

Agenda Report

October 27, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ZONE CHANGE FOR THE REUSE OF THE DESIDERIO ARMY RESERVE CENTER

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that, following a public hearing, the City Council:

1. Adopt a Resolution certifying the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve Center (SCH #2013091086) (Attachment A) and adopt the CEQA Findings, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and a Statement of Overriding Considerations;
2. Adopt the Land Use Findings for a Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning of the site from West Gateway Specific Plan (WGSP-2) to Planned Development (Attachment B);
3. Adopt the Conditions of Approval for the Desiderio Planned Development (Attachment C);
4. Direct the City Attorney to draft an ordinance within 60 days consistent with the provisions set forth herein, amending the zoning from West Gateway Specific Plan (WGSP-2) to Planned Development (PD) and adding the Desiderio Planned Development to the Zoning Code; and
5. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination before Friday, October 31, 2014.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On September 10, 2014, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and recommended to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (5-2 vote), adopt the Findings for the Zoning Map Amendment (7-0 vote), and adopt the Conditions of Approval for the Planned Development with the addition of restrooms to the park (4-3 vote.)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On May 20, 2014, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the Draft EIR for the Reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve Center. The Commission supported the project and supported the adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations for the demolition of Desiderio Hall.

RECREATION & PARKS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On July 8, 2014, the Recreation and Parks Commission voted unanimously to support the design concept for Desiderio Neighborhood Park (Attachment D) with the request that a restroom be included in the final design plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This action will change the Zoning Map designation on the Desiderio site from the existing West Gateway Specific Plan (WGSP-2) designation to Planned Development and establish development standards and conditions of approval for the project. Concurrently it will certify the Final EIR and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations. This will facilitate the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the construction of nine detached single-family affordable homes and a neighborhood park.

BACKGROUND:

On June 4, 2007, City Council approved a Concept Plan for the reuse of the Desiderio Army Reserve Center after a lengthy public participation process. The property had been declared surplus by the Department of Defense in 2006. The Concept Plan requires 25 percent of the land to be transferred through a public benefit conveyance from the Army to Habitat for Humanity to build nine affordable single-family residences in a bungalow court configuration and the remaining 75 percent to be transferred to the City through a public benefit conveyance for use as a neighborhood park.

In June 2007, the City began the process by submitting the project to the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which is required to review and approve all sales of excess Federal Government property. After a collaborative effort over three years, the plan was approved by HUD in February 2011, which allowed the City to negotiate with the Army to acquire the site.

The National Park Service and HUD approved the City's and Habitat for Humanity's applications for a public benefit conveyance in July 2012. The City and Habitat are working with these agencies and the Army to finalize the transfer of property.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Planned Development

The project proposes a zone change from West Gateway Specific Plan "The Army Reserve Training Center Site" (WGSP-2) to Planned Development (PD). The PD zoning district is intended for sites where an applicant proposes and the City desires to achieve a particular mix of uses, appearance, land use compatibility, or special sensitivity to neighborhood character.

The specific purposes of the PD district include (PMC 17.26.020(C):

- *Establish a procedure for the development of large parcels of land in order to reduce or eliminate the rigidity, delays, and inequities that otherwise would result from application of land use regulations and administrative procedures designed primarily for small parcels;*
- *Ensure orderly and thorough planning and review procedures that will result in quality urban design; and*
- *Allow certain types of development consistent with the general plan that can be acceptable at a specific location only under standards significantly more restrictive than those of a base district in which the use is permitted.*

The PD zoning district is consistent with all land use classifications of the General Plan.

The proposed uses for the PD are consistent with or more restrictive than the current uses allowed by the WGSP-2 zoning district, except that the lot sizes of the Desiderio Homes range from 5,610 to 9,717 square feet and average 6,236 square feet. The minimum lot size in the single-family zoning district is 7,200 square feet. The smaller lot sizes facilitate the provision of affordable ownership housing. The design of the project will comply with the Citywide Design Principles.

Site

The project site is the 5.17 acre Desiderio Army Reserve Center at 655 Westminster Drive in Pasadena, California. The property was vacated by the U.S. Army on December 6, 2010 as part of the government's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program. The site was used as a classroom training center by the U.S. Army Reserve prior to the closure. Facilities at Desiderio consist of a two-story classroom building, a large garage, two small accessory structures, and paved parking. All existing structures are scheduled for demolition as part of the City's redevelopment plan for the site.

Existing Zoning and General Plan Designation

The site is included in the West Gateway Specific Plan and is zoned WGSP-2 which allows a variety of public or semi-public uses such as government offices, schools and charitable institutions. The site also allows low-density residential development at six

dwelling units/acre. The Specific Plan states that new development should be in character with the surrounding residential areas, respect the peaceful quality of the area, and minimize traffic and impacts on the Arroyo Seco Watershed. The Specific Plan recommends the Planned Development process to tailor the development standards to a specific project.

Desiderio Park

Desiderio Park (3.87 acres) will be a neighborhood park characterized as a passive retreat for individuals, families, walkers, and visitors to the Lower Arroyo. The park is not intended to accommodate large groups or organized sports activities.

This proposed project consists of passive neighborhood park components such as walkways, site furnishings, picnic areas, play area, arroyo stone retaining walls, and small parking lot. Grading will consist of undulating terrain including berms, depressions, and gently sloping areas. A dry stream bed has been proposed to promote infiltration and reduce runoff. The walkways will loop around the park and cross the dry stream with small footbridges in various locations.

The park will include meadow-type, drought tolerant landscaping with an emphasis on trees and plants that are consistent with the adjacent Lower Arroyo Seco. An irrigation system with water management technology will be included. A preliminary site plan with proposed grading and identification of key features is attached. See Attachment D.

Desiderio Homes

Desiderio Homes (1.29 acres) consists of nine single-family detached bungalows in a courtyard formation. The bungalows will be constructed by Habitat for Humanity through a self-help sweat-equity program and sold at affordable prices to families that earn up to 60 percent of the area median income. All the units are three-bedroom, one to two stories, range from 1,244 to 1,256 square feet, and have detached, two-car garages. The nine lots range from 5,610 to 9,717 square feet. See Attachment E.

Approvals Required

In order to demolish the buildings, clear the site and construct the park and affordable housing, the Final EIR will need to be certified, and mitigation measures, a mitigation monitoring program, and a Statement of Overriding Considerations will also need to be approved.

The City will be responsible for the demolition and removal of the existing structures and paving on the site. Staff will return to the City Council for approval of a contract to undertake this work.

Desiderio Homes will require a subdivision into nine new lots. Design Review will also be required.

ANALYSIS:

Desiderio Homes

Floor Area Ratio and Lot Coverage – The lot coverage of the site is 25% and the floor area ratio (FAR) is 29.4%. The individual homes have lot coverage ranging from 19% to 32% and FARs ranging from 17% to 30%. The single family residential (RS-6) zoning allows lot coverage of 35 to 40% and FAR of 30% + 500 square feet. The project complies with the RS-6 requirements.

Minimum lot size – The lots range from 5,610 to 9,717 square feet and the average lot size is 6,243 square feet. The RS-6 zoning designation requires a minimum lot size of 7,200 square feet. The Desiderio Homes lots are smaller than the RS-6 requirements which allow the project to be affordable for low income households.

Height – The homes adjacent to Westminster Drive and adjacent to the park at the north end of the site are one story – maximum of 14 feet in height. The interior five homes are two stories and a maximum of 23 feet. The detached garages are all a maximum of 12 feet in height. Single family residential zoning allows a maximum height of 28 feet.

Setbacks – The front setback of each unit to the property line in the center of the courtyard ranges from 31 to 41 feet. Rear setbacks from the homes to the property line range from 46 to 63 feet. Setbacks from the detached garages to the rear property lines range from 12 to 16 feet. The side setbacks range from 5 to 11 feet. These setbacks meet or exceed the setbacks of the single family zoning district.

Landscaping and Tree Removals – The project provides a large central greenbelt courtyard that is aligned with California Terrace. The courtyard is approximately 61 feet wide and will include trees, lawn and native shrubs. A landscape plan will be submitted for review and approval by the Planning Director. The existing site is paved and does not have any protected trees.

Parking – Each home will have a detached two-car garage located to the rear and accessed from a shared driveway.

Desiderio Park

Restrooms - The staff recommendation is not to include a restroom in Desiderio Park. Throughout the conceptual park planning process, community input suggested Desiderio Neighborhood Park should be highly passive with a landscape reminiscent of the adjacent Lower Arroyo Seco. These comments demonstrated an understanding that the Desiderio parcel shape would not lend itself for traditional neighborhood park features such as open turf play field areas nor would it allow for generous off-street parking.

From September 2013 until the present, public comment has remained consistent. The park design concept that emerged from this community-led process suggests a small collection of park amenities contained within a “meadow” landscape. Accordingly, it is anticipated that a typical visit to Desiderio Neighborhood Park will be short in duration. Additionally, with the exception of the proposed play area, the adjacent Lower Arroyo Seco will provide a similar user experience in a much larger natural setting. Brookside Park and Area ‘H’ to the north offer the City’s largest collection of amenities and open parkland.

For these reasons, staff finds that a park restroom structure is not necessary at Desiderio Neighborhood Park. Other neighborhood parks without restrooms include Defenders, Gwinn, San Rafael, and Sunnyslope parks. These parks share a similarity to Desiderio in that they offer a very basic and largely passive visitor experience. Gwinn and Sunnyslope are similar in that a larger park (Viña Vieja) is located nearby.

Parking – The park will include 10 regular and 2 accessible parking spaces. All parking spaces and aisles will meet the minimum stall and aisle dimensions as prescribed by the Zoning Code.

Landscaping and Trees – Several non-natives trees may be removed for the park. Any tree removal requests would be reviewed by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee. The landscaping will be drought tolerant and consistent with the adjacent Lower Arroyo Seco.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW – FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT:

In preparation for conveying the property to the City and Habitat for Humanity, the Army conducted its own environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). There are many similarities between NEPA and CEQA and the EIR references and incorporates the technical studies prepared for the site for the NEPA process.

During the NEPA process, the Army determined that the 1956 Desiderio Hall Building and Organization Maintenance Shop are eligible for National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historic Places. An agreement between the Army and the California State Historic Preservation Officer outlines the terms of the mitigation necessary to document the historic buildings and allows demolition after this mitigation is completed. Under CEQA, an EIR is required prior to the elimination of a historic resource and a Statement of Overriding Considerations must be adopted prior to elimination of the resource.

A Notice of Preparation was released on September 25, 2013 to announce that the City was preparing the EIR and to solicit comments and input on what topics the EIR should analyze. The EIR scoping period was from September 25 to October 25, 2013. During this time a Scoping meeting was held on October 9, 2013 at a Planning Commission meeting.

The DEIR was released for comment on April 9, 2014 and the 45-day comment period closed on May 27, 2014.

Alternatives

The DEIR analyzed two project alternatives that would avoid or lessen significant environmental impacts, while still meeting the basic objectives of the project:

- No Project - assumes that the demolition of the existing structures and reuse of the project site would not occur. The site would remain vacant.

This alternative would not result in impacts to cultural resources because demolition of the eligible historic resource would not occur. Because no construction or demolition would occur, there would be no potential for the release of hazardous materials into the environment. No new noise sources would be generated. No new vehicle trips would occur.

This alternative would not meet the project objectives of providing affordable housing, providing open space or implementing the reuse plan for the site.

- Reuse Alternative - maintain and reuse the existing USARC building. The building would be rehabilitated to accommodate housing on the project site.

This alternative would lessen impacts to historic resources because the building would not be demolished. It is possible that changes to the building to accommodate affordable housing would be substantial and the building would no longer be eligible for the National Register. Hazardous Materials impacts would be similar to the project and with appropriate mitigation measures would be less than significant. Impacts to Noise and Traffic would be similar to the project because both this alternative would also include affordable housing and a park.

This alternative would not achieve the City's desire for visual compatibility between the project site and the surrounding area. The existing USARC building is visually inconsistent with the nearby single-family homes and historic resources. The project would also not be consistent with the reuse plan for the site and would require additional negotiation with the Federal Government.

Several other alternatives were considered, but not evaluated in detail because they were determined to be infeasible during the scoping process. These include the original project submittals proposed for the redevelopment of the site.

The project requires the adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations in order to certify the FEIR because the remaining impacts to Cultural Resources and Transportation & Traffic cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level.

CEQA allows a decision-making agency to balance, as applicable, the economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the project against its unavoidable environmental impacts when determining whether to approve a project. If these benefits are deemed to outweigh the unavoidable adverse environmental effects, those effects may be considered "acceptable" per Section 15093 (Statement of Overriding Considerations) of the CEQA Guidelines.

In such a case, CEQA requires the agency to support, in writing, the specific reasons for considering a project acceptable when significant impacts are not avoided or substantially lessened. Those reasons must be based on substantial evidence in the Final EIR or elsewhere in the administrative record.

Although staff recommends against inclusion of a restroom for the reasons discussed above, such an addition would not trigger recirculation of the EIR. The State CEQA Guidelines require that a project description must include specified information, but "The description of the project . . . should not supply extensive detail beyond that needed for evaluation and review of the environmental impact." (Guidelines, § 15124.) The addition of a restroom would be a standard feature to add to a neighborhood park, and would not in itself create the potential for a significant environmental effect, nor would it deprive the public of the ability to comment on a potentially significant environmental effect. Accordingly, certification of the EIR could proceed even with the addition of a restroom.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The project supports several city goals by providing affordable ownership housing and increasing the supply of parkland. The project supports the following General Plan goals:

Land Use Element Policy 15.2 – Increase Supply: Increase the total number of market rate and affordable housing units within the City.

Land Use Element Policy 15.4 – Family Housing: Increase the supply of large family affordable housing units with adequate outdoor play space for children.

Housing Element Goal HE-2 – Promote an adequate supply and diversity of quality rental and ownership housing opportunities suited to residents of varying lifestyle needs and income levels.

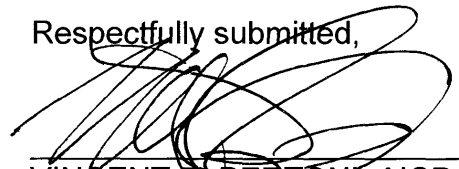
Housing Element Policy HE-2.3 – Affordable Housing. Facilitate a mix of affordability levels in residential projects and dispersal of such units to achieve greater integration of affordable housing throughout the community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact as a result of this action; indirect and support costs such as legal, maintenance and IT support are expected to be addressed by the utilization of existing budget appropriations. There are no anticipated impacts to other operational programs or capital projects as a result of this action.

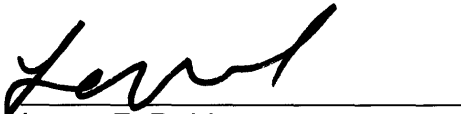
Park Funding - The estimated cost for the construction of Desiderio Park, which includes the demolition of the existing structures, is \$2.41 million. A total of \$1.56 million has already been appropriated to the CIP project and the remaining \$850,000 will be appropriated as part of the adoption of a future CIP budget.

Respectfully submitted,



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Development

Prepared by:



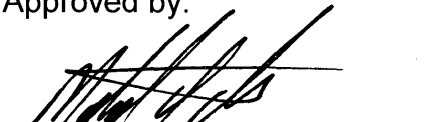
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Attachments: (5)

- Attachment A – Final Environmental Impact Report
- Attachment B – Land Use Findings for Zoning Map Amendment
- Attachment C – Conditions of Approval
- Attachment D – Desiderio Park Plan
- Attachment E – Desiderio Homes Plan