TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT
DATE: NOVEMBER 21, 2005
CMR:429:05

SUBJECT: 870 N. CALIFORNIA AVENUE [04PLN-00132]: REQUEST BY STRATFORD SCHOOL ON BEHALF OF THE PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT TO ALLOW A PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL USE AT AN EXISTING VACANT SCHOOL FACILITY (GARLAND SCHOOL). ZONE DISTRICT: PF PUBLIC FACILITY. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT PER SECTION 15301.

RECOMMENDATION
Staff and the Planning and Transportation Commission (P&TC) recommend that the City Council uphold the Director of Planning and Community Environment’s decision to approve a Conditional Use Permit based upon the findings and conditions in the Record of Land Use Action (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND
The review process for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) that has been called up for a public hearing requires initial review and recommendation by the P&TC. The recommendation of the P&TC is then placed on the consent calendar of the City Council within thirty days of the P&TC review. In accordance with PAMC section 18.77.060, the Council may: (1) adopt the findings and recommendation of the planning and transportation commission; or (2) remove the recommendation from the consent calendar, which requires three votes, and (a) discuss the application and adopt findings and take action on the application based upon the evidence presented at the hearing of the planning and transportation commission; or (b) direct that the application be set for a new hearing before the city council, following which the city council shall adopt findings and take action on the application.

On July 29, 2005, the Director of Planning and Community Environment tentatively approved a request for a CUP to allow a private educational use (elementary and preschool) for Stratford School (see Attachment J for the approval letter). Within the prescribed timeframe, two requests for a public hearing were received for the CUP application.
The primary issues raised by the neighbors requesting a public hearing related to the initial plan that allowed use of an existing driveway to access the inner campus for the drop-off and pick-up of students. The neighbors raised concerns about the potential noise and privacy impacts that the increased circulation would create. At the September 14, 2005 P&TC meeting, Stratford School presented an alternative plan that eliminated the access use of the driveway and designated the existing front parking lots as the drop-off and pick-up area for the students. The driveway would remain and be used only for employee parking and emergency vehicle access.

At the P&TC meeting, members of the community spoke to both the initial plan and the revised plan. While acknowledging improvements in the plan to address the original concerns for the driveway, speakers also stated their concerns that they were not given enough time to adequately review the new proposal and comment on the school’s operations and the conditions of approval. The P&TC continued the item to October 26, 2005 to allow all concerned parties additional time to review and comment on the revised project.

On October 11, 2005 the City/School Traffic Safety Committee (CSTSC) held a meeting to review the plan and receive community input. Courtesy noticing cards were sent to residents within a 600-foot radius of the school. The Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) retained John Wilson of Wilson Engineering, consulting traffic engineer for the District, to review the project’s circulation and parking plan. John Wilson presented the conclusions of his review to the Committee at the meeting. A record of the Committee’s recommendations with John Wilson’s report is in Attachment G. The CSTSC and John Wilson’s report recommendations have been incorporated into the Record of Land Use Action (Attachment A).

Subsequent to the October 26 P&TC meeting, staff added one additional condition of approval (Attachment A, section 6, number 5) to provide for tree protection in the employee parking area.

COMMISSION REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS
On October 26, 2005, the project was reviewed by the P&TC, who recommended that the City Council uphold the Director of Planning and Community Environment’s decision to approve the Conditional Use Permit (5-0-2-0) (see Attachment H for staff report).

There were four members of the community that spoke to this item. The speakers were in support of the project and were pleased that John Wilson was brought in to review the plans of the school (see pages 12-14 of the Verbatim Minutes, Attachment I).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
This project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act per Section 15301.

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Director of Planning and Community Environment

CITY MANAGER APPROVAL: ____________________________________________
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ATTACHMENTS:
A. Record of Land Use Action
B. Location Maps/Aerial
C. Applicant Submittal Information
D. Comprehensive Plan Compliance
E. Zoning Table
F. Background/Project Description
G. City/School Traffic Safety Committee Recommendations and Wilson Engineering’s Report
H. Planning & Transportation Commission Report, October 26, 2005
I. Planning & Transportation Commission excerpt verbatim minutes, October 26, 2005
J. Conditional Use Permit Approval Letter, dated July 29, 2005
K. Project Plans

COURTESY COPIES:
Joseph Wagner, Stratford School
Palo Alto Unified School District
Annette DeStefano, Requestor of Public Hearing
Tola Minkoff, Requestor of Public Hearing
CSTSC Committee
Wilson Engineering