TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2006

CMR: 394:06

SUBJECT: 705 & 711 COWPER STREET [06PLN-00102]: REQUEST BY STEVE PIERCE ON BEHALF OF JOHN WOODWORTH TO SUBDIVIDE TWO FORMERLY MERGED PARCELS AT 705 & 711 COWPER STREET. THE PROJECT CONSISTS OF SUBDIVIDING A SINGLE 16,507 SQUARE FOOT PARCEL BACK TO THE TWO ORIGINAL PARCELS, ONE AT 7,503 SQUARE FEET AND ONE AT 9,004 SQUARE FEET. EXCEPTIONS TO LOT DESIGN WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ALLOW A LOT AREA OF 7,500 SQUARE FEET AT 705 COWPER STREET WHERE 8,500 SQUARE FEET IS THE REQUIRED MINIMUM LOT AREA, AND SITE WIDTHS OF 50- FEET FOR 705 COWPER STREET AND 60- FEET FOR 711 COWPER STREET, WHERE A 75- FOOT LOT WIDTH IS REQUIRED. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: AN INITIAL STUDY HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND A NEGATIVE DECLARATION HAS BEEN PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) REQUIREMENTS. ZONE DISTRICT: RM-30.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff and the Planning and Transportation Commission (Commission) recommend that the City Council adopt the Negative Declaration (Attachment D) and approve the proposed preliminary parcel map with exceptions to subdivide a single 16,507 square foot parcel into two parcels, one at 7,503 square feet and one at 9,004 square feet and grant exceptions for lot width and lot area, based upon the findings and conditions contained within the Record of Land Use Action (Attachment A).

The following items have also been provided for the Council’s review:

- Environmental Assessment and Negative Declaration (Attachment D); and
- Preliminary Parcel Map plan set (Attachment E).

BACKGROUND

Background information and discussion of relevant issues is included in the Commission staff report (Attachment B) and the Commission minutes (Attachment C). In summary, the
subdivision would result in nonconformities with regard to lot width (on both lots) and lot area (on the 705 Cowper Avenue lot). Exceptions to allow these nonconforming lot characteristics would be required. The findings to allow these exceptions are contained in Section 3 of Attachment A. Staff supports the project and the exceptions because the Parcel Map will return the lots to their configuration that existed prior to the lot merger and will be consistent with the historic lot pattern of the neighborhood. In addition, the subdivision would reduce the redevelopment pressures that could result in the demolition of the two structures for additional multiple-family housing.

Future Development
Although the subdivision would reduce redevelopment pressure, the structures, listed as Category 3 on the City’s Historic Preservation Inventory, could still be demolished after the subdivision is granted. Any new construction would have to conform to all zoning requirements and be subject to all applicable development impact fees. Any new multi-family buildings of three units or greater would be subject to architectural review.

COMMISSION REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION
At the public hearing held on September 13, 2006, the Commission voted (6-0-0-1), Commissioner Keller absent) to accept staff’s recommendation to approve the map and exceptions. The Commission expressed its appreciation to John and Peggy Woodworth for the years of service as owners and operators of the Cowper Inn, but also expressed regret that the Cowper Inn would cease operations.

Prior to the Commission meeting, staff received no written comments from the public and no public comments were made at the meeting.

RESOURCE IMPACT
Closing of the Cowper Inn and conversion to residential housing will have an impact on City revenues. Loss of the 14 room Inn results in an estimated transient occupancy tax loss in the range of $35,000 to $65,000 annually. Property taxes will likely increase as a consequence of the parcel split and sale of the properties at market value. The City will receive a one-time transfer tax upon sales. These taxes are dependent upon the value of the eventual transactions. No net incremental costs to the City are expected from this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lists a minor land division of property in an urbanized area into four or fewer parcels as exempt from CEQA if the subdivision is in conformance with all zoning regulations. The project is not exempt from CEQA because the subdivision would create two lots not in compliance with the requirements of the zoning ordinance. An Environmental Impact Assessment and a Negative Declaration was prepared for the project and is attached.
PREPARED BY:  

STEVEN TURNER  
Senior Planner  

DEPARTMENT HEAD:  

STEVE EMSLIE  
Director of Planning and Community Environment  

CITY MANAGER APPROVAL:  

FRANK BENEST  
City Manager  

ATTACHMENTS  
A. Record of Land Use Action  
B. Planning and Transportation Commission Staff Report, September 28, 2005  
C. Planning and Transportation Commission Meeting Minutes  
D. Environmental Assessment & Negative Declaration  
E. Preliminary Parcel Map (Council Members Only)  

COURTESY COPIES:  
Steve Pierce  
John and Peggy Woodworth