

DATE ISSUED: October 16, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-200

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Docket of October 21, 2003

SUBJECT: YMCA Friars Road, Conditional Use Permit/Site Development
Permit/MHPA Boundary Line Adjustment Project No. 5501, Council
District 6. Appeal of the Process 4, Planning Commission Approval

REFERENCE: Planning Commission Report No. P-03-205 dated July 31, 2003

OWNER/
APPLICANT: City of San Diego/YMCA of San Diego County

SUMMARY:

Issue - Should the City Council deny the appeal and uphold the Planning Commission's decision to approve the YMCA at Friars Road project?

Manager's Recommendations - Deny the appeal of the Planning Commission action and uphold the approval of the YMCA project by taking the following actions:

1. DENY the appeal and uphold the Planning Commission's decision to approve the project with conditions (Attachments 3 and 4).
2. CERTIFY Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) No. 42-0900 and adopt the Mitigation, Monitoring and Report Program (MMRP).
3. APPROVE Conditional Use Permit No. 8920 (Amending Conditional Use Permit No. 91-0215) including a front setback deviation.
4. APPROVE Site Development Permit No. 22593.
5. APPROVE Multi-Habitat Boundary Line Adjustment No. 22594.

Planning Commission Recommendation - On July 31, 2003, the Planning Commission voted 7-0-0 to unanimously approve the project.

Community Planning Group Recommendation - The Mission Valley Unified Planning Organization voted 15-0-0 to recommend approval of the project on January 8, 2003 (Attachment 5).

Environmental Impact - The City of San Diego as Lead Agency under CEQA has prepared and completed a Mitigated Negative Declaration No. 42-0900 dated July 17, 2003, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Report Program covering this activity.

Fiscal Impact - All costs associated with the processing this project are paid from a deposit account maintained by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact - None with this action.

Housing Affordability Impact - None with this action.

BACKGROUND

The project is an appeal of the Planning Commission's decision to approve a Conditional Use Permit(CUP)/Site Development Permit (SDP) and a Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) Boundary Line Adjustment to allow modifications to the existing YMCA facility located at 5505 Friars Road (Attachment 2). The proposed improvements include building additions, interior renovations and a new parking lot (Attachment 9). Specific project elements are listed below:

1. Construction of 21,571,372 square feet of new building.
2. Renovation of 7,913 square feet of existing buildings.
3. A new 50-meter outdoor swimming pool.
4. Removal of three tennis courts and one in-line hockey rink located within the interior of the site.
5. Relocation of the existing soccer field (currently located adjacent to Friars Road) to the current location of the tennis courts and in-line hockey rink.
6. Removal of the dirt parking lot within the floodway to be replaced with turf areas for outdoor day care activities and vegetative buffer adjacent to the San Diego River.
7. Construction of a new parking lot in the current location of the existing soccer field adjacent to Friars Road.
8. Deviation to allow fencing, light standards and a row of parking spaces within the front setback along Friars Road.

The 8.3-acre site is designated for Public Recreation and Open Space land uses within the Mission Valley Community Plan, and zoned RS-1-1, a residential single-family zone, and OF-1-1, an open space floodplain zone (Attachment 1). The property is not located within the Mission Valley Planned District. The zone boundary lines and land use designation boundary lines are the same and traverse the site. The southerly portion of the site is also located within the floodway (Attachment 6). The floodway boundary line is located within the lower approximate one third of the site (Attachment 17). Surrounding land uses include the San Diego River to the south and west, a substation of the San Diego Police Station across Friars to the north and a five-story, multi-family complex to the east (Attachment 7).

Project History

In 1975, the City Council approved Conditional Use Permit No. 432-PC to allow the construction

of a master plan for an 80,000-square foot recreational facility at the site. This permit was subsequently amended over the years to allow various additions to the facility.

In April of 2002, CUP No. 40-0596 (amending CUP No. 91-0215 - Attachment 8) was approved by the Planning Commission (PC) permitting additions and renovations to the YMCA facility. The proposal was the same as what is before City Council today with the exception of a request to maintain an existing dirt parking lot located within the floodway. The dirt parking lot will be removed with the current project.

In June 2002, the decision of the Planning Commission was appealed to the City Council by the River Valley Preservation Project and the Sierra Club. Issues identified in the appeal were environmental concerns and land use issues. The City Council upheld the appeal and denied the project by a vote of 5-4. During Council deliberation and stated motions for the project, it was noted that the project could not be supported primarily due to the request to maintain the existing parking lot within the floodway, specifically, the inability to make the Site Development Permit's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Findings. As the project was not approved, this application was closed after the project was denied.

In October 2002, permission was administratively granted to relocate the existing soccer field from the front of the site along Friars Road, to the interior of the site.

In November 2002, the project that is before the City Council was re-submitted to the City, however, it was revised to delete the overflow dirt parking lot from the floodway and to replant the area with turf for day camp activities and a vegetative buffer. Additionally, this revised project includes the relocation of this parking to a new parking lot adjacent to Friars Road. The original project (denied at City Council in June 2003) included a front setback deviation for light standards and fencing around the proposed outdoor pool. The revised project includes the same deviation request but also proposes one row of parking spaces within the front setback along Friars Road.

During the July 31, 2003 Planning Commission hearing, numerous speakers, including YMCA patrons, members of the community and a representative of the Mission Valley Unified Planning Organization, testified in support of the project. One individual, Mr. Peugh of the Audubon Society, spoke in opposition to the project. After public testimony, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the project by a vote of 7-0. Subsequent to that hearing, an appeal was filed by the River Valley Preservation Project, the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club (Attachment 14).

DISCUSSION

The project on appeal before City Council today is the same proposal that was denied by City Council in June of 2002. However, the current proposal, excludes a request to maintain an existing dirt parking lot located within the floodway. This existing parking lot would be relocated along Friars Road and the dirt parking lot will be removed and replanted with turfed areas for outdoor day care activities and native vegetation.

The revised project requires the same project actions: A CUP amendment (including a minor deviation to the front setback), an SDP for environmentally sensitive lands, and an MHPA Boundary Line Adjustment. The YMCA leases the site from the City. These actions do not require modifications to the lease.

Existing Facility/Proposed Project:

The current project would implement and modify the master plan for the facility approved by City Council in 1975. Conditional Use Permit No. 432-PC permitted the construction of an 80,000-square-foot recreational facility consisting of offices, pools, lockers and gyms. The current project proposes the two-phased construction of proposed additions and interior renovations that would result in a 57,301 square feet recreational facility.

The existing YMCA facility currently consists of a one-story, 35,730- square-foot building containing fitness rooms, a gymnasium, restrooms, offices and program support areas. An indoor pool and outdoor play area are located within the interior of the site, as well as the three tennis courts and the indoor hockey rink. The existing soccer field abuts Friars Road. An existing paved parking lot with 255 spaces is located along the west portion of the site accessed from an existing driveway.

The project proposes to upgrade the YMCA facility in two phases (Attachment 9 - Project Plans). Phase I includes the demolition of a portion of the existing building and the construction of a two-story addition in the same approximate area to accommodate a fitness room, pool equipment area and administrative office. The addition would total 1,945 square feet net. Phase I also includes the relocation of the existing dirt parking lot out of the floodway to be replaced with turf for the day care camp and an MHPA buffer consisting of native vegetation. A new 140 space parking lot is proposed along Friars Road with access from a new driveway proposed along the east end of the site.

Phase II includes the interior renovation of a 7,913 square foot portion of the existing building which includes restrooms, lockers, and program areas. No functional changes are proposed. A new one-story, 19,626-square-foot, attached addition is proposed to the existing building within the interior of the site. The addition would consist of a community room, program areas, snack bar, fitness rooms, lobby/reception area and program support office areas (Attachment 10 - Summary of Land Uses).

After construction of both phases, the facility would result in the following:

A one and two story structure containing 57,301 square feet (excluding the 8,743-square- foot indoor pool) with 48,543 square feet used for indoor recreational areas and community based services and programs, and 8,758 square feet devoted to program support office areas.

Outdoor recreation areas including the new outdoor 50-meter swimming pool, the relocated soccer field, an existing covered pool, an existing tot lot and outdoor play area with play equipment, and a new day camp activity area for summer camp programs.

Project Issues:

Land Use Consistency

The northern portion of the site is designated Public Recreation and the southern portion within the floodway is designated Open Space in the Mission Valley Community Plan. The Community Plan recommends that a joint use public recreation facility be provided at the site. The recommendation has been implemented by requiring the YMCA to issue single-day use permits at a cost equivalent to similar City facilities. The proposed project is consistent with the community plan by enhancing the recreational opportunities in the area outside of the floodway, and restoring landscaping to an area currently in use as an unpaved parking lot within the floodway (Attachment 11- Mission Valley Community Plan Excerpts).

MHPA Boundary Line Adjustment

Approximately 1.0 acre of the southern portion of the project site is presently a part of the Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA), or preserve area of the City of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea (Attachment 12 - MHPA Boundary Line Adjustment Aerial Photo). The on-site MHPA area is presently comprised of 0.97 acre of disturbed dirt parking and lawn area, 0.03 acre of developed area, 87 square feet of southern willow scrub and 0.03 acre of southern willow scrub canopy. The applicant proposes to adjust the MHPA boundary line by removing the 0.34 acre of disturbed area on-site, and adding 0.45 acre consisting of 0.299 acre disturbed wetland, 0.078 acre of southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest and 0.073 acre southern riparian scrub. The proposed addition is contiguous to the MHPA and owned by the City of San Diego. City staff has determined, with concurrence from the wild life agencies (United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game), that the proposed adjustment would be consistent with the biological resource goals of the City MSCP Subarea Plan and the Final MSCP Plan.

Front Yard Setback Deviation

The project as proposed complies with all relevant regulations of the Land Development Code except for the front yard setback requirements (Attachment 13 - Project Data Sheet). The proposed fencing and light standards at the north end of the 50-meter pool would observe a 13-foot six-inch setback where 25 feet is required. Additionally, 26 parking spaces of the proposed 140-space parking lot would observe a 0'-6" front setback along Friars Road. Staff has determined that the deviation is supported due to physical constraints on the southern portion of the site. The floodway cuts diagonally across the southern half of the property limiting the placement of the pool and parking areas. Locating the pool any further south than proposed, to accommodate the 25-foot requirement, would encroach into this sensitive resource. The proposed new parking lot location takes it out of its current area within the floodway. Landscaped screening areas are proposed as well as a 36 inch high wall next to the parking spaces to screen the lot along Friars Road. The Urban Design Element of the Mission Valley Community Plan encourages parking adjacent to public streets for sites abutting the San Diego River.

Water Quality

The project as proposed complies with the City's Storm Water Standards. The project is deemed a "priority" project based on the Storm Water applicability criteria contained in the Standards. As such, the project is required to use source control, site design and Structural Treatment Best Management Practices (BMP's) for site runoff. The pollutants of concern identified for the project include trash, oil and grease, and sediment. Source control of the storm drainage will include stenciling on the inlet, the trash storage areas will be paved and covered. The site design shall consist of on site detention, vegetated swales and landscape using drought tolerant plant species. Additionally, structural treatment BMP's will consist of hydrodynamic separators which are highly effective at reducing these pollutants in the runoff. In accordance with the City's Storm Water Standards, the treatment BMP's will be sized to accommodate the maximum runoff generated from the 85th-percentile storm event. Additionally, the project proposes the use of pervious concrete pavement. This pavement will reduce the amount of site runoff by promoting infiltration. The applicant will be required to enter into a maintenance agreement with the City for the treatment BMP's. Construction phase best management practices will be outlined in a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) which will be prepared to the satisfaction of the City Engineer prior to the issuance of a construction permit.

Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)

Subsequent to the Planning Commission Hearing, staff received additional information regarding the location of the floodway boundary line at the subject site. Upon further review of the Flood Insurance Rate Map Number 06073C1614 F dated November 2002, it has been determined that the revised floodway boundary at the project location is now located closer to the San Diego River. This had the effect of lessening the amount of the project site included within the floodway. As a result the proposed buildings are now located approximately 50 to 70 feet away from the floodway as compared to the approximately 20 to 25 feet as shown on the exhibits approved by the Planning Commission.

With respect to Environmentally Sensitive Land regulations for development within the floodway, the project was conditioned using the June 19, 1997 floodway boundary. This is a more conservative analysis of the potential impacts of the project to a major flood event.

The proposed project is located entirely within a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) "flood plain" of the San Diego River. All of the proposed structures and modifications to existing structures are located in the flood fringe of the SFHA and have been conditioned to be elevated or flood proofed to two feet above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE). Most of the grading will also be performed in the flood fringe, however some minor grading is proposed for a fire lane in the floodway. This work has been conditioned to be constructed so that there is no increase to the BFE as a result of encroachment into the floodway. The engineer of work must provide a No Rise Certificate verifying the encroachment has no impact on flood levels.

APPEAL

On August 14, 2003, the project was appealed by Randy Berkman of the River Valley Preservation Project, James Peugh of the San Diego Audubon Society, and Eric Bowlby of the

Sierra Club. The appellants listed several items for the appeal, primarily indicating that the project lacked consistency with the Community Plan and the zoning for the site, that there was a predominance of “non-recreational” uses versus “recreational uses” being proposed, and concerns were listed about floodplain and other environmental issues. A detailed response to each issue identified in the appeal is contained in Attachment 14.

Staff have reviewed the appeal issues and believes that the project as proposed does not adversely affect the community plan, is consistent with all relevant regulations of the underlying zoning, including all floodplain and environmentally sensitive lands regulations. Only one deviation to the front setback is proposed. Further, staff’s analysis of all of the proposed and existing uses on the site conclude that the YMCA at Friars Road is a public recreational, community serving facility with program support areas, and parking lots, necessary and incidental to this primary function.

CONCLUSION

The Mission Valley YMCA has been an established facility since 1981, providing a variety of recreational and community based programs to a wide segment of the population including day care, fitness programs, and other community services. The project is consistent with the zoning for the site and the land use designations of the Mission Valley Community Plan. The project implements several goals and objectives of the community plan.

The plan specifically recommends that a recreation facility be provided at this site. The Cultural and Heritage Resource Element of the community plan identified the YMCA as a “new facility..that will serve as a community activity center for West Mission Valley because of its facilities such as a gymnasium, arts and crafts rooms, meeting rooms and outdoor play facilities...designed to appeal to youth and adults....”

The Open Space element of the community plan states that projects should preserve and protect the natural features of the community. Recreational uses are identified as compatible land uses within the floodway. The proposed project would be constructed within the interior of the site in areas currently improved with hardscape features and landscaped areas. The lower portion of the site located within the special flood hazard area, would be replanted with native vegetation and turf for outdoor play areas. An MHPA boundary line adjustment and the required vegetative wetland buffer, would be established adjacent to the existing parking lot, therefore, the proposal would serve to enhance and protect existing sensitive resources as called for in the Community Plan.

The Urban Design Element of the community plan identifies several mechanisms to ensure sensitive development adjacent to the San Diego River. The Progress Guide and General Plan states that “lands included in floodplains and steep hillsides...should be permitted to develop consistent with the appropriate zoning that is applied to them...and...the purpose and intent of regulating floodplains is to control land use and development in a manner that protects the public health, safety, and general welfare.” Therefore, staff recommends that the City Council deny the appeal and uphold the Planning Commission’s decision to approve the project.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the appeal and deny the project.
2. Uphold the Planning Commission's decision and approve the project with modifications.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina P. Christiansen, AIA.....	Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
Development Services Director	Assistant City Manager

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CHRISTIANSEN:MED

Note: The attachments are not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments:.. ..

- 1.Community Plan Land Use Map
- 2.Project Location Map
- 3.Draft CUP/SDP Permit
- 4.Draft CUP/SDP Resolution5. Mission Valley Unified Planning Organization
- 6.Zone Boundary Map
- 7.Aerial Photo of Surrounding Development
- 8.CUP 91 -0215 Permit /Resolution
- 9.Project Plans
- 10.Summary of Land Uses
- 11.Mission Valley Community Plan Excerpts
- 12.MHPA Boundary Adjustment Aerial Photo
- 13.Project Data Sheet
- 14.Appeal Issues/Staff Responses
- 15.California Regional Water Quality Control Board letter dated 8/1/03
- 16.California Regional Water Quality Control Board letter dated 10/6/03
- 17.Floodway Boundary Line