



Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council **From:** Councilmember Pete Constant

Subject: Winchester SNI Neighborhood Improvement Plan Amendment **Date:** April 23, 2007

Approved: _____

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the amended Winchester SNI Neighborhood Improvement Plan with the following changes that will assist in accomplishing the NAC's renewed action agenda.

- 1) Direct staff to initiate the planning process to create a new NBD General Plan Overlay for Winchester Boulevard, and
- 2) Direct staff to begin developing a neighborhood plan for new parks and increased open space in the Winchester SNI Area.

OUTCOME

Mayor and City Council approval of the *Plan Amendment* and the direction to initiate a NBD General Plan Overlay will result in beginning the General Plan Amendment process to identify Winchester Boulevard as a "Neighborhood Business District" with added benefits to preserve and promote the commercial area. My office has taken the initial step of presenting this action to the NAC at their regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The NAC's response was one of cautious optimism at the opportunity to encourage further business development along Winchester as long as they are involved in helping to draw the boundaries of the NBD. I expect this to be a valuable experience for the community and look forward to working with them to ensure that this is a benefit to the neighborhood.

Mayor and City Council approval of the *Plan Amendment* and the modified neighborhood park plan timeline will result in the acceleration of the plan development from medium term (four to six years) to short term (one to three years).

BACKGROUND

NBD General Plan Overlay

In the 2001 *Winchester Strong Neighborhoods Improvement Plan*, the Neighborhood Action Coalition (NAC) identified "Strengthen Economic Development" as one of its key goals. To achieve this goal, the *Plan* includes a strategy for economic development for Winchester Boulevard and direction to complete Winchester Boulevard improvements. Although the Winchester NAC, City, and Redevelopment Agency staff have worked to improve Winchester Boulevard since the completion of the *Plan*, additional improvements (including streetscape and banner installation) are needed. As a result, the *Plan Amendment* lists "Implement a Beautification and Business Plan for Winchester Boulevard" as its tenth priority. As a part of this priority, the NAC recommends the development of a Winchester Boulevard economic strategy for attracting individualized stores and retail uses.

Open Space Strategy

The 2001 *Plan* also includes "Acquire Parks/Open Space" as one of its key goals due to the lack of park space within the Winchester SNI Area. The NAC recommended acquiring land for recreational resource development, as vacant land becomes available and/or through relocation of existing businesses, to address the open space deficit. The Renewing the Action Agenda process confirmed that open space remains a high priority for the Winchester NAC, resulting in "Develop a Parks Plan" as the seventh priority in the *Plan Amendment*. As a part of this priority, the NAC recommends developing a neighborhood plan for new parks and increased open space, exploring feasibility of purchasing property for parks and open space, develop neighborhood-serving pocket parks, and increasing open space.

ANALYSIS

Neighborhood Business District General Plan Overlay

The creation of a new Neighborhood Business District (NBD) overlay for Winchester Boulevard requires a General Plan Amendment including General Plan text changes as well as changes to the Transportation/Land Use Diagram. The first step in the NBD designation process is to assess the level of support from the Winchester NAC, Business Association, and business owners in a series of community meetings. If the Winchester community indicates a desire to proceed with the NBD designation, Redevelopment Agency staff will submit a General Plan Amendment application and a proposed NBD boundary map for Planning Commission and City Council consideration.

The Winchester NBD designation aligns with several of the Winchester NAC's top-ten priorities and action items, including: limit expansion of NBD boundaries to keep business development from encroaching into residential areas; strengthen the Business Association and assist business owners in developing an economic strategy; allow for the completion of the Winchester banner project; and further preserve, enhance, and revitalize the Winchester corridor through the coordination of public and private investment such as streetscape beautification, façade improvements, business development and retention, and promotional events. In addition to these benefits, a NBD designation also includes the opportunity for more unique signage, reduced

parking requirements for specific uses located on the ground floor, and the potential to attract individualized stores and retail uses.

Open Space Strategy

The *Plan Amendment* includes several action items to increase open space within the next seven years. Given the severe park deficit, I recommend adjusting the timeline for the open space strategy from medium term (four to six years) to short term (one to three years) and to begin exploring the feasibility of land acquisition as a part of this strategy. The two outcomes of the neighborhood park plan will be to conduct a comprehensive feasibility assessment of open space opportunities within the Winchester SNI Area and to identify recommendations to pursue the expansion and creation of new open space. The park plan will establish a framework for identifying, exploring, and prioritizing open space opportunities.

COORDINATION

The preparation of this supplemental memorandum was coordinated with the Winchester NAC, the Redevelopment Agency, the City Manager's Office, and the Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement.