

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL **DATE:** AUGUST 3, 1998
FROM: ACTING CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
CHANDLER SCHOOL LOCATED AT 1005 ARMADA DRIVE

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

1. Adopt a Resolution (Attachment 1) approving Chandler School Master Development Plan Amendment (Exhibit A of the Resolution) subject to the Conditions of Approval;
2. Approve the Initial Environmental Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (Attachment 2);
3. Adopt the Environmental Mitigation Measures and the Mitigation Monitoring Program (Attachment 3);
4. Approve the De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Attachment 4);
5. Direct the City Clerk to file a Notice of Determination and a Certificate of Fee Exemption for the California Department of Fish and Game with the Los Angeles County Recorder (Attachment 5); and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this amendment to the Master Development Plan is to allow Chandler School to expand and upgrade its facilities while not increasing student enrollment from the existing 420 students. The amendment to the Master Development Plan will also allow the school to provide newer, more efficient facilities for its students and instructors. The school has an existing Master Development Plan which was approved in December, 1987.

The Master Development Plan Amendment has been reviewed by the Design Commission and Planning Commission. Several changes were recommended by these two commissions. The Design Commission and Planning Commission have recommended approval of the amendment to the Master Development Plan subject to Conditions of Approval, those conditions are included in the recommendation in this Agenda Report.

BACKGROUND:

The Chandler School has submitted an application for an amendment to its existing Master Development Plan for its campus located at 1005 Armada Drive between Prospect Boulevard and Rosemont Avenue. The school has been located at this site since September 1958. Its first Master Development Plan was approved by the City Council in December 1987. Six out of the ten buildings within the master development plan boundary area are affected by the proposed amendments.

Planning Commission Public Hearing

The Planning Commission conducted a site visit and held a public hearing on May 27, 1998. Several issues and concerns were expressed by neighbors at this hearing: (1) the proposed expansion would cause an increase in student enrollment; (2) there would be an increase in traffic due to the project expansion; (3) increase in traffic on Armada Drive due to the drop-off/pick-up of students; (4) improvement of the Seco Street parking lot to facilitate the drop-off/pick-up of students; and (5) mature trees should not be removed to make way for a wall along Armada Drive and Prospect Boulevard.

Following the public hearing the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of staff's recommendation to the City Council with the following addendum:

1. That the Conditions of Approval include the repair of the unpaved sidewalk on Armada Drive along the Arroyo to be in compliance with ADA requirements;
2. That the refuse and parking area on Armada Drive and Seco Street be screened from public view;
3. Adopt all Design Commission recommendations;
4. Add recommendation developed by Kaku Associates including crossing guards and making sure safety patrols are implemented on Armada Drive and Seco Street;
5. That the Master Development Plan be brought back for review before the Planning Commission in January 1999 for the traffic control plan at which time subsequent reviews may be requested;

6. A construction staging plan for all four (4) phases be implemented;
7. That the construction of the four-foot high wall along Prospect Boulevard avoid destruction of the existing mature Cedar trees;
8. That the Armada Drive drop-off/pick-up site be restricted to kindergarten through the second grade; and
9. Direct the Code Compliance staff to investigate a reported code violation at 1010 Armada Drive.

Design Commission Public Hearing

The Design Commission conducted a site visit and held a public hearing on May 26, 1998. Several issues were expressed at the hearing: (1) the second floor additions would be too tall and out of character with the residential neighborhood; and (2) that the new wall along Armada Drive and Prospect Boulevard be constructed without the removal of the trees.

Following the public hearing the Design Commission voted to forward the following recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council:

1. Found that the siting and scale of the proposed new construction on the campus of the Chandler School are -- in concept -- appropriate to existing location;
2. Concurred with the conclusion in the initial environmental study that design review and application of the City's design guidelines to the project will reduce any adverse aesthetic effects to a level of insignificance;
3. Supported the recommended condition of approval in the Master Development Plan (MDP) that authorizes the Commission to conduct design review of all four phases of the new construction (according to the provisions of Chapter 17.92 of the municipal code) with the understanding that design review shall concentrate on mitigating the effects of the massing of the buildings on the neighborhood and the street; and
4. Recommend as a condition of approval that any new perimeter wall or fence (replacing the existing chain link fence along Armada Drive) should avoid destruction of the existing mature cedar trees, which are character-defining features of the site, and for this reason further recommend installation of a fence (in wood or metal) instead of a masonry wall.

ANALYSIS:

The school campus occupies 4.06 acres and is accessed from Armada Drive and Seco Street. Grades for this school range from kindergarten through the eighth grade. The

campus is separated into two schools: lower school, kindergarten through fifth grade and the upper school, sixth through eighth grade. The lower school is accessed from Armada Drive and the upper school is accessed from Seco Street.

Currently, the school campus has a total building square footage of 42,366 or a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.24. The school is proposing to add 11,058 square feet to its existing campus. The development will consist of four phases and will be phased over ten years.

In 1987, a Master Development Plan was adopted for Chandler School to develop 9,000 square feet on its campus. To this date, only 4,800 square feet were constructed. The following buildings were completed: (1) auditorium, 4,000 square feet; and (2) library, 800 square feet.

General Plan Designations: The project site is currently designated Institutional on the General Plan Land Use Diagram (Attachment 6). Surrounding land use designations include Low Density Residential (0-6 dwelling units / net acre) to the south, north and east; and Open Space to the west.

Zoning Designations: The current zoning designation for the project site is PS (Public and Semi-Public District). Surrounding zoning designations include OS (Open Space) to the west; RS-4 (Single-family Residential District, 4 dwelling units / net acre) to the northeast; and RS-4 HD (Single-family Residential District, 4 dwelling units / net acre, Hillside District) to the east and south (Attachment 7).

Land Uses: The project site is an existing school campus that has been operating since 1958 at its current location. The site is accessible by Armada Drive and Seco Street. To the west is open space and to the east, north and south are single-family residential dwelling units with a mixture of one and two-stories in height.

Historic District: The school campus is located at the south edge of the Prospect Historic District. The period of significance for the Prospect Historic District is 1906 to 1930. According to the records of the State of California Office of Historic Preservation, the buildings on the campus are not listed as contributing to the historic district (presumably because they do not date from period of significance for the district, 1906-1930). Nevertheless, the historic surroundings of the campus warrant applying the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation to the new construction to ensure that new development is compatible with historic buildings in the neighborhood.

Project Description: The Chandler School proposes to amend its existing Master Development Plan which will include the addition of 11,058 square feet to its existing campus. The amendment to the Master Development Plan is proposed to be developed in four (4) phases (Exhibit A).

Phase 1 will consist of the removal of 744 square feet and the addition of 5,916 square feet to the Classroom/Library building.

Phase 2 will include the addition of 3,428 square feet to the Classroom/Administration building.

Phase 3 will consist of the demolition of the Classroom Computer building (1,000 square feet) and the construction of a four-foot high wall along Prospect Boulevard. This will also include the addition of parking spaces in the Armada Drive parking lot for faculty and visitors.

Phase 4 includes an addition of 3,500 square feet to the Gymnasium/Multi-purpose building for an art and music complex (Exhibit A). The expansion will not increase the student enrollment of 420 students.

Parking: Currently, there are 54 parking spaces on the school campus: 16 parking spaces in the Armada Drive parking lot and 38 parking spaces in the Seco Street parking lot. On April 6, 1988, a variance was granted for 52 on-site parking spaces. At that time, the code required a total of 61 parking spaces.

The current number of parking spaces does not meet the code requirement of 65 parking spaces. The school is proposing an additional 11 parking spaces be provided on the campus: nine parking spaces in the Armada Drive parking lot and two spaces in the Seco Street parking lot (Exhibit A).

Seco Street Student Drop-off/Pick-up Area: The traffic consultant (Kaku Associates) for Chandler School has been working with the Public Works and Transportation Department in developing a plan for a student drop-off/pick-up area on Seco Street that will alleviate some of the traffic on Armada Drive. The proposal will have a stairway from Seco Street into the parking lot for Chandler School. A crossing guard and safety patrol will help the students cross the crosswalk leading to the stair tower. The curb will be marked for unloading and loading of students. Also being proposed on the east side of the Seco Street parking lot, is a retaining wall for widening the driveway approach to provide improved visibility.

A proposal has been made by Chandler School to have staggered hours for students (kindergarten to second grade) drop-off/pick-up at the Armada Drive area. Drop-off/pick-up for students third through the eighth grade will be at the Seco Street parking area.

Building Height: The existing building height for the structures on the school campus ranges from fourteen feet to thirty-seven feet. The new additions to the proposed development will not exceed the height limit of the adjacent RS-4 zoning district -- thirty-six feet (Attachment 7).

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS: A neighborhood meeting was held on December 11, 1997. Several issues and concerns were expressed by neighbors at this meeting: (1) the proposed expansion would cause an increase in student enrollment; (2) there would be an increase in traffic due to the project expansion; (3) improvement of the Seco Street parking lot to facilitate the drop-off/pick-up of students; (4) vehicles parking along the Prospect Boulevard bridge make it too narrow for other vehicles to travel across the bridge; (5) a lack of parking and police enforcement for vehicles speeding and parking illegally on Prospect Boulevard and Armada Drive; (6) mature trees should not be removed to make way for a wall along Prospect Boulevard; and (7) second-story additions would impede views and be inappropriate in the historic district. Based on these concerns, Chandler School hired a traffic consultant, Kaku Associates to review the traffic and circulation issues.

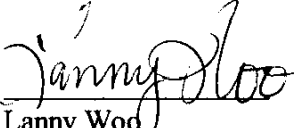
The traffic consultant recommended a drop-off/pick-up procedure that identifies a specific area for morning drop-off/afternoon pick-up and a procedure that will keep the traffic flowing through Armada Drive and Prospect Boulevard. Such drop-off measures include: (1) staggering the morning hours for drop-off between 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.; (2) designating the south curb face on Armada Drive along the school frontage as the morning drop-off area; (3) using the Seco Street parking lot aisle for the upper campus drop-off area; and (4) instructing parents who must accompany their children onto the school campus to use the parking spaces along the north side of the Armada Drive lot west of the drop-off area.

Afternoon pick-up measures include, children from kindergarten to third grade should be picked-up at Armada Drive and fourth to eighth grade children picked-up on Seco Street. Other traffic measures that were addressed include: (1) prohibiting U-turns from all three directions at the intersection of Prospect Boulevard and Armada Drive; (2) shifting the double yellow centerline on Prospect Boulevard south of Armada Drive 2-3 feet to the west to give more room to the northbound land adjacent to the parked cars and to reinforce the southbound "No Stopping" area; (3) prohibiting all parking on the west side of Prospect Boulevard from Armada Drive southerly across the bridge; adding red curb and signing this area for "No Stopping"; and (4) moving the school speed limit sign facing westbound Seco Street traffic so that it is not hidden by foliage.

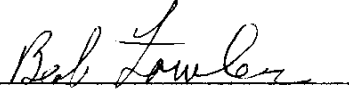
A second neighborhood meeting was held on April 23, 1998 with Chandler School presenting revised plans and Kaku Associates discussing the traffic study. At that meeting, several concerns were raised: (1) the 300 feet radius for public notification of the meeting was not adequate and should be expanded; (2) vehicles speeding on Prospect Boulevard and Armada Drive; (3) drop-off and pick-up of students should be located on the Seco Street parking area; and (4) new structures on the school campus should relate to existing structures.

Staff have received numerous letters from residents regarding the school's expansion. The letters are included in this report as Attachment 8.

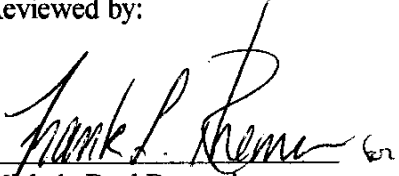
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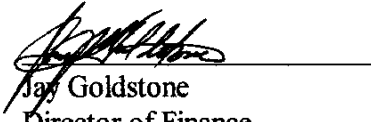
Approved by:


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Reviewed by:


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Reviewed by:


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Attachments:

- Attachment 1 - Resolution Adopting Chandler School Master Development Plan Amendment
- Exhibit A - Chandler School Master Development
- Attachment 2 - Initial Environmental Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration
- Attachment 3 - Environmental Mitigation Measures and Mitigation Monitoring Program
- Attachment 4 - De Minimis Impact Finding
- Attachment 5 - Notice of Determination
- Attachment 6 - Existing General Plan Land Use Diagram designations
- Attachment 7 - Existing Zoning Map designations
- Attachment 8 - Letters from Residents