

DATE ISSUED: December 3, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-246

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Docket of December 9, 2003

SUBJECT: SAINT AUGUSTINE HIGH SCHOOL MASTER PLAN,
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT/SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT,
PROJECT NO. 4869, COUNCIL DISTRICT THREE, PROCESS 5.

REFERENCE: Planning Report No. P-03-315

OWNER/
APPLICANT: Saint Augustine School of San Diego

SUMMARY

Issues - 1) Should the City Council approve a Conditional Use Permit and Planned Development Permit for a three-phase campus master plan and the abandonment of existing utility easements for the St. Augustine High School located at 3266 Nutmeg Street in the Greater North Park community?

Staff's Recommendation -

1. Recommend that the City Council CERTIFY Mitigated Negative Declaration No. 4869 and ADOPT the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program; and
2. Recommend that the City Council APPROVE an application for Conditional Use Permit No. 8110 for a phased campus master plan; and
3. Recommend that the City Council APPROVE Planned Development Permit No. 34245 to allow deviations to the maximum permitted height in the RS-1-7 Zone.
4. Recommend that the City Council APPROVE Easement Abandonment No. 44655

Planning Commission Recommendation - On October 30, 2003, the Planning Commission voted 5-1 (Commissioner Chase voting nay/Commissioner Schultz absent) to recommend that the City Council Approve the project. The motion to recommend approval of the project included the addition of a permit condition prohibiting all construction activity on Sundays. The condition was accepted by the applicant and included in the draft Planned Development Permit No. 34245 (Condition No.12)

Community Planning Group Recommendation - On August 19, 2003, The Greater North Park Community Planning Group voted 11-1-0 to recommend approval of the proposed project. The motion included a statement encouraging the school to continue a dialogue with the neighbors and look for ways to address additional parking needs in the future.

Environmental Review -The City of San Diego conducted an Initial Study which determined that the proposed project could have a significant environmental effect on paleontological resources. Specific mitigation measures have been identified in Section V of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (No. 4869) which would reduce impacts to paleontological resources to below a level significance.

Fiscal Impact - All the cost associated with processing this application is paid for by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact - None.

Housing Impact Statement - The proposed 7.5-acre site is designated for institutional use in the Greater North Park Community Plan. Although the community plan does not designate this site for residential development, the underlying zone of RS-1-7 does permit single-family residential development with a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet. Based on the most compatible land use density in the community plan, Low-Residential development at 5 to 10 dwelling units per acre, the proposed site could potentially accommodate between 38 to 75 dwelling units.

Water Quality Impact Statement - The project is classified as a priority project as defined by the City Storm Water Standards. The project is required to comply with the State Water Resources Control Board Order No.92-08-DWQ (NPDES General Permit No. CAS0000002). The post development Best Management Practices (BMPs) incorporated into the project consists of site design, source control and treatment. The majority of the site is currently drained by a series of area drains, which connect to the public storm drain system. The redevelopment of the site will retain the existing runoff characteristics. Building density has been increased. However, due to the use of underground parking, the total impervious surface area will be reduced. Inlets and area drains will incorporate catch baskets and filtration devices.

PROJECT SETTING

The project is located at 3266 Nutmeg Street in the Greater North Park Community Plan Area. The Community Plan designates the 7.51-acre site for public/institutional land use. The underlying zone is RS-1-7 with a density range between 5-10 dwelling units per acre. The site is comprised of two square city blocks bounded by Palm Street to the north, 32nd Street to the west, Nutmeg Street to the south and 33rd Street to the east and includes a portion of Bancroft Street that was vacated in 1990. The site is surrounded on all sides by single-family residential development and a few previously conforming multi-family units (duplexes) along 33rd Street. McKinley Elementary School is located one block east of the project site.

BACKGROUND

The Saint Augustine High School officially opened at its current location on September 4, 1923, with a total enrollment of 59 students. In the ensuing decades, Saint Augustine has grown and become an integral part of the North Park community. The High School now has an annual enrollment of 700 students. The campus was expanded twice in the postwar era, once in 1947 with the addition of four new classrooms, and again in 1953 with six additional classrooms and a 16-room addition to the priory. The current campus facilities essentially consist of the five main buildings that were developed in the 1920s, and the expansion of the late 1940s/early 1950s. The earlier structures were designed in the Spanish Mission Revival style, while the later building additions adopted the utilitarian/modern style of the period. The structures have been modified to some extent in order to facilitate modernization, maintenance and the increase in student population, however, the complex of five buildings is relatively distinct and intact. The structures were developed in conformance with the regulations that were in effect, however, a Conditional Use Permit to operate a school within a residential zone was not required at that time. The proposed development would not alter the structure or exterior of Vasey Hall or the adjacent priory (monastery), portions of which have been determined to be architecturally significant.

DISCUSSION

Project Description

Saint Augustine High School has been a historical presence in the North Park community for eighty years and, with the exception of the more recent Bancroft Street vacation, the campus has not been significantly altered or expanded since 1953. The master plan proposes a substantial remodel of the campus that would ultimately provide new classroom and educational facilities, administrative offices, a new gymnasium and sports field complex, landscaping and 145 new subterranean off-street parking spaces. The project would be implemented in three phases over a period of approximately ten to fifteen years to allow the continued operation of the school during construction.

The phased redevelopment of the 7.48-acre site requires a Conditional Use Permit to allow the

previously conforming use of the site as an educational institution to operate within a residential zone, and to allow the master plan to be implemented in three phases over the next several years without additional discretionary action. The project is requesting a Planned Development Permit to allow the new classroom structures and the new gymnasium to deviate from the development regulations of the underlying residential zone. The requested deviations for the proposed classrooms and gymnasium include encroachments into the required yard setbacks and exceeding the maximum 30 foot height limit.

The project also requires the abandonment of existing water and sewer easements within the previously vacated portion of Bancroft Street at the center of the campus. The utilities serve only the Saint Augustine site therefore, are required to be private services. The proposed easement abandonments require that the application be considered in accordance with a Process Five City Council decision.

Project Analysis

The proposed project design is modern institutional in most aspects with an attempt to draw architectural elements from the historical campus structures and the older stately homes in the surrounding neighborhood. The two-story and three-story classroom structures employ a stucco finish and tile roof accents with a tower element at the corner of 32nd Street and Nutmeg. The building design features arched doorways and windows including patio areas with stuccoed columns and overhead trellises incorporating desirable elements of Vasey Hall and the priory. The two classroom structures are connected with a second-story pedestrian bridge. The new gymnasium would also feature a stucco finish, tile accents, and arched entrances and window trim to match the classroom structures. The proposed design effectively incorporates the new structures with the campus buildings that will remain. The site plan provides active and passive open space areas throughout the site with an emphasis on directing student activity towards the center of the campus. The project design includes new fencing, street trees and screening materials along most of the project frontage.

Height Deviations

The project is requesting deviations to the 30 foot maximum height limit established by the underlying single-family zone. The proposed height deviations include both of the classroom structures and the gymnasium. The two-story classroom building closest to the street is approximately 38 feet above the street grade, while the tower element associated with this building at the corner of 32nd Street and Nutmeg Street is approximately 44 feet high. The three-story classroom is generally 44 feet tall with an elevator parapet extending the maximum height of the structure to 49 feet above street level. The proposed gymnasium features a curved roof element with a height of 37 feet at the lower edge fronting the street and 48 feet at the upper edge which is interior to the campus. City staff believes the requested deviations to the 30-foot height limit for the classroom buildings enhances the overall design of the project and maximizes the use of the structures, thereby reducing the need for additional building coverage on the site. The deviation for the height of the gymnasium is essential to provide a useable building for athletics. The deviations are considered minimal based on the overall size of the site and suitable for this location based on the institutional use of the property as a high school. However, neighbors in

nearby proximity to the classroom structures are opposed to the deviation for height and consider the height excessive when compared to the existing structures in the area. Staff acknowledges that the heights of the proposed structures are notably higher than the residential development in the neighborhood, but believe the design is consistent with the use of the property as a school and therefore, are an acceptable deviation to the residential development regulations. Staff believes that granting the requested deviation to the height limit would not have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Yard Encroachment

The project is also requesting deviations to encroach into the established setbacks for the street and street side yards on 32nd Street and Nutmeg Street. Like the height limit, the regulations establishing minimum setbacks from the property lines are based on the underlying single-family residential zone rather than tailored to the actual institutional use. Staff believes that the requested encroachments allow for a better overall design of the project by facilitating additional underground parking utilizing the existing grade, and by allowing the structures to be sited in a fashion that reduces the bulk of the building as viewed from the street. The encroachment on 32nd Street allows the two-story classroom to be constructed over existing parking and to take advantage of the grade at the corner of the site. While the encroachment of the three-story classroom on Nutmeg allows the building to be sited at an angle away from the street rather than parallel to the frontage, thereby somewhat reducing the bulk of the structure as viewed from the street.

Fence Height

The final deviation is a request to exceed the maximum six-foot fence height at the property line. The deviation would allow for taller fences around the perimeter of the athletic fields and the basketball court consistent with the use of those areas. The design of the fence is compatible with the architecture of the campus and includes stucco columns and wrought iron fencing with arches. The existing chain link fence exceeds the height limit and has not been an issue of the project. Staff recognizes the need for taller fences based on the use of the site and supports the proposed deviation.

Phasing Plan

Phase 1 would involve the demolition of existing temporary classroom facilities, Sheehan Hall and Sullivan Hall, and the abandonment of existing utility easements. Phase 1 construction would include two new classroom structures totaling 39,893 square feet and 57 subterranean parking spaces. Temporary parking (43 spaces) and a temporary athletic field would be constructed on the site of the demolished buildings along 32nd Street and portions of Vasey Hall would be converted to alternative uses. Phase 2 would include the demolition of the Dougherty Gymnasium and a small food service/bookstore structure. Phase 2 construction would primarily consist of a new 35,517-square-foot multi-purpose gymnasium. Phase 3 would include the construction of a new athletic field and track, a secondary athletic field and 88 subterranean off-street parking spaces.

Grading is required for each of the proposed phases, the majority of which is required for the underground parking structures. Phase 1 grading would be a balanced cut/fill of 8,820 cubic yards with cut slopes to a maximum height of five-feet and approximately 700 linear feet of retaining wall. Phase 2 would require a maximum excavation depth of 12-feet resulting in 4,327 cubic yards of soil that would be exported from the site. Phase 2 grading would result in a maximum cut slope height of five-feet and an additional 66 linear feet of retaining wall. Phase 3 grading to accommodate the majority of the subterranean parking would include an excavation depth of 20-feet and the off site exportation of approximately 28,950 cubic yards of material. The maximum cut slope height in Phase 3 would also be five-feet, and a final 1,410 linear feet of retaining wall up to 20 feet in height would also be constructed.

Traffic

Historically, the main issue surrounding the development of the site has been the traffic activity associated with the use of the property as a high school within a predominately single-family residential zone. The proposed master plan would not result in an increase of traffic as the student enrollment will be capped at the present level of 700 students. The project addresses traffic circulation within the school vicinity, driveway access and the recommended 32nd Street improvements within the Greater North Park Community Plan. The community plan recommends that 32nd Street be classified as a two lane collector to accommodate the projected (year 2005) traffic volume of 7,000 Average Daily Trips (ADT). A cross section of a standard two lane collector would include 36 feet of pavement width within a 56-foot-wide right-of-way and allow parking on both sides. The existing street configuration of 32nd Street consists of 30 feet of pavement and parking limited to one side. The school would be required to dedicate three-feet (half) of the required right-of-way and install standard street improvements per the City's Street Design Manual. However, this isolated widening would not result in the recommended 36-foot pavement width and parking would still be limited to one side of 32nd Street. The existing 30-foot pavement width along 32nd Street is consistent through out the blocks surrounding the project site and parking is restricted to one side of the street in this area. The street currently carries about half of the projected traffic volume identified in the community plan and is only expected to have a small increase in traffic because the single-family neighborhood is, for the most part, fully developed. Staff analysis has concluded that an isolated widening of three feet along the project frontage at 32nd Street would not significantly improve traffic capacity nor accommodate additional on-street parking. Therefore, the project would not be required to expand the pavement width along 32nd Street.

The staff also analyzed traffic issues associated with the proposed 33rd Street access to the new parking garage. Once the project is complete, a future traffic volume of 680 daily trips would account for trips to and from the 88 space garage. The traffic volume along 33rd Street takes into consideration the anticipated change in traffic circulation resulting from the proposed increase of off-street parking and improvements to vehicular access points. Analysis of the proposed access has demonstrated that traffic flow on 33rd Street would be improved compared to the existing traffic volume of 846 ADTs. The parking garage has been designed to include off-street stacking lanes for 14 cars so there is no queuing anticipated to occur along 33rd Street as a result of the garage access location.

Additional traffic improvements include expanding the existing drop-off/pick-up zone located on Nutmeg Street and converting an existing driveway to accommodate fire truck access. These improvements are anticipated to improve vehicle conflicts between cars pulling in and out of the drop off area and cars making u-turns at the existing driveway entrance. In total, the proposed improvements will increase off-street parking thereby reducing the current on-street parking demand and improve traffic circulation during peak hours by reducing the number of drivers circulating the campus searching for available on-street parking.

Conclusion

The Saint Augustine High School project would allow the sequential redevelopment of the existing campus to expand and modernize the educational facilities. The proposed master plan would be implemented in three phases over an approximate ten to fifteen year period. The use of the site as a private high school is consistent with the institutional designation in the community plan and the Conditional Use Permit would allow conditions to be placed on the use to ensure it remains, to the extent possible, compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed project would benefit the surrounding area by improving traffic circulation, providing 145 off-street parking spaces and improving the visual quality of the campus.

Staff has reviewed the project including the requested deviations and determined the encroachments, height limit exception and fencing are consistent with the institutional use of the property. The City of San Diego Planning Commission reviewed the project and considered public testimony and recommends that the City Council approve the project. The Greater North Park Community Planning Committee reviewed the proposed master plan and recommended approval of the project. A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for the project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and includes a Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program to protect paleontological resources potentially located on the site. Therefore, staff believes all of the appropriate findings to approve the Conditional Use Permit, Planned Development Permit and Easement Abandonment can be affirmed.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1.....Approve Conditional Use Permit No. 8110 and Planned Development Permit No. 34245 and Easement Abandonment No. 44655 with modifications.
- 2.....Deny Conditional Use Permit No. 8110 and Planned Development Permit No. 34245 and Easement Abandonment No. 44655, if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina P. Christiansen, A.I.A.
Development Services Director

Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
Assistant City Manager

CHRISTIANSEN/JPH

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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.....Project Data Sheet

.....4.....Project Site Plans

.....5.....Building Elevations

.....6.....Landscape Plan

.....7.....Site Cross Sections

.....8.....Draft Permit with Conditions

.....9.....Draft Resolution with Findings (Supporting Recommendation)

.....10.....Ownership Disclosure

.....11.....Community Planning Group Recommendation