

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: FEBRUARY 8, 2006

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

BY: MIKE KAMINO, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: CONDUCT A PRE-SCREEN REVIEW AND PROVIDE DIRECTION REGARDING AN AMENDMENT TO THE LADYFACE MOUNTAIN SPECIFIC PLAN TO ALLOW A SENIOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE LADYFACE MOUNTAIN SPECIFIC PLAN AREA (CASE NO. 05-PSR-004)

Carlos Khantzis is seeking direction from the City Council on whether to proceed with an amendment to the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan to allow residential development within the Specific Plan area. Mr. Khantzis owns a 7.1-acre parcel on the westerly end of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan area and wishes to develop a 46-unit senior housing condominium project. The purpose of the pre-screen review is to provide an opportunity for the City Council to offer comments to assist the applicant in determining whether he should proceed with a formal request to amend the Specific Plan. The City Council conducted requests for a pre-screen review by the same applicant for the same parcel and proposed use in April of 2002, and in February of 2005. However, the applicant is now seeking further direction on the proposed density and preliminary site planning of the project.

The senior housing project is proposed on an irregularly shaped parcel totaling 7.1 acres located directly east of the existing Archstone Apartment complex along the south side of Agoura Road (A.P.N. 2061-001-025). The parcel is situated at the toe of the north-facing slopes of Ladyface Mountain and rises in elevation from approximately 870 feet above sea level (adjacent to Agoura Road) to over 1,000 feet (at the southern property line). Two watercourses under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Game and the Army Corps of Engineers divide the parcel into two natural pad areas, and a third watercourse separates the parcel from the lots to the east. Much of the area proposed for building is located adjacent to Agoura Road and has been previously modified through brush clearance. The steeper slopes south of the proposed development consist of undisturbed biological habitat.

At the time of Specific Plan adoption in 1991, the City Council concluded that the land uses most compatible with the sensitive nature of the hillside were business park type developments, including offices and other ancillary uses. Business park type developments

were generally preferred at the time of Specific Plan adoption due to the more compact nature in which they can be designed (i.e. avoidance of large graded pad area for surface parking through incorporation of underground parking) as compared to the typical residential tract that would likely require the construction of an extensive vehicle circulation system and large level building pad area. In addition, the standard single-family residential developments and high-density apartment units are more likely to create increased demand on the City's public schools, recreational facilities and shopping facilities. None of these facilities are located in the project vicinity. Moreover, unlike business parks which are primarily weekday uses, residential development would result in human presence 24 hours a day which would further encroach onto the sensitive environment of the hillsides.

The Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan currently permits the development of the subject parcel as a business park use with 24,000 to 34,000 square feet of building area. The maximum allowable development pad area is limited to 2.42 acres. The maximum traffic budget allotted to the parcel is 90 vehicle trips during the PM peak hour period.

For the City Council's pre-screen review in 2002, the applicant provided information regarding the development concept. The project proposal included 48 senior condominium units distributed among 10 individual residential structures with 4-5 units per structure. The project also included underground parking structures. While staff had reservations about the proposed density, staff found that the subterranean parking concept, along with the placement of small residential pads, could reduce the potential environmental effects caused by mass on-site grading. Also, the proposal to construct senior housing units would most likely generate less traffic and reduce the impacts on neighborhood support facilities. Thus, unlike a tract of traditional single-family homes or a high-density multi-family project, the City would not be compelled to provide convenient neighborhood facilities such as schools and parks. Staff also noted that the proposal would be compatible with the Archstone Apartments – a multi-family residential development located directly west of the proposed project site.

The City Council expressed their willingness in allowing the applicant to proceed with an application to amend the Specific Plan to allow for a senior housing project, but only for this specific site. The City Council did not provide direction on the proposed density (number of units) of the project, but staff did note at the time that a final determination of the maximum allowable density would need to be calculated based on the City's Hillside and Significant Ecological Area development criteria, since residential development was not anticipated and thus not analyzed as part of the Specific Plan adoption. Staff also informed the City Council that the applicant's proposal to construct 48 condominium units may likely need to be reduced based on these standards.

Staff subsequently worked extensively with the applicant in determining a density for the project that could meet the City's development criteria. The average topographic slope of the property is 16-20%, which the Hillside Ordinance would allow for a maximum density of 10 units on the site (0.66 acres per unit). If the City were to theoretically apply a Cluster Development Overlay designation to the property, the allowable density could be increased

by up to 100%, or 20 units on the site. The 20 unit density could also theoretically be increased if specific criteria of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan were applied, including allowing for the maximum building area on the parcel of 34,000 square feet, or allowing a density based on the traffic budget of 90 vehicle trips in the PM hour. Allowing for development within the maximum pad area of 2.42 acres could also increase the project density beyond the 1.5 acre total pad area that was proposed at the time.

Based on these criteria, the applicant proceeded in the development of design plans under an administrative Pre-Application Review Process. However, in 2004, the applicant and staff were informed that California Civil Code Section 51.3.4 requires a minimum density of 35 units for a residential project to qualify as a “senior citizen housing development.” If the project were to have a density of less than 35 units, the City could not restrict the occupancy of the residents to exclusively seniors. The question posed to the City Council in February of 2005 was whether the City would be willing to allow the applicant to proceed with the Specific Plan Amendment with the understanding that a minimum of 35 units would be required for development of a senior housing project.

In order to provide for the 35 units, the applicant proposed to cluster 23 two-story condominium units on the western side of the property, in close proximity to the Archstone Apartments. Twelve (12) detached, two-story, single-family units were proposed on the east side of the property. The City Council was split in their support for a clustered development proposal. However, the Council was receptive to a project density of 35 units while acknowledging that a non-restricted senior housing project on the site with fewer than 35 units would place more demands on schools, parks, and traffic.

The applicant is now seeking non-binding comments from the City Council on his proposal to develop the site with a density of 46 attached, senior housing condominium units within two buildings and a 3,400 square foot public senior citizen recreation center. Both residential buildings would include underground parking and two levels of residential units that range in size from 1,800 square feet to 2,000 square feet. The westerly building would include 20 residential units and the easterly building would include 26 units. The buildings would be separated by a guest parking lot and the proposed recreation center.

In his attached project description the applicant does not specifically explain why an increase in density from 35 units is being considered, other than to state that the density can be mitigated within the development parameters of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan. For instance, the 46 condominium units would occupy approximately 1.2 acres of pad area (or 18% of the total site). The Specific Plan allows for maximum pad area, including buildings and parking lot improvements, of 2.42 acres for business park development purposes. The clustered units would allow for the site to be graded within concentrated areas while providing for more undisturbed, private open space areas. The project would also produce significantly fewer vehicle trips in the PM peak hour than the 90 vehicle trip budget assigned for this parcel within the Specific Plan.

The project will require the widening of Agoura Road along the length of the property and two on-site detention basins would need to be reconstructed per flood control requirements. The applicant is also proposing to realign an existing driveway easement that is intended to

serve the private Open Space zoned property to the south. This realignment, as shown on the preliminary site plan, will require consent of the off-site property owner. The extent of the potential construction impacts to existing Oak trees has not been addressed at this stage. Several Oak trees would need to be removed from the public right-of-way along the property frontage for the widening of Agoura Road. Most on-site Oak trees are located on the perimeter of the lot and between the proposed westerly residential building and the recreation center.

The Economic Development Committee reviewed the applicant's preliminary plans for 46 clustered residential units on this site in July of 2005. Since the project included a request for a greater density than was previously presented to the City Council, as well as a public senior citizen recreation center, the Committee recommended that the applicant submit this proposal to the City Council for discussion purposes.

The Community Service Department is receptive to the proposal for the City's use of an exclusive senior citizen recreation building, which could potentially allow for more recreation opportunities within the existing recreation center. While the proposed 3,400 square foot size of the senior recreation building would likely meet their needs, the Community Services Department expressed a concern with the potential parking demand for the public's use of the building. The number of public parking spaces on the site may need to be nearly doubled from the proposed 24 spaces to meet the anticipated public parking demand, especially if the parking lot is used for senior excursions.

A formal request for a Specific Plan Amendment would need to be filed by the applicant for the proposed development scenario. Staff would conduct a more thorough analysis of the application, including environmental clearance pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. The entitlement requests (Conditional Use Permit, Oak Tree Permit, etc.) could be submitted together with the Specific Plan Amendment request. The requests would be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a public hearing for a recommendation to the City Council at a subsequent public hearing.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council provide non-binding comments to the applicant as to whether he should proceed with his request to amend the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan to allow for the proposed clustering of 46 senior housing condominium units and construction of a public senior citizen recreation building on the parcel.

Attachments: Letter/Project Description from Applicant
City Council Meeting Minutes – April 24, 2002
City Council Meeting Minutes – February 23, 2005
Vicinity Map