

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Date: February 7, 2005

From: Geoffrey L. Grote, City Administrator

Subject: **Re-Zoning of 801 Magnolia Avenue**

BACKGROUND

In 2003, 801 Magnolia was sold to the city for \$730,000 by the members of the Christian Science Church in the hope that it would “benefit the public”. Throughout the negotiations, members of the congregation expressed the hope that the building and grounds would be used to provide direct services and programs to the residents of Piedmont rather than be used for storage or office space. While these conversations are not legally binding and no deed restrictions exist, staff has always hoped that the building would provide a place to serve Piedmonters until a comprehensive plan could be developed for the entire civic center.

The property consists of a main structure originally built circa 1878 and remodeled in 1935 and a newer section built in 1964 as a youth education wing. The structure has always been part of Zone A. Properties in this zone must be either single family residential or a church.

Unfortunately, significant deferred maintenance and ADA issues exist at this property and have been the subject of several other reports (see attached).

Re-Zoning in June 2005

In my last staff report (January 18, 2005), I suggested that the city might wish to consider placing the matter of zoning on a consolidated election ballot in June 2005. In order to qualify for the June ballot, the city would need to take action no later than March 7, 2005. City Attorney George Peyton has analyzed this possibility and has determined that because of the notice requirements in our municipal code and under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), it is not possible to proceed with this plan.

Other Election Options

The matter of re-zoning could be moved to a November 2005 ballot if the governor proceeds with plans to call a statewide election at that time. Costs to consolidate on a statewide election would be approximately \$6-10,000. It would also be possible to postpone the matter until March 2006, the date of the next regular municipal election. Costs for a March election would also be in the \$6-10,000 range.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Requirements

Careful review by the city attorney has determined that the city will need to create an Initial Study under CEQA before this matter can proceed to the ballot. In effect, this requires that the city determine a specific use for the property and the environmental impacts of such use before submitting the matter to the voters.

Obviously, the city will want to begin a thorough public process to determine what uses are desired by residents. However, discussion of use should be separated into

1. Possible immediate uses (within the next 1-5 years), and
2. Future uses related to a civic center plan.

Possible Immediate Uses - The site has already been used as a temporary art gallery for Piedmont schools and a performance space for Piedmont Choirs. According to the Recreation Department staff, the youth education wing offers many opportunities for children's recreation programming. Residents and the city council should determine what types of use and programs can be accommodated at 801 Magnolia with little or no remodeling to the site. These uses would take place over the next 1-5 years while the city is engaged in a larger process to determine the ultimate use in the context of civic center. Re-zoning for this type of use could be voted on in November 2005 (if a special election is called by the governor) or March 2006.

Future Uses - Over the past five years, both the Civic Center Committee and the Recreation Aquatics Committee have studied the civic center in some depth. As the city moves towards reconsideration of the Piedmont Swim Club lease of city property, a full-scale evaluation of the needs of the community including swimming facilities, classrooms, meeting/gathering spaces, performance space, parking, etc. should take place. Decisions regarding the long-term use of the civic center would be followed by a separate CEQA process, decisions regarding funding of such proposals, and eventual construction or renovation.

Public Discussion on February 7

Residents have been asked to attend this meeting to begin the discussion regarding 801 Magnolia. Whether they are interested in short-term or long-term goals, this is an excellent opportunity to begin to bring together the community's needs and desires regarding this public asset. At the end of this evening's discussion, council may wish to schedule another discussion which will focus on Possible Immediate Uses, leading to an Initial Study under CEQA and placement on an election ballot.

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Date: January 3, 2005

From: Mark Delventhal, Recreation Director
Lawrence A. Rosenberg, Public Works Director
John Speakman, Fire Chief
Mark Feldkamp, Parks and Project Manager
Chester Nakahara, Building Official

Subject: **Maintenance Requirements for 801 Magnolia Avenue**

RECOMMENDATION

Appropriate \$6,000 for immediate repairs necessary for use of the building in January 2005. Consider further needs during council discussion of FY 04-05 mid-year appropriations in February 2005.

BACKGROUND

As the landlord of 801 Magnolia Avenue, the City of Piedmont has obligations both short and long-term to maintain and, where necessary, improve the condition of this facility. Although the current zoning of the site precludes any use for permanent city functions, it has been used from time to time for special events. PUSD used 801 Magnolia as part of its "Art is Education Month" celebration and this month the Piedmont Choirs will hold a small concert in what was once the sanctuary of the Christian Science Church. The discussion regarding maintenance should focus on three separate topics: short-term maintenance needs, long-term maintenance needs and landscaping issues..

Short-Term Needs

In order to make 801 Magnolia safe for occupancy during the choral event on January 20, 2005, the fire department inspected the premises and proposes:

Battery operated smoke detectors	\$75.00
Temporary exit signs pursuant to fire code	\$40.00
Fire extinguishers (borrowed from FD)	No cost
Emergency lighting (borrowed from Disaster Preparedness)	No cost

A safety briefing and walk through will be conducted with the Piedmont Choir staff prior to the event and fire department personnel will be assigned to be present that evening.

The heating system for the building consists of two separate units. The first unit is cracked and for safety reasons must be replaced immediately at an estimated cost of \$6,000 (\$2,500 for asbestos removal and \$3,500 for the new heating unit). The second unit is extremely old but serviceable. If both units were to be replaced simultaneously, the cost would be \$10,000. Staff recommends that cracked unit be replaced immediately due to safety concerns. Replacement of the second unit can be deferred until council decides how the building is going to be used and, therefore, what type of heating system is needed.

Other expenditures which are needed to protect the city’s investment in this property (from rain, termites, etc.) and maintain the building in its present state include:

1. Roof and gutter replacement:	\$36,000
2. Exterior repairs including windows & siding:	\$20,000
3. Exterior painting:	\$15,000
4. Termite/Dry Rot issues (Phase 1):	\$20,000
5. Landscaping & Irrigation:	\$ 7,000

These items are considered “short-term” since they must be done in order to avoid further deterioration of the building.

Issues which are cosmetic and which would make the facility more acceptable for occasional public use include:

1. Remove and replace old carpeting in sanctuary:	\$10,000
2. Repair ceiling tiles or install new dropped ceiling and lighting in needed areas:	\$20,000
3. Interior painting (major rooms only)	\$ 5,000
4. New window coverings:	\$ 5,000

Obviously, the city must weigh the value of such improvements against any occasional use which is authorized by the council prior to a zoning change. Keep in mind that each of these items can be divided and phased, to a certain extent, which would spread out the cost of the repairs over a period of time.

Landscaping

City staff has completed an initial clean up of the site. All of the existing planting areas (shrubs, groundcover & trees) were pruned and the planting areas were mulched to keep out weeds.. Staff is particularly concerned with the turf areas along Magnolia Avenue that have died due do to inadequate irrigation. Entire sections of the lawn have died and have become overgrown with weeds and Bermuda grass giving an unkempt look to the front of the building.

Staff recommends that the existing irrigation system, consisting of corroded metal pipes, non-functioning valves, controller and missing irrigation spray heads be replaced. Cleary Brothers has provided a preliminary bid of \$6,000 to \$7,000 to complete the work. This includes removal of the existing lawn and replacement with new drought tolerant fescue sod and installation of a functioning irrigation system. The proposed work could be

completed this winter to take advantage of the winter rains. Staff would continue the ongoing maintenance of the shrub planting areas and the pruning of the existing trees.

This remediation will serve as an interim maintenance solution while the city develops a plan for the use of the structure and secures the required zoning changes. Staff has also developed a draft Master/Planting Plan for a possible educational garden that will be presented to the City Council at a later date.

Long-Term Maintenance Needs

Maintenance which is required for permanent occupancy can only be determined when the city council decides how to use this property. What is important to remember is that whatever spaces are designated for whatever uses by the City of Piedmont, the scope of work can be streamlined and tailored to meet those needs.

For instance, one possible use of the site which has been discussed in some detail previously is to allow the Recreation Department to operate the school wing for young children's programs. Currently, the Recreation Department offers pre-school classes in the Recreation Center and the Community Hall Lower Level. Existing programs: First Step, Tot Zone, Tiddlywinks, and Play School have room for about 110 students. The demand almost always exceeds the available space during the spring and fall registration period. Erin Rivera, Schoolmates Supervisor, advises that with additional space these programs could accommodate some 75 additional children and produce additional revenue.

In order to use the school wing for recreation programs, the bathrooms, entry areas and patio will need to be evaluated to see that they are appropriate for young children. It is possible that the obscure glass in the room might be changed to create a space with more natural light. The existing carpet is serviceable if thoroughly cleaned. Therefore, it is possible that this facility may be easily converted to use for city recreation programs without additional large expenditures. Other uses would require separate evaluation.

Council Action

Staff would like to recommend that the cracked heater in the building be replaced immediately at an approximate cost of \$6,000. This will eliminate a potential hazard and prepare the facility for use by Piedmont Choirs later this month. The remaining safety issues for the choir event can be handled by the fire department from existing funds. All other issues will be discussed with the council in detail as part of the mid-year budget cycle.