



F.2 Review to consider recommending that two alternative Concept Plans for Area 3 and Area 4 be forwarded to the City Council and selecting a preferred alternative- from Community Development Director Grindall (MOTION)

Background/Discussion – To guide future development, the City initiated a comprehensive revision to its General Plan in the mid-1980's. Following an extensive public process involving numerous workshops and input from five citizen committees, the City Council adopted the General Plan Update in 1992.

The General Plan identified and established land use designations for several Planning Areas, including Areas 3 and 4 in the southwest quadrant of the City. Area 3, a large portion of which has been developed, is bounded by Cherry Street, Stevenson Boulevard, the Union Pacific railroad tracks and Mowry Avenue. It is designated primarily for R&D High Tech development, but also includes the City's Silliman Recreation Complex, and an Ohlone College Newark Center. Area 4 is one of the last undeveloped areas in the City, it consists of 560 acres located between Mowry Avenue and Stevenson Boulevard, west of the Union Pacific railroad tracks. It is largely in agricultural use.

The General Plan requires that future development of Area 4 consist of an 18-hole golf course, high quality housing, and open space. The General Plan also requires that the City prepare a Specific Plan for Area 4 before any such development may occur, due to the complex conditions in this area including access, ownership and environmental constraints issues.

In 1999, a measure was placed on the City of Newark ballot to change the General Plan land use designation for Area 4 to conservation, open space and agricultural uses. The measure was rejected by the community by a 61.3% to 38.6% vote. As a result, the General Plan designations for Area 4, noted above, remain the City's vision for the development of Area 4.

Specific Plan Process for Areas 3 and 4

Complex ownership issues have, to date, precluded the development of Areas 3 and 4 as envisioned by the City's General Plan. Recently, however, New Technology Park Associates (NTPA), a limited partnership, has acquired title to or options to purchase substantial amounts of property in Areas 3 and 4. NTPA has now proposed the development of Area 4 consistent with the General Plan, including an 18-hole championship golf course, housing, and an elementary school. NTPA has also proposed that the City redesignate 77-acres owned by NTPA in Area 3 from R&D High Tech to residential use. Based on these proposals, the City agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding approved by the City Council on June 22, 2006 to prepare a Specific Plan for Area 3 and Area 4 and to consider the Area 3 redesignation.

The City's Specific Plan process commenced in late 2006, and consists of two phases. Phase one involves preparation of a conceptual plan and a feasibility analysis which evaluates development

constraints. Phase two will use the results of this constraints analysis as the basis for developing the Specific Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The constraints analysis was completed fall 2007. Work began on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in Spring, 2007. The Notice of Preparation for the EIR was distributed in May 2007. Upon approval of a concept plan, a detailed specific plan will be prepared. The Specific Plan, along with zoning changes would be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council in the fall of 2008.

Community Process

To obtain community input, the City conducted a series of public meetings. The first community meeting for the project was held in November 2006. The community meeting was very well attended and a variety of issues were raised at the meeting. Many issues raised centered around issues that will be part of the EIR such as traffic impacts and impacts to the Bay and surrounding habitat. An Open House, attended by approximately 50 people was held in April 2007 to explain the project progress. In November 2007, a community workshop was held to update the community on the United States Army Corps of Engineers verified wetlands delineation for the site and habitat survey results. In addition, land plan options were presented to the community for their comment and review. Approximately 85 community members attended the meeting.

At this meeting, community members gave specific input related to the proposed concept plans by drawing their comments and suggestions on maps at the meeting. After the November 2007 meeting, the planners and the technical consultants utilized the community input to revise the land use concept plan. A joint Community Meeting and Planning Commission Workshop was held on February 6, 2008. Approximately eighty (80) people attended the meeting.

Throughout the process, community input was generally constructive and helped to develop and refine alternatives. Many comments received addressed environmental issues that will be addressed in detail in the Environmental Impact Report. It should be noted that there was a portion of the meeting attendees who disagreed with the existing general plan vision and opposed any development in Area 4.

Concept Plans

This process has yielded two alternative land use concepts for each area. The alternatives represent refinements of numerous potential land use arrangements and have been developed in response to environmental conditions, development constraints and community input. Once approved by the City Council the conceptual land use plan will be the basis of the more detailed specific plan process which will be developed this summer and considered by the Planning Commission and City Council this fall.

Area 3 - The key variant between the alternatives in Area 3 is the site of the elementary school. In alternative A the school is located with in residential area in the southeast portion of the Area; with office uses or public uses identified for the property between Sportsfield Park and the Ohlone College campus. Residential uses on this site were analyzed in the planning process but were eliminated due to incompatibility with surrounding land uses. In alternative B the school site is located in the northern portion of Area 3 between the Sportsfield Park and the Ohlone College campus. Both alternatives envision the same number of residential uses, with Alternative A having slightly higher density.

Area 4- The primary variation between the alternatives in Area 4 is the arrangement of the golf course, residential and open space uses. Both alternatives would include roughly the same number of housing units. It is expected that both alternatives would have require a similar amount of wetland fill. It should be noted that both conceptual layouts would be possible without filling any wetlands; however, if that approach were followed, open space would be more discontinuous and restoration more difficult. A grade separated crossing of the Railroad tracks, as envisioned in the General Plan, serves as the primary access in both alternatives. An emergency vehicle access would be provided at Mowry Avenue. A trail segment along the levee on the Mowry Slough and along the Flood Control Channel is common to both alternatives. In Alternative A, residential is in the northern portion of the Area with the golf course in the southern portion. Open space uses in this alternative, divided between two discontinuous areas are scatted throughout the golf course. In Alternative B, the Golf Course is in the northern portion on the Area with the residential area in the southern section. The open space primarily forms and single large contiguous area.

Recommendation

In Area 3, staff recommends that an alternative with both variants be recommended to the City Council and carried forward into the Specific Plan in order to provide the School District with flexibility. There are numerous complex issues involved in school siting and Staff recommends that this decision be left to the District.

In Area 4, staff recommends that Alternative B be recommended to the City Council as the land use concept. This alternative provides the best balance of recreation, residential and quality open space. Alternative A includes a significant amount of housing adjacent to the railroad line and the distance of the bulk of the residential community would be from the primary vehicle access at Stevenson Boulevard. Alternative B allows for a large contiguous open space area that provides significant opportunities for restoration, conservation and enjoyment.

Attachments

Action - It is recommended that the Planning Commission, by motion, direct that the Concept Plan Alternatives be forwarded to the City Council with a recommendation that the preferred concept include both Alternative A and B for Area 3 and Alternative B for Area 4.