

DATE ISSUED: April 29, 2004

REPORT NO. 04-092

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing
Agenda of May 5, 2004

SUBJECT: Potential Reuse of Publicly-Owned Property for Affordable
Housing

REFERENCE: Affordable Housing Task Force Report

SUMMARY

Issue- What is the potential for developing affordable housing on vacant or underdeveloped public lands in San Diego?

Manager's Recommendation – 1) Direct the Real Estate Assets department and the San Diego Housing Commission (hereafter referred to as the Housing Commission) to determine the feasibility of using City-owned sites identified in this report for development of affordable housing. 2) Direct the Housing Commission to continue working with local school districts to identify a mutually beneficial strategy for developing housing on suitable vacant or underutilized school property.

Other Recommendation – The Affordable Housing Task Force recommended that staff be directed to evaluate surplus public lands that are vacant and underdeveloped for the creation of affordable housing.

Land Use and Housing Committee Recommendation – On October 1, 2003, the Land Use and Housing Committee directed staff to evaluate surplus public lands that are vacant and undeveloped for the creation of affordable housing.

Housing Affordability Impact – None with this action. The purpose of the recommendations in this report is to expand the City's supply of affordable housing.

BACKGROUND

As one approach to addressing San Diego's chronic housing shortage, the Affordable Housing Task Force recommended that the City analyze vacant and underutilized publicly owned properties to determine their potential use for affordable housing development. In this instance, the reference to "affordable housing" was not to any particular price level or target group, but rather to relatively affordable units, primarily multi-family, that could be constructed on publicly owned parcels.

The task force specifically recommended that several parcels be analyzed including the Rose Canyon and Chollas maintenance yards and Montgomery Field. These sites were analyzed and determined to be unsuitable or unavailable for residential development for a variety of reasons including need to retain existing public uses, legal restrictions and environmental constraints. On October 1, 2003, the Land Use and Housing Committee rejected the concept of converting the maintenance yards or Montgomery Field to housing uses. Concurrently, they directed staff to more comprehensively evaluate other vacant public lands to determine their potential to accommodate additional housing.

DISCUSSION

The Planning Department has completed an analysis of vacant publicly owned properties of one-half acre or greater that are designated for residential use and of properties of one acre or greater that are not designated for residential use or open space. A list of properties with these characteristics was generated and 320 sites were analyzed (see Attachment 1). The vast majority of these were determined to be unsuitable for residential development due to a variety of factors. Many of the sites were designated for park uses. Others were located on steep terrain, wetlands, riparian areas, adjacent to airport runways, in industrial areas or in other locations that would be too noisy and dangerous for residential development. Other sites were too small and/or oddly shaped to support residential development.

Twelve City-owned sites were identified that could potentially accommodate some residential development (see Attachment 2). However, only two of these are large enough (over two acres) to accommodate a significant number of homes. Some of the others might be suitable for small-scale development. In addition to the small list of sites discussed above, there are some vacant City-owned sites throughout the City that are designated for open space. A few of these may be remainder parcels that have limited open space value and may be suitable for housing.

Local school districts or community college districts own most of the larger sites that were found to be suitable for residential development. (See Attachment 3.) Most of the twelve school district-owned sites identified are flat or gently sloped sites located in residential neighborhoods. Many of these have been held for possible school development in the event of increased enrollment in nearby schools. However, in a number of instances, the school districts that own these sites may have determined that

they are unlikely to ever be needed for school use. The Housing Commission is working with the San Diego Unified School District to try to create an opportunity for housing development on at least two of the sites.

If a determination is made that housing development on some of these sites should be pursued, there are several options that the City could pursue. Possibilities include long-term lease of City property to a housing developer; sale of City property to a housing developer, direct development of housing by the City (Housing Commission); or sale of City-owned property to raise funds for housing. The Southeastern Economic Development Corporation is examining the possibility of housing development on three City-owned sites. Selection of any alternative method of proceeding and selection of any specific sites would occur only after community input and review.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

- 1) The Real Estate Assets department and Housing Commission should be directed to prepare further analysis of the development feasibility of the identified City-owned sites and return in 6 months for further direction on proceeding with a development strategy.
- 2) The Housing Commission should be directed to return in 6 months to report on its work with the San Diego Unified School District and other school districts to develop housing on school property.
- 3) Direction should be given to staff regarding whether the issue of redesignating any open space designated areas for housing should be reconsidered.

Respectfully submitted,

S. Gail Goldberg, A.I.C.P.
Director
Planning Department

Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
City Manager

CLEMENTSON/LEVIN

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

Attachments: 1. List of computer generated sites analyzed
2. List of sites suggested for further analysis