

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: MARCH 23, 2005

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

BY: MIKE KAMINO, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: PRE-SCREEN REVIEW OF A PROPOSED SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT TO ACCOMMODATE A 17,000 SQUARE FOOT OFFICE DEVELOPMENT EAST OF 29800 AGOURA ROAD (RWR HOMES, INC., APPLICANT) (CASE NO. 05-PSR-002)

RWR Homes, Inc., is requesting direction from the City Council on whether they should proceed with a proposed amendment to the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan to develop a 17,000 square foot office building on vacant property located east of 29800 Agoura Road (A.P.N. 2061-033-015). The purpose of the pre-screen review is to receive non-binding comments from the City Council. Based on the City Council's conceptual comments, the applicant will decide whether to make a formal application for the Specific Plan Amendment. As the pre-screen review is an informal process, the applicant is required only to submit concept plans. Consequently, staff's comments are general in nature because we did not have the benefit of reviewing all of the technical reports and plans, including environmental documents, that are typically submitted with development applications.

The 1.65 acre parcel is located on the south side of Agoura Road, east of Ladyface Court, between the Gateway Four Square Church site and the Agoura Hills Business Center (Warmington Group). In January of 1990, the owner, John Miller, received the Planning Commission's approval of a Conditional Use Permit to construct a 28,000 square foot, two-story office building with partially subterranean parking on the property. Development standards of the Business Park-Office Retail (BP-OR) zone were applied to the project. The Planning Commission's unanimous decision included approval of a Variance request to: 1) increase the building height from the 35-foot maximum to 40 feet; 2) decrease the required side yard setbacks from 70 feet combined to 24 feet on the east side and 4 feet on the west side of the property; and 3) decrease the minimum separation distance between adjacent buildings from 70 feet to 22 feet. The Planning Commission also approved an Oak Tree Permit to remove three (3) oak trees to accommodate the proposed construction.

The project approvals were valid for a two-year period. An additional one-year extension was granted by the Director of Planning and Community Development. However, project plans were never submitted for a building permit and the project has since expired

without entitlement being used. Meanwhile, in September of 1991, the City Council adopted the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan, which limited the amount of building area on this parcel to 7,000 square feet in Scenario 1-A. The property owner may request, in connection with a Conditional Use Permit application, that the maximum building area be increased provided that certain findings listed in the Specific Plan are met. The maximum building size increase allowed, per Scenario 2-A of the Specific Plan, for this parcel is 8,000 square feet. Therefore, the theoretical maximum allowable building area, as prescribed in the Specific Plan, on this parcel is between 7,000 and 8,000 square feet.

On June 25, 2003, the City Council discussed a pre-screen review application for the site. The property owner had requested direction on whether he could proceed with a Specific Plan Amendment to develop the property with a new building of the same 28,000 square foot size and within the same building envelope that was approved in 1990. The Council expressed their willingness to consider a Specific Plan Amendment to accommodate a building size larger than the 8,000 square foot maximum. Based on the design plans submitted by the owner, the Council did not support development of a building as large as 28,000 square feet. The Council expressed a desire to: minimize the prominence of the building from Agoura Road; preserve viewsheds of the neighboring property to the west; and screen the parking areas as viewed from Agoura Road. A preferred building size was not given by the City Council.

RWR Homes now wishes to locate their corporate headquarters in a new office building on the site. A new project architect has been retained and RWR Homes is now seeking direction from the City Council on whether they could proceed with a Specific Plan Amendment to develop the project with a building area of 17,000 square feet.

The Specific Plan provides the City with a comprehensive set of plans, policies, regulations and conditions for guiding and ensuring the orderly development of properties located on the north side of Ladyface Mountain, between Kanan Road and the westerly City limits. The City's decision to prepare a Specific Plan for Ladyface Mountain was with the recognition that this area was a unique asset to the community, that there are numerous environmental resources that need to be protected, and that any future development must be compatible with and sensitive to the unique qualities of the area and coordinated with infrastructure. With those purposes in mind, development caps were established for each parcel to ensure that any individual development would not exceed the carrying capacity for that parcel and that the cumulative buildout would not overburden the carrying capacity of the entire specific plan area.

In considering any plans for development within the Ladyface Mt. Specific Plan area, the City must consider the following:

1. Maximum Allowable Building Area:

As stated earlier, the Specific Plan has established a maximum allowable building area ranging from 7,000 to 8,000 square feet and the applicant is requesting an increase to 17,000 square feet. Therefore, the applicant is requesting a Specific

Plan Amendment to approximately double the maximum allowable building area over what is currently allowed. The 7,000 to 8,000 square foot office building envisioned for this parcel was dictated, in part, on the inherent constraints of the property. The lot width of 133 feet is relatively narrow, however the preliminary project plans meet or exceed the minimum requirements for setback distance between the property lines and the building. Access would be provided with a shared driveway serving this lot and the Gateway Four Square Church parcel to the east.

The building is situated perpendicular to Agoura Road and a terraced, full roof design is intended to minimize its presence as viewed from Agoura Road, and to maintain views of the hillside backdrop. Most parking spaces are located under the building (tuck under spaces) or behind the building in order to screen their visibility from Agoura Road. Over 50% of the property is proposed as undisturbed open space or landscaping.

This particular parcel has an average slope of 15%. In 1998, the City amended its hillside ordinance to further control hillside development. According to the City's hillside ordinance, the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) for properties with average slope ranging from 10 to 15 percent is 0.25. Applied to this property, a maximum FAR of 0.25 would yield a maximum building area of approximately 18,000 square feet. Thus, the applicant's development proposal of 17,000 square feet of building area would be within the floor area ratio limitation. In comparison, the existing Warmington Building located immediately to the west is 35,500 square feet in area on a 2.2-acre site which yields a floor area ratio of 0.37. The Warmington Building was constructed prior to adoption of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan and the floor area ratio ordinance.

2. Maximum Allowable Pad Area:

The Specific Plan prescribes maximum allowable pad areas for each parcel. The pad areas include the graded areas necessary to accommodate the building and surface parking areas. The maximum allowable pad area established for this particular parcel is 0.74 acres. In reviewing the site plan submitted by the applicant, it appears that the proposed pad area is approximately 1.05 acres in size. Therefore, a Specific Plan Amendment is required to increase the maximum allowable pad area. While the proposed increase in maximum building area to 17,000 square feet represents over a 112% increase from the 8,000 square foot maximum size, the requested increase in pad area represents a 42% increase.

The subject property is the smallest parcel in the Specific Plan, located adjacent to existing development, and the proposed building pad location is close to Agoura Road, thus similarly sited as the adjacent Warmington Building and the Library-City Hall. Also, unlike many of the remaining vacant parcels in the Specific Plan that are natural and un-graded, it appears that this property was rough graded at one time. Given these factors, a Specific Plan Amendment to increase the building area and pad area may be

reasonable if many of the other development parameters in the Specific Plan and Zoning Ordinance are met. These would include meeting the setback and building height requirements, keeping within the maximum allowable floor area ratio, using innovative siting techniques, minimizing grading, preserving oak trees, and using architectural design techniques such as stepped massing and using natural materials that are in keeping with the hillside environment. Preliminary project design plans are being distributed to the City Council for review with this Pre-Screen Review discussion.

Staff requests that the City Council provide non-binding comments and direction on whether the property owner should proceed with a Specific Plan Amendment. If the applicant proceeds with a Specific Plan Amendment, the request could be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council concurrently with the required Conditional Use Permit to develop on this parcel. The City Council would review the development proposal since legislative action is required for a Specific Plan Amendment.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully requests the City Council provide non-binding comments and direction to the property owner on whether to proceed with a Specific Plan Amendment for his proposed development.

Attachment: Vicinity Map