



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 5, 2004

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN SCREENING REQUEST GPS-03-03
1695 SUPERIOR AND 635 W. 17TH STREET

DATE: DECEMBER 17, 2003

FROM: PLANNING DIVISION/DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PRESENTATION BY: CLAIRE L. FLYNN, AICP, ASSOC. PLANNER

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: CLAIRE L. FLYNN, AICP, ASSOC. PLANNER
(714) 754-5278

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Reject proposed General Plan amendment, based on inconsistency with the acceptance criteria specified in City Council Policy 500-2.

BACKGROUND

Project Description

The applicant, Grower's Direct, has requested a General Plan amendment screening for two contiguous parcels totaling one acre located at 1695 Superior Avenue (.79 acre) and 635 W. 17th Street (.21 acre). At this time, 1695 Superior Avenue is owned by Eugene Stirbu, owner/manager of Grower's Direct, and the second parcel at 635 W. 17th Street is in escrow. The applicant is requesting the following:

- Change in General Plan Land Use. The applicant requests a General Plan amendment to change the land use designation from Light Industry to Neighborhood Commercial.
- Site-Specific FAR of 0.19. The Neighborhood Commercial land use designation permits a maximum floor area ratio (0.25 FAR) for general retail uses. The applicant is requesting a site-specific 0.19 FAR for the property.

The proposal would allow Grower's Direct to relocate their existing business to a larger building. The existing lease does not expire for three years. In the letter of justification, the authorized agent has indicated that Grower's Direct intends to occupy the site once construction on the new building is completed. The applicant has also considered leasing the new building to other permitted commercial uses until

the current lease expires in three years. Please refer to the applicant's letter (Attachment 4).

City Council Policy 500-2

City Council Policy 500-2 establishes a procedure for processing privately initiated General Plan amendments. This procedure involves a City Council screening of these requests prior to their acceptance for formal processing. The policy includes three criteria for accepting requests and two criteria for rejecting requests. The acceptance criteria are as follows:

1. A General Plan amendment is necessary to resolve inconsistency between the General Plan designation and zoning of a parcel.
2. A General Plan amendment is necessary to provide a uniform land use designation on a single parcel.
3. A General Plan amendment would result in decreased traffic impacts from the property.

The criteria for rejecting an application are as follows:

1. The request applies to a single small lot or a small area, especially if the change would make the property inconsistent with surrounding properties.
2. The property is located in the Redevelopment Area and requires action by the Redevelopment Agency to amend the Redevelopment Plan.

In addition to the above criteria, the policy also states that no request shall be accepted that would increase the overall, citywide development cap. It does, however, allow amendments that would result in development exchanges or transfers to be considered. The policy also acknowledges that these criteria are only guidelines and City Council may accept an application which does not meet the criteria if it finds there are overriding reasons to do so.

ANALYSIS

Existing General Plan

The General Plan designates both parcels as Light Industry. However, the parcels have two different zoning classifications: Commercial Limited (CL) at 1695 Superior and General Industrial (MG) at 635 W. 17th Street. General Plan and zoning maps are attached (Attachments 1 and 2, respectively). If this General Plan screening request is approved, the proposal would also involve a rezone of the parcel at 635 W. 17th from MG to CL, as well as a combination of both parcels.

Floor Area Ratio

Grower's Direct is considered a *General Retail* use and is a permitted use in the CL zone. However, in the Light Industry land use designation (existing), this use is classified as a High Traffic Generator and would be subject to a maximum FAR of 0.15 (6,567 sq.ft. building). The applicant has indicated that this building size is too small to meet their needs.

In the Neighborhood Commercial designation (proposed), the Grower's Direct business is classified as a Moderate Traffic Generator and subject to a maximum 0.25 FAR. Therefore, the proposed Neighborhood Commercial designation would allow the construction of a maximum 10,945 sq. ft. building on the combined parcels. Since this building size is greater than what the applicant would need, the applicant is also requesting a site-specific FAR of 0.19 (8,500 sq.ft. building).

The following table is a summary of the proposed action and property information.

Table 1 – Summary Table

SITE ADDRESSES:	1695 Superior Avenue and 635 W. 17 th Street
LOT AREA:	34,628 sq.ft. (.79 acre) at 1695 Superior 9,153 sq.ft (.21 acre) at 635 W. 17 th Street Total: one acre
EXISTING GENERAL PLAN	Light Industry, Maximum 0.15 FAR, 6,567 sq.ft. building
PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT	(1) Change from Light Industry to Neighborhood Commercial with a site-specific FAR of 0.19 (2) Construction of up to 8,500 sq.ft. retail building (site-specific 0.19 FAR)
EXISTING USES/BUILDINGS	(1) Vacant Gas Station: A 600 sq.ft. building with six pump stations at 1695 Superior (2) Keegan's Concrete: A 1,156 sq.ft. building at 635 W. 17 th Street

The property at 1695 Superior Avenue was formerly a gas station. The station has been closed for about a year, and the pumping stations have been removed. Chain link fencing currently surrounds the property. Keegan's Concrete, Inc. is currently located at 635 W. 17th. Site photographs of these properties are provided as Attachment 3.

Traffic Analysis

The City’s traffic analysis indicates that there is a projected increase in trip generation with the proposed General Plan amendment compared to permitted land uses in the existing Light Industry designation. As shown in Table 2, under the Neighborhood Commercial land use designation (FAR 0.25), there is a projected increase of 298 weekday vehicle trips to and from the site compared to the existing Light Industry designation. The increased traffic generation would result in a projected increase of seven vehicle trips at the a.m. peak hour and 28 vehicle trips at the p.m. peak hour.

Under the proposed development scenario (8,500 sq.ft. retail building at a site-specific 0.19 FAR), the traffic analysis projects an increase of 132 average weekday vehicle trips compared to the existing Light Industry designation. The increased traffic generation is would result in an increase of three vehicle trips at the a.m. peak hour and 12 vehicle trips at the p.m. peak hour.

Table 2 – Trip Generation

	DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL	AM PEAK	PM PEAK	WEEKDAY TRIPS	CORRESPONDING ZONING
EXISTING GENERAL PLAN Light Industry	FAR 0.15 (6,567 SQ.FT. BUILDING)	10	41	448	Commercial Limited (CL) at 1695 Superior General Industrial (MG) at 635 W. 17 th
PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN Neighborhood Commercial	FAR 0.25 (10,945 sq.ft. building)	17	69	746	Requires rezone from MG to CL at 635 W. 17 th
PROPOSED SITE SPECIFIC FAR Neighborhood Commercial	FAR 0.19 (8,500 sq.ft. building)	13	53	580	Requires rezone from MG to CL at 635 W. 17 th

General Plan Screening Criteria

Staff recommends denial of the General Plan screening request for the following reasons:

- Failure to meet General Plan amendment screening acceptance criteria. In terms of the acceptance criteria, this proposal would not meet any of the three acceptance criteria. The proposal does not achieve the following objectives: (a)

resolve a General Plan/zoning inconsistency, (b) provide a uniform land use designation on a single parcel, nor (c) decrease vehicle trips.

- Increased traffic generation beyond General Plan capacity. Given the existing 0.15 FAR for general retail uses allowed in the current Light Industry designation, any change to a commercial designation would result in increased traffic. The Neighborhood Commercial FAR of 0.25 would result in a trip generation of 746 daily trips, or 298 daily vehicle trips over the existing General Plan designation. The proposed 0.19 site-specific FAR would result in fewer weekday trips compared to maximum build out under the proposed Neighborhood Commercial designation (0.25 FAR), but this development scenario still exceeds the traffic capacity as modeled in the 2000 General Plan by 132 daily vehicle trips.
- Cumulative traffic impacts may be considerable. Superior Avenue and 17th Street are heavily traveled corridors with average daily traffic volumes of 15,000-27,000 vehicle trips in the project area. While the proposed 8,500 sq. ft. building only results in an incremental increase in vehicle trips during the a.m./p.m. peak hours, staff believes the cumulative traffic impacts are considerable. A more detailed traffic study would need to be conducted for the proposed project, if City Council directs staff to proceed.
- Site-specific FAR not considered appropriate. Site-specific FARs are typically approved in conjunction with a comprehensive master plan to guide the long-term physical development of a large area (e.g. specific plans or master plans). The applicant proposes a site-specific FAR for the construction of a single, general retail building. The City has not typically approved site-specific FARs for development that is not associated with a long-range planning document which implements the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan. Staff is concerned about setting a precedent for allowing a site-specific FAR for a small, single building and believes that it may be difficult to track such approvals in the future without a related specific plan or master plan in place.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

City Council has the following alternatives available for consideration:

1. Deny the screening request. As recommended by staff, Council may deny the screening request. If the request is denied, the applicant may request a rezone of the 0.21 acre parcel at 635 W. 17th from General industrial (MG) to Commercial Limited (CL). This would result in a uniform zoning classification for the two contiguous parcels. Grower's Direct would only be able to build a maximum 6,567 sq.ft. building on the two parcels.
2. Accept the screening request. Pursuant to Council Policy 500-2, Council may acknowledge that the General Plan screening criteria are only guidelines and

that City Council may accept an application that does not meet the criteria based on other considerations.

Alternative land use designations are typically evaluated as a part of the overall review of the General Plan amendment once it is accepted for processing. Should Council have one or more specific alternatives they would like to have evaluated as a part of the review process, additional direction should be provided to staff.

FISCAL REVIEW

Fiscal review is not required.

LEGAL REVIEW

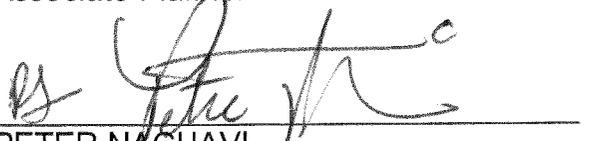
Legal review is not required.

CONCLUSION

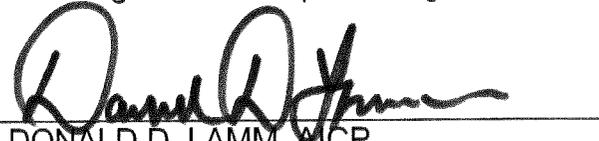
Based on the proposal's inconsistency with the acceptance criteria specified in City Council Policy 500-2, staff recommends denial of the applicant's request. City Council Policy 500-2 specifies acceptance criteria as guidelines so City Council may accept an application that does not meet the criteria if it finds there are overriding reasons to do so. If accepted and contingent upon the submittal of a completed planning application, the General Plan amendment will be scheduled for Planning Commission review on February 9, 2004 and forwarded for City Council consideration in March, 2004. A rezone application will also be processed concurrently with the General Plan amendment.

It is important to note that acceptance of this screening request does not set precedent for approval, but does allow staff, the public, Planning Commission, and Council the opportunity to review the request and its relative merits and compatibility in greater detail prior to final action.


CLAIRE L. FLYNN, AICP
Associate Planner


PETER NAGHAVI
Transportation Manager


R. MICHAEL ROBINSON, AICP
Planning & Redevelopment Mgr.


DONALD D. LAMM, AICP
Dep. City Mgr. – Dev. Svcs. Director

- Attachments:
1. General Plan Map
 2. Zoning Map
 3. Site Photographs
 4. Applicant's Letter of Justification, dated December 12, 2003

File Name: 010504GPS0303

Date: 12/17/03

10:30 a.m.

cc: City Manager
Public Services Director
Transportation Services Manager
Raja Sethuraman, Associate Engineer
Dennis Johnson, Assistant Engineer
City Clerk
Staff (4)
File (2)

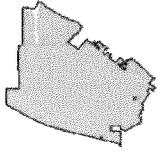
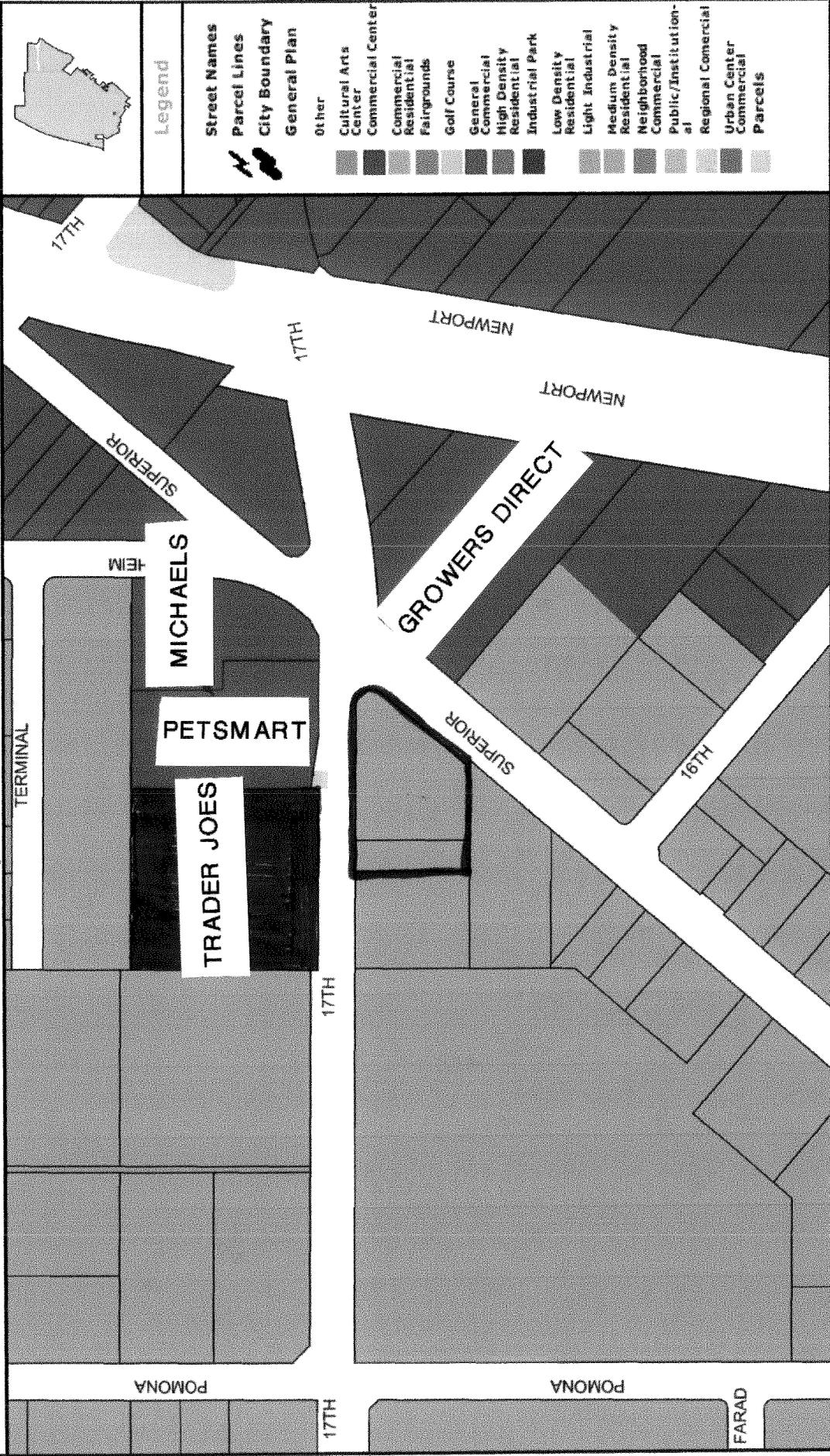
Patricia Arroyo
Studio 3 Architects
20101 S.W. Birch, Ste 210
Newport Beach, CA 92660

Eugene Stirbu
4331 Alonzo Avenue
Encino, CA 91316

Attachment 1
General Plan Map

GENERAL PLAN MAP

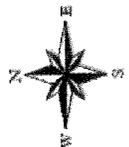
1695 Superior and 635 W. 17th St.



Legend

- Street Names
- Parcel Lines
- City Boundary
- General Plan

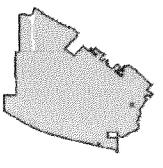
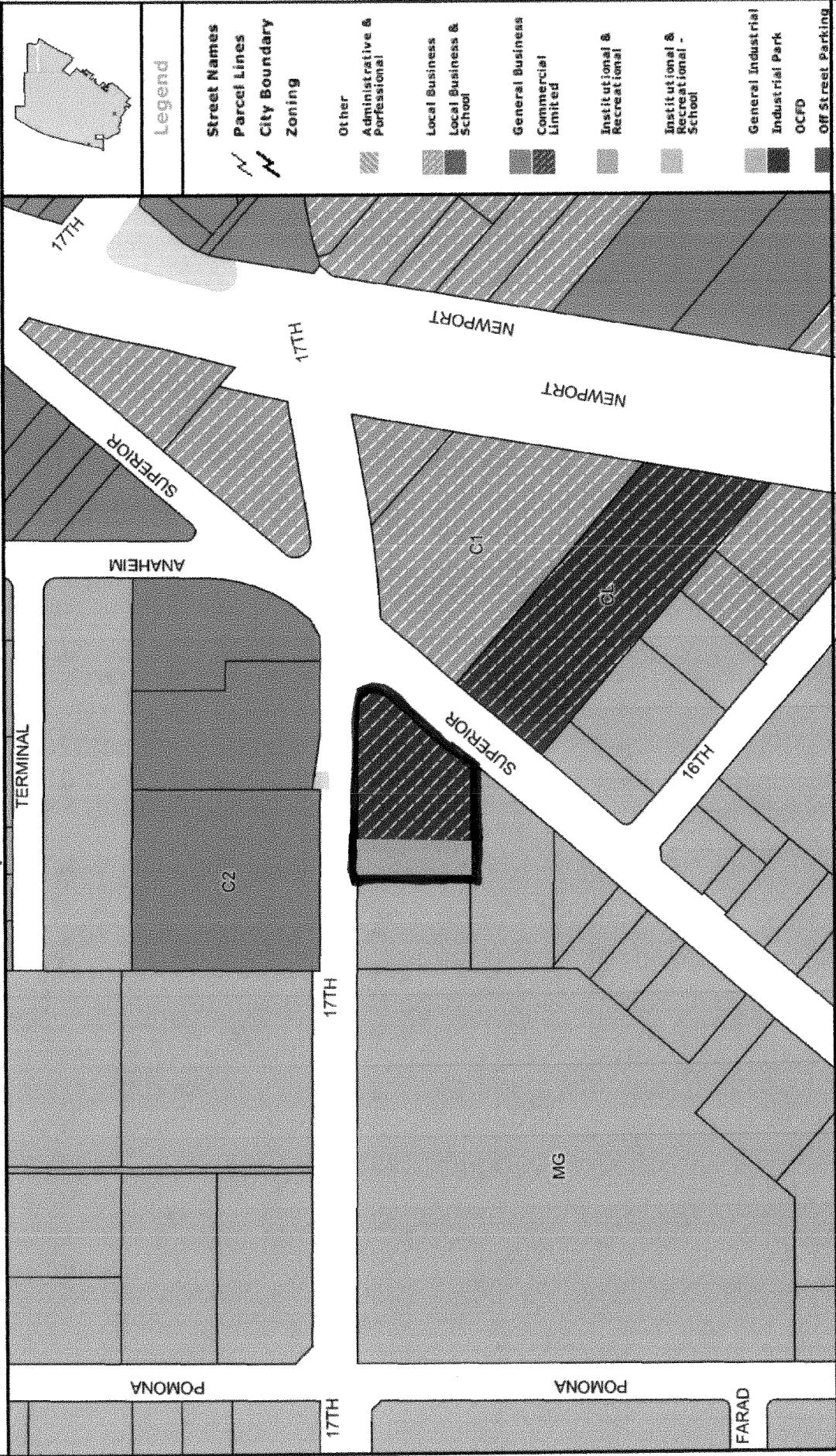
- Other
- Cultural Arts Center
- Commercial Center
- Commercial Residential
- Fairgrounds
- Golf Course
- General Commercial
- High Density Residential
- Industrial Park
- Low Density Residential
- Light Industrial
- Medium Density Residential
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Public/Institutional
- Regional Commercial
- Urban Center Commercial
- Parcels



Attachment 2
Zoning Map

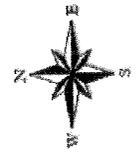
ZONING MAP

1695 Superior and 635 W. 17th St.



Legend

- Street Names
- Parcel Lines
- City Boundary
- Zoning
- Other
- Administrative & Professional
- Local Business
- Local Business & School
- General Business
- Commercial Limited
- Institutional & Recreational
- Institutional & Recreational - School
- General Industrial
- Industrial Park
- OCFD
- Off Street Parking



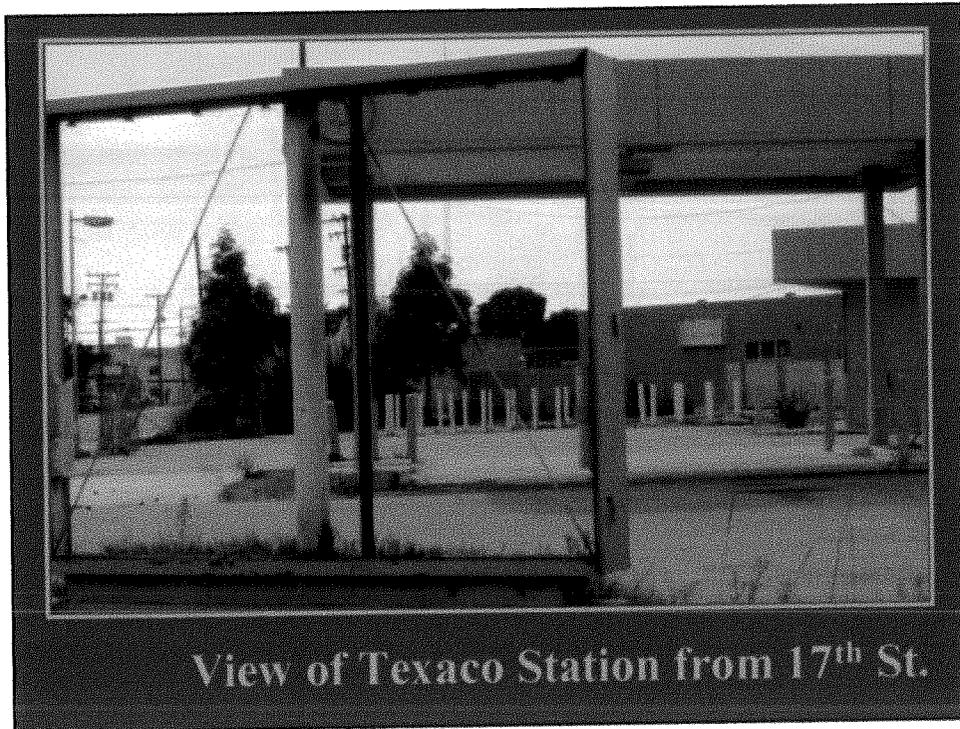
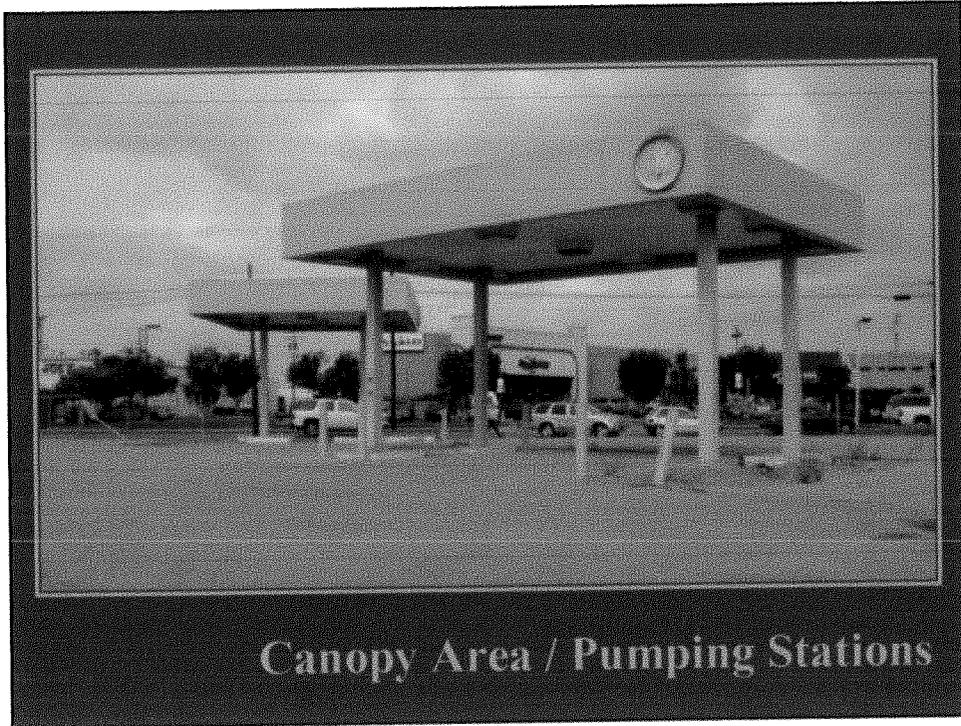
Attachment 3
Site Photographs



Grower's Direct at SEC of 17th/Superior



1695 Superior – Old Texaco Station





Unpaved Area on Western Portion of Lot



Keegan's Construction at 635 W. 17th

Attachment 4
Applicant's Request

STUDIO 3
ARCHITECTS

architecture
planning
interiors

December 12, 2003

Claire Flynn
City of Costa Mesa
77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92628-1200

Re: General Plan Amendment Screening for
1695 Superior Avenue and 635 W. 17th Street

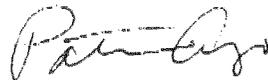
Dear Ms. Flynn,

After much deliberation, we have concluded the following as the intent for the site: Growers Direct will occupy the site once construction is complete but would like to change the zone to neighborhood commercial. This change request is to obtain a larger square footage not allowed with the present classification and to unify the two properties under the same zone. Understanding that the traffic studies do not entirely support the full use of the square footage allowed under neighborhood commercial, we agree to limit the F.A.R. from 0.25 allowed to approximately 0.19 or 8,500 S.F. further lowering the peak hour trips to limit levels. As explained previously, the physical conditions at this site will yield a limited amount of parking, further limiting the size of the building itself.

It is our most sincere intent to work with the needs of the city and to better the existing conditions at this intersection. In conjunction of the two adjoining properties, we propose to eliminate three of the five existing driveways. In addition, serious consideration and evaluation is in process for the opportunities opened if the existing street dedication on Superior is regained and in turn dedicating to the city a designated area along Seventeenth for a turning lane and / or a bus stop turn out.

We appreciate your assistance and patience in evaluating the needs of our clients' and potentials for this project. If further discussion is required, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,
Studio 3 Architects



Patricia Arroyo
Project Manager

cc: Eugene Stirbu, Growers Direct

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