



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2005
AGENDA ITEMS C4 & C5

LOCATION:	110 Linfield Drive and 175 Linfield Drive	APPLICANT:	110 Linfield Project, LLC and HMH Engineers
EXISTING USE:	Office	PROPERTY OWNERS:	Richard Burge et. al. and CFC Trust
PROPOSED USE:	Residential	APPLICATION:	General Plan Amendment, Rezoning, Conditional Development Permit, Tentative Subdivision Map and Environmental Review
EXISTING ZONING:	C-1 (Administrative and Professional, Restrictive)		
PROPOSED ZONING:	R-3-X (Apartment – Conditional Development)		

PROPOSAL

The applicants are proposing to demolish two office buildings totaling approximately 56,000 square feet located at 110 Linfield Drive and 175 Linfield Drive and to construct a total of 56 residential units on the two properties. The proposal requires the approval of the following requests:

- 1) **General Plan Amendment:** Change from Professional and Administrative Offices land use designation to Medium Density Residential land use designation;
- 2) **Rezoning:** Change from C-1 (Administrative and Professional District, Restrictive) to R-3-X (Apartment – Conditional Development District);
- 3) **Conditional Development Permit:** Establish specific development regulations and review architectural designs at each site;
- 4) **Tentative Subdivision Maps:** Create 22 lots and associated common areas at 110 Linfield Drive and create 34 lots and associated common areas at 175 Linfield Drive;

- 5) **Heritage Tree Permit:** Remove 50 heritage trees, relocate 1 heritage tree and plant 73 new trees that can reach heritage tree status; and
- 6) **Environmental Review** of the proposed project in the form of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

The proposal requires review and recommendations by the Planning Commission on the General Plan Amendment, Rezoning, Conditional Development Permit, Tentative Subdivision Maps, and EIR. The City Council is the final-decision-making body on these applications. The City Council will also consider the recommendations of the Environmental Quality Commission in regard to the proposed heritage tree removals and the Housing Commission in regard to the Below Market Rate Housing proposal.

BACKGROUND

The proposal to demolish the existing office buildings at 110 and 175 Linfield Drive has been contemplated since 2002. On August 27, 2002, the City Council held a study session and expressed support for the proposed land use change subject to the project going through the necessary review process to address specific issues. The proposed project was then reviewed at a series of public meetings in February and March 2003, including a Planning Commission Study Session on March 3, 2003 and a City Council Meeting on March 24, 2003. The Planning Commission indicated general support for the proposed land use change and provided individual comments to the applicant on specific elements of the proposal. The Council re-confirmed its support for the proposed land use change subject to the project addressing specific issues through the review process.

In May 2003 the preliminary results of the traffic study prepared for the project indicated that the proposed conversion could result in potentially significant impacts according to the City adopted Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) Guidelines. The project proponents ultimately decided to prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). On October 23, 2003, the City Council authorized the City Manager to enter into contracts with Impact Sciences, Inc. and DKS Associates to prepare the EIR. During this time period, the project sponsors changed from one entity that controlled both properties to two separate applicants that agreed to work together on one EIR that covered the impacts of each property.

During the summer of 2004, the applicants considered all of the feedback received on the project and decided to redesign the overall site layout and individual structures to create better on-site circulation, increased buffers from adjacent commercial properties and increased common open space. The applicants submitted revised project plans in January 2005, and these plans are the subject of review in the Draft EIR that was circulated on August 22, 2005. The project no longer involves the abandonment of portions of Linfield Drive and Homewood Place, but continues to include a proposal to narrow the paved roadway of Linfield Drive. The ultimate configuration of the Linfield Drive roadway will be determined through a separate process that the City Council

authorized related to the comprehensive traffic study being prepared for 321 Middlefield Road, 8 Homewood Place and 75 Willow Road. For the September 12, 2005 Planning Commission meeting, the applicants have submitted updated plans that reflect feedback they received since the January 2005 submittal. The applicants intend to revise the project plans to incorporate feedback from the Planning Commission and to address storm drainage requirements.

The Environmental Quality Commission and Housing Commission have reviewed the project on multiple occasions. On July 25, 2005, the Environmental Quality Commission recommended approval of the proposed heritage tree removals subject to further refinement to the planting plans to reduce the total number of new trees to be planted and increase the number of tree species that would grow to a minimum height of 30 feet. On August 15, 2005, the Housing Commission recommended approval of the proposed Below Market Rate Housing Program subject to changes in which units were being designated as the BMR units and which were subject to payment of the in lieu fee. The applicants have incorporated the changes requested by the Environmental Quality Commission and Housing Commission into the attached project plans.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of the September 12, 2005 public hearing on this proposal is to give both the public and the Planning Commission an opportunity to comment both on the nature of the project itself, as well as on the Draft EIR that has been prepared for the project. Therefore, this staff report contains both a general description of the project and a summary of the issues discussed in the Draft EIR. A second Planning Commission meeting will be scheduled at a later date, and it is at that meeting that the Commission will provide a recommendation on the project to the City Council.

The property at 110 Linfield Drive and was most recently leased to the General Services Administration and occupied by the United States Geological Survey. The property is developed with an approximately 17,500-square-foot building. The proposal includes the demolition of the office building and the construction of 22 single-family residences on individual lots plus common areas. Three of the residences would be Below Market Rate (BMR) housing units.

The property at 175 Linfield Drive is the former headquarters of Consolidated Freightways Shipping Company, an entity now referred to as CFC Trust. The property is developed with an approximately 38,000-square-foot office building that is currently unoccupied. The proposal includes the demolition of the existing office building and the construction of 36 single-family residences on individual lots plus common areas. Five of the residences would be Below Market Rate (BMR) housing units.

The 56 residential units range in size from 1,655 square feet to 1,950 square feet, exclusive of the two-car garages, which range in size from 409 to 450 square feet. There are three primary floor plans, with variations of two of the three floor plans. Thirty-four of the floor plans include a third-story element comprised of a bedroom and a bathroom. The maximum height of the structures range from approximately 25 feet 4

inches to 36 feet 7 inches measured from finished grade. Guest parking is provided at a rate of approximately one space for every three units.

The proposed project would require changes to the General Plan and the Zoning Map for each property. For each property, the existing General Plan designation is Professional and Administrative Offices and the zoning is C-1 (Administrative and Professional District, Restrictive). The applicants are proposing to change the General Plan designation to Medium Density Residential and change the underlying zoning classification to R-3 (Apartment District) to be consistent with the designation and classification of the adjacent residential properties along Waverley Street. The proposal includes the use of the “X” (conditional development) zoning designation in order to consider alternative development standards as described below.

The following table provides the density, floor area ratio and percentages of building coverage, paving and landscaping compared to the requirements of the underlying R-3 zoning district.

Density, FAR, Building Coverage, Paving and Landscaping Comparisons

	110 Linfield Drive	175 Linfield Drive	Maximum Allowed in R-3 District
Density (dwelling unit per acre)	10.6 du/ac	10.3 du/ac	18.5 du/ac
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	43%	43%	45%
Coverage	26%	25%	30%
Paving	19%	25%	20%
Landscaping	55%	50%	50%

Note: All calculations are based on the gross land area of each site.

The table indicates that the project will be within the standard R-3 requirements for all items except for the amount of paving at the 175 Linfield Drive site. The request for increased paving at the 175 Linfield Drive site is a result of the improved circulation system. The increase in paving is counterbalanced by a decrease in lot coverage by a corresponding five percent.

Through the Conditional Development zoning and permit process, the applicant at 175 Linfield Drive is requesting an exception to the maximum allowed paving. In addition, both applicants are requesting exceptions to the following Zoning Ordinance requirements:

- Decrease in minimum lot area and dimension requirements;
- Decrease in the minimum setbacks from property lines and buildings;
- Increase in maximum building height for select three story units; and

- Decrease in the minimum interior garage dimensions.

The following table provides the lot sizes, setbacks, heights and garage dimensions compared to the requirements of the underlying R-3 zoning district.

Lot Size, Setback, Height, and Garage Dimension Comparisons

	110 Linfield Drive	175 Linfield Drive	R-3 District Requirement
Lot Area	2,250 sf	2,212 sf	7,000 sf min.
Lot Width	30 ft.	30 ft.	70 ft. min.
Lot Depth	75 ft.	73 ft.	100 ft. min.
Setbacks			
Front	9.5 ft.	7.5 ft.	20 ft. min.
Rear	4 ft.	4 ft.	15 ft. min.
Side	4 ft.	4 ft.	10 ft. min.
Side	4 ft.	4 ft.	10 ft. min.
Between buildings	8 ft.	8 ft.	20 ft. min.
Height	36 ft. 7 in.	36 ft. 7 in.	35 ft. max.
Garage Dimensions	Encroachments of up to 2 feet for water heaters and stair landings		10 ft. by 20 ft. interior clear
Note: The listings for each site reflect the extreme condition (minimum or maximum).			

The Planning Commission and City Council will consider these requests in evaluating the overall merits of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared for this project, and was released for public comment on August 22, 2005. The public comment period for the Draft EIR will end at the close of the business day on September 20, 2005. All verbal and written comments received at the meeting will be responded to in the Final EIR, which will be prepared following the close of the review period. The Planning Commission will review the Final EIR as part of the Commission's recommendation to the City Council on the project.

The Draft EIR analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the project on focused impact areas. The Draft EIR, through the Initial Study, determined that the project would have a less-than-significant impact without the need for mitigation on the following impact areas: land use and planning, population and housing, energy and mineral resources, public services, utilities and service systems, and recreation. For most of the remaining environmental impact areas, including, geologic problems, water, air quality, biological resources, hazards, noise, and cultural resources, the Draft EIR, including the Initial Study, concluded that the project would have a less-than-significant impact with the adoption of specific mitigation measures. Most of these mitigation measures are typical and often included with larger development projects. A complete list of these mitigation measures is included in the *Executive Summary* of the Draft EIR

on pages 2.0-3 through 2.0-10. These mitigation measures would be included as conditions of approval for the project.

One proposed mitigation measure is project specific and relates to the intersection of Alma Street and Ravenswood Avenue. The project has the potential to degrade the level of service at the intersection during the AM peak. The Draft EIR includes a mitigation measure that would prohibit left turns from Alma Street to Ravenswood Avenue during the AM peak (7 a.m. to 9 a.m.) similar to the current prohibition that exists during the PM peak (4 p.m. to 6 p.m.).

The Draft EIR found that two of the environmental impact areas would have significant unavoidable impacts as a result of the project. These are aesthetics and transportation and are explained in more detail below.

Aesthetics

The Draft EIR concludes that the proposed project and the project's contribution to cumulative tree removals would result in significant unavoidable impacts to scenic resources due to the removal of 50 heritage trees. The City's requirements for removing heritage trees require the replanting of suitable trees, but the trees will be small and will take a number of years to grow to sizes comparable to the trees slated for removal. The Draft EIR concludes that there are no feasible mitigation measures to address this impact.

Transportation

The transportation analysis considered impacts to signalized and unsignalized intersections, roadway segments, transit, bicycle and pedestrian access, and site access, circulation and parking. The analysis was based on a 59-unit residential development and assumed no trips from the previous uses. As such, the analysis is a conservative estimate of the project's potential traffic impacts.

The Draft EIR concluded that the project and the project's contribution to cumulative impacts would be significant at the intersection of El Camino Real and Ravenswood Avenue in the AM peak in the project conditions and both AM and PM peaks under the cumulative conditions. The Draft EIR proposes a mitigation measure that would require widening and re-striping of the intersection. Due to the fact that the mitigation measure is unfunded and requires Caltrans approval, the impact remains significant.

The Draft EIR also concluded that the project and the project's contribution to the cumulative impacts would be significant on the following five segments of roadways due to increases in projected traffic volumes compared to existing conditions:

- Linfield Drive from the project sites to Middlefield Road;
- Linfield Drive from the project sites to Waverley Street;
- Waverley Street from Linfield Drive to Laurel Street;
- Ravenswood Avenue from El Camino Real to Alma Street; and

- Willow Road from Middlefield Road to US 101.

The City's significance criteria are based on the projected increase in daily traffic volume, therefore significant impacts cannot be mitigated through physical roadway improvements. Measures to reduce actual volumes could have secondary impacts on other roadways. The only mitigation available would be to reduce the project size to three residential units, which as noted in the *Alternatives* chapter of the Draft EIR, would not be considered a feasible mitigation. The Draft EIR concludes that the impacts to five local street segments would be significant and unavoidable.

Correspondence

The City issued a Notice of Preparation of the EIR and received comments from five agencies and 14 members of the public. The letters are included in Appendix 1.0 of the EIR. The letters raised issues related to such items as traffic, visual impacts associated with heritage tree removals, and school impacts. The first two items are covered in detail in the Draft EIR. The impacts to schools were not discussed further in the Draft EIR because the Initial Study indicates the City's limited ability to deem school impacts an environmental impact according to State Government Code 65996.

Since the release of the Draft EIR, the City has received one comment letter. The letter (Attachment D) is from the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain) and expresses its belief that the project has the potential for a significant impact to rail due to increased vehicle delay caused at the intersection of El Camino Real and Ravenswood Avenue and the proximity of the intersection to the rail line.

SUMMARY

As stated at the beginning of this staff report, the purpose of the September 12, 2005 Planning Commission public hearing is to allow both the public and the Commission an opportunity to comment on both the project itself and the Draft EIR that has been prepared for the project. No recommendation is being provided at this time, as the Planning Commission will have a second opportunity at a subsequent public hearing to provide a recommendation to the City Council on this proposal.

In regard to the Draft EIR prepared for this project, the Planning Commission may wish to discuss whether the potential environmental impacts have been adequately discussed and addressed.

In terms of general comment areas regarding the project itself, the Planning Commission may wish to provide comments or direction on the site layout and architectural design of the residences.

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PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Public notification consisted of publishing a legal notice in the local newspaper and notification by mail of owners and residents within a 300-foot radius of the subject property. In addition, notices were mailed to all owners and residents in the area roughly bounded by Coleman Avenue to the east, San Francisquito Creek to the south, Alma Street to the west, and Ravenswood Avenue to the north. No formal action will be taken by the Commission at the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Location Map
- B. Project Plans for 110 Linfield Drive
- C. Project Plans for 175 Linfield Drive
- D. Letter from the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain), dated August 31, 2005

EXHIBITS TO BE PROVIDED AT MEETING

1. Colored Renderings

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AT THE CITY OFFICES

1. City Council Study Session Staff Report, dated August 27, 2002
2. Planning Commission Study Session Staff Report, dated March 3, 2003
3. City Council Staff Report, dated March 24, 2003
4. Draft Environmental Impact Report prepared by Impact Sciences, Inc., dated August [22,] 2005

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