TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: MARCH 20, 2006

CMR: 172:06

SUBJECT: 2460 HIGH STREET [05PLN-00363]: REQUEST BY CITY OF PALO ALTO REAL ESTATE DIVISION FOR CITY COUNCIL ADOPTION OF CITY-INITIATED ZONING CHANGE OF A PORTION OF THE HIGH STREET CITY SURPLUS PROPERTY FROM PF (PUBLIC FACILITIES) TO RMD (TWO UNIT MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL). ZONE DISTRICT: PF.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff and Planning and Transportation Commission recommend the City Council approve the ordinance for the zoning classification change of a portion of 2460 High Street (parcel number 132-17-081) from the Public Facilities (PF) zoning district to the Two-Unit Multiple-Family Residence District (RMD) zone pursuant to the Palo Alto Municipal Code Section 18.98.040. The parcel is surplus City property. The Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan designation of the subject site is Multifamily Residential; therefore the proposed zone change is consistent with the land use designation and a Comprehensive Plan amendment is not required. (Attachment A: Adopting Ordinance & Attachment B: Location Map).

BACKGROUND

The 5,413 square foot portion of Parcel 132-17-081 is located on High Street adjacent to the Alma Street-to-Oregon Expressway on-ramp and 2476/2496 High Street. The parcel is owned by the City of Palo Alto and is remnant land left from the development of the Oregon/Alma Street interchange. Surrounding land uses are predominantly multifamily (RM-15 & RM-30), with some vacant county property and roadways. The parcel is currently vacant. The remaining portion of the parcel, not designated as City surplus property, would remain zoned PF. This remaining portion contains some City Utilities facilities. This area might be needed in the future for widening of the adjacent on-ramp to Oregon Expressway.

On September 19, 2005, the City Council declared a portion (approximately 5,400 square feet) of the subject parcel as surplus property and directed staff to process the application to change the zoning classification of at 2460 High Street (Parcel # 132-17-081) from Public Facilities (PF) to Two Unit Multiple Family Residence (RMD) (CMR 366:05 included in Attachment F). Funds from the sale of this City surplus property would be used to help fund an affordable housing project on a larger site.
There is no development proposal at this time for the subject parcel. The zoning change does not entitle a development to occur, and any proposal would be subject to all applicable development standards and review processes. Additional discussion of the existing and proposed zoning district development standards, surrounding land uses and designations; and consistency with Comprehensive Plan policies can be found in the Commission staff report. (Attachment C)

COMMISSION REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

At the Planning and Transportation Commission public hearing on February 8, 2006, the Commission recommended (6-0-0-1) the City Council approve the zoning classification change on the subject portion of parcel number 132-17-081, 2460 High Street, from PF to RMD. The Commission further recommended that the City Council direct staff to provide sufficient landscaping to act as a buffer between the property and the eastbound Oregon Expressway onramp. (Attachment D: Excerpt of 2/8/06 Commission minutes)

One resident speaking toward the item at Commission expressed concern about the safety of any future development from east bound on-ramp traffic onto Oregon Expressway, noting damage to the existing guardrail. The resident, following the Commission meeting, submitted a clarification to his comments, noting that upon further inspection the guardrail damage was not in the location mentioned. Instead the damage and noted accidents had occurred on the westbound ramps and tunnel area, and therefore not adjacent to the proposed rezoning area. (Attachment E: email and comment letters received)

In its motion and discussion, the Commission indicated that the property just to the west of the subject parcel that is owned by the County (Attachment B), could be suitably landscaped to act as a buffer between this parcel and the roadway for safety and visual reasons and that ideally the landscaping would be established prior to any development of the subject parcel.

RESOURCE IMPACT

The proposed zoning classification change on the High Street City Surplus Property does not have an economic impact to the City’s General Fund. If the zoning change is approved by City Council, City staff will return to Council with a Request for Bid Proposals, including a staff recommendation of a minimum bid for the High Street parcel based on an appraisal of its market value as a multiple family residential lot. The net sale proceeds from the sale would be deposited in the Residential Housing Fund to be used for affordable housing projects.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This proposed zoning change does not represent any change to existing City policy.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The zoning change is consistent with the underlying Comprehensive Plan designation of Multiple Family Residence, and was analyzed as such in the City of Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Report certified by the City on July 20, 1998. An Addendum to the Comprehensive Plan Update EIR was completed when the Housing Element was adopted on December 2, 2002.