

MEMORANDUM

DATE November 28, 2011
TO Vacaville General Plan Steering Committee
FROM City Staff and The Planning Center | DC&E
RE **Policy Options: Parks, Complete Streets,
Transportation Level of Service (LOS)**

A General Plan is made up of text describing goals and objectives, policies, principles, standards, and plan proposals, as well as a set of maps and diagrams. Together, these constituent parts paint a picture of the community's future. To date, the City has been primarily focusing on the creation of the preferred land use alternative for the new growth areas and for the focus areas. As this task draws to a close, the City is now turning its primary focus to General Plan policies.

Goal of Steering Committee Meeting # 16

At Steering Committee Meeting #16, scheduled for December 1, 2011, we will discuss a handful of policy topics that will be incorporated into the new General Plan as policies. While the General Plan will cover many policy topics, Steering Committee Meeting #16 is intended to focus on policy topics that have generated the most public input and/or have a range of possible approaches. Some of those policy topics were identified in part during Steering Committee Meeting #9 on July 21, 2011 and Community Workshop #2 on August 20, 2011. (See attached summary notes from these meetings.) Others have been identified by staff and consultants based on Steering Committee and City Council input.

The Steering Committee will discuss the following policy topics during Meeting #16 as a precursor to the development of the Draft General Plan document:

- Park Acquisition, Development, and Maintenance
- Complete Streets
- Traffic Level of Service (LOS)

These topics are in addition to topics discussed during Meeting #15, on November 18, 2011, and covered in a separate memorandum.

Overview of the Process to Develop Policies

The General Plan Update is expected to carry forward many of the policies in the existing General Plan, which are working well for the City. However, there are some important policy topics in which the current General Plan policy language is vague, missing, or inadequate to respond to current conditions, or there may be difficulties in implementation of those policies. The process to address these policy gaps by refining existing policies and creating new ones, as needed, is as follows:

- ◆ **Review existing General Plan policies.** City staff from multiple departments have reviewed existing General Plan policies and have provided specific comments to The Planning Center | DC&E regarding how the existing policies are utilized, and have identified which policies need clarification, improvement, or removal. In addition, the General Plan Update consultant team is carefully reviewing the policies and is identifying what changes are needed to respond to State requirements by drawing from policies adopted by other California communities that are similar to Vacaville in terms of location, population, or role in the region.
- ◆ **Identify and discuss problematic policies and policy issues.** The major policy issues listed above have been identified through the General Plan Update process at public workshops, Steering Committee meetings, Technical Advisory Committee meetings, and City Council Study Sessions. City staff and The Planning Center | DC&E believe these require discussion with the Steering Committee.
- ◆ **Explore options for amending existing General Plan policies and/or adopting new policies.** City staff and The Planning Center |

DC&E have prepared preliminary policies and actions to address the major policy issues identified above. In addition, discussion questions have been posed for policy topics not yet discussed with the Steering Committee. Please note that City staff and The Planning Center | DC&E will continue to draft new and amend existing policies, and City staff will consider the possibility of holding additional meetings with the Steering Committee to review these other policies prior to presenting them in the Draft General Plan.

- ◆ **Review the Draft General Plan.** After receiving Steering Committee direction on policy options, the consultant team will incorporate the selected policies into the Draft General Plan. The Steering Committee will review the Draft General Plan at three meetings in summer 2012. However, if City staff and/or the General Plan consultants identify potential policies and/or issues that require additional input prior to the publication of the Draft General Plan, additional Steering Committee meetings will be scheduled.

A. *Provision of Parks*

The City has established a park standard to provide 4.5 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 people. Only park acres that are improved are counted as developed parkland. The City currently has approximately 3.43 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.¹ Vacaville needs more developed parkland, particularly in the neighborhoods in the western, central, and northeastern portions of the study area. The updated General Plan should include policies to support an increase in developed parkland.

Provision of a sound park system depends upon funding for three components: acquiring parkland, constructing parks, and maintaining

¹ Note that this number includes the 40 acres within Lagoon Valley Park that are designated as a Community Park and does not include approximately 18 acres of school-owned facilities that were previously counted as parkland under shared use agreements.

parks. Many funding sources are restricted and can only be used for one of these three components. The policy options in this memo address each component.

Examples of how other jurisdictions that have a similar size, socioeconomic profile, or character as Vacaville have addressed parks include the following:

- ◆ The City of Tracy has established a park service standard of 4 acres per 1,000 residents, although its General Plan directs the City to consider increasing this requirement to 5 acres per 1,000 residents. New development must provide park acreage or in-lieu fees at the required ratio in force at the time the project is approved. The City allows the following types of parks: Mini-Parks (1 to 3 acres in size); Neighborhood Parks (4 to 12 acres in size); Community Parks (13 to 50 acres in size); Regional Parks (greater than 50 acres in size); Linear Parks (size varies), and Special Use Parks (size varies)
- ◆ The City of Fairfield park standards include the following:
 - Neighborhood Parks (5 to 7 acres) - 1.5 developed acres per 1,000 residents.
 - Community Parks (40 acres) – 2 developed acres per 1,000 residents.

Fairfield's General Plan suggests funding mechanisms for park and open space facilities of interest to more than one entity, and directs the City to investigate funding opportunities for park acquisition and maintenance.

- ◆ The City of Livermore has established a park service standard of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, and requires new development to provide new park acreage or in-lieu fees at this ratio.

1. Policies on park service standards

As noted above, General Plan Policy 4.6-I 1 establishes a Citywide park standard to provide 4.5 park acres per 1,000 people, allocated as follows:

- 1.8 acres/1,000 residents of neighborhood park

- 1.7 acres/1,000 residents of community park, and
- 1.0 acres/1,000 residents of city park

Previous conversations with the Steering Committee regarding the City's adopted park service standards have resulted in strong consensus not to change these standards. Therefore, no change to this policy is proposed as part of the discussion at Meeting #16.

2. Draft policies on park acquisition

The 1975 Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) authorizes cities and counties to pass ordinances requiring that developers set aside land, donate conservation easements, or pay fees for park improvements. Revenues generated through a Quimby Ordinance cannot be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities. A Quimby Ordinance would require that, at the time a subdivision map is submitted, the applicant must either identify one or more park sites, or pay in-lieu fees for park development based on the value of the land that is being subdivided. Therefore, a Quimby Ordinance ensures that land for new parks is identified and dedicated as part of the planning approval process for new neighborhoods², as opposed to development impact fees, which are assessed at the time of the building permit, when the land has already been planned and subdivided. This approach makes it extremely difficult to incorporate parkland retroactively after a new neighborhood is already planned and the subdivision map is approved.

The example cities of Fairfield, Tracy, and Livermore mentioned above have all adopted Quimby Ordinances, as have many other cities and counties throughout California, from large urban cities to growing suburban communities and small rural towns. –

² The Quimby Act only allows a jurisdiction to exact an amount of parkland that is already provided community-wide. In Vacaville, for example, that number would currently be 3.43 acres per 1,000 population. This prevents a new project from bearing an unfair burden in rectifying existing parkland deficiencies.

- a. Implement a Quimby Ordinance requiring that park provision be considered and incorporated in the subdivision process.

3. Draft policies on park construction

Vacaville currently requires a Parks and Recreation Impact fee for new development. This fee is included and described under Section 11.01.020 of the Municipal Code. The fee intends to provide for the adequate provision of parks, recreation facilities and park improvements such as tennis courts, swimming pools, and soccer and ball fields as Vacaville's population grows.

- a. Adjust park impact fees to reflect a more accurate cost of developing park land based on real development costs. Include an adjustment factor for changes in the cost of construction and the cost of responding to changing requirements such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, playground safety standards, CEQA requirements, and new building technology that combats vandalism (such as concrete tables and video surveillance systems).
- b. Adjust the Comprehensive Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan to include a broader description of desired park facilities and allow staff the flexibility to include the facilities desired by the public.
- c. Continue to use park development impact fees to construct new parks.
- d. Proponents of large projects subject to Specific Plans and/or Development Agreements shall work with City staff early in the planning process to ensure that the project includes an adequate amount of developed parkland.

4. Draft policy options on park maintenance

Currently, maintenance of some Neighborhood Parks is partially funded from individual Lighting and Landscaping Maintenance Assessment Districts (LLMADs). Maintenance of the remaining Neighborhood Parks, as well as Community and City parks, is provided from the General Fund. This has resulted in a patchwork of small LLMADs across the City, meaning that residents within LLMADs pay a fee to support a Neighborhood Park, while those not in an LLMAD do not pay any fees. The City may want to consider implementing a citywide LLMAD to balance out public support for park maintenance. This would also save money by simplifying the administration of the many existing LLMADs. Approval of a city-wide LLMAD would require voter approval.

The two draft policies below represent two different possible approaches to funding ongoing park maintenance. These two policies would be mutually exclusive, although it would be possible and advisable to leave the current policy of requiring new LLMADs in place until and unless a citywide LLMAD were established.

- a. Implement a citywide Lighting and Landscaping Maintenance Assessment District (LLMAD) to fund park maintenance.

Note: This would require voter approval.

- b. Continue current policy of requiring individual new LLMADs for new development projects and leaving existing neighborhoods outside of LLMADs.

5. Draft policies on park size

General Plan Policy 4.6-I 2 establishes typical size and service area standards for neighborhood, community, and city parks as follows:

- Neighborhood Parks – 6 to 9 acres; 0.5-mile service area.
- Community Parks - 10 to 40 acres; 1- to 2-mile service area.
- City Parks - 100 acres or more; centrally sited to serve all areas of the city.

The draft policies presented below would not change the required size ranges, but would add allowances for smaller parks in cases where the land is not available but new parks are needed to serve the local area. An example of this type of situation would be the Peabody Center Focus Area, where the Preferred Land Use Alternative calls for adding High Density Residential. Under these draft policies, a new project in that Focus Area would be allowed to include a park smaller than 6 acres, because the surrounding area is already substantially urbanized and there is no existing park close by.

- a. All new parks shall be provided in accordance with the following park size standards:
 - New neighborhood parks must be a minimum of 6 acres in size, and up to 9 acres as needed to serve the local service area.
 - Smaller neighborhood parks may be approved in infill areas where there is a documented shortfall of parkland.
 - New community parks must be a minimum of 10 acres in size, and up to 40 acres as needed to serve the ~~local~~ planned service area.
- b. Vacaville's only "City" park (Centennial Park at 265 acres) shall be developed to provide a minimum ratio of 1.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

6. Draft policy on special use parks

Through the General Plan Update process, we have heard community input that Vacaville residents desire space for a number of special uses, including community gardens, dog parks, and skate parks. Although current City regulations do not prohibit these types of special uses, either on City-owned parks or on other properties, the General Plan could be revised to include a policy that explicitly supports and encourages special use facilities. The City is currently conducting a Recreational Needs

Assessment. The General Plan Update will consider the conclusions of this assessment in addition to the policy options listed below.

- a. Support and encourage the location of special use facilities on available park or other public lands where compatible with the existing and planned uses on surrounding properties.

B. Complete Streets and Alternative Transportation

The California Complete Streets Act (AB 1358), passed in 2008, requires all General Plan Updates after January 1, 2011 to “plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel” and defines “users of streets, roads, and highways” to include bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, motorists, pedestrians, users of public transportation, and seniors.

1. **How should the General Plan address all transportation system users?**
 - a. Develop and adopt a Complete Streets Ordinance requiring the accommodation of all travel modes, ages, and abilities, concurrent with any street redesign, repaving, or widening.
 - b. New development shall consider provision of bicycle paths and/or lanes.
 - c. New development shall consider provision of transit and bicycle facilities such as bus stops, bus bays, transit shelters, benches, on-site drop off locations, bicycle racks, lockers and showers.
 - d. When appropriate and whenever possible, support increased frequency and operational hours of public transit service consistent with current short- and long-range transit planning.

- e. Enhance and improve bicycle connections between neighborhoods and between neighborhoods and significant destinations such as parks, schools, transit stops and transit centers, shopping centers, and employment centers.
- f. Where existing street width or traffic volumes do not support creation or maintenance of striped bicycle lanes or shoulders, but where cyclists can be safely accommodated and other conditions permit, consider use of mechanisms such as “sharrows,”³ pavement markings, “share the road” signage to indicate to both drivers and bicyclists that bicycle use is permitted and should be expected.
- g. Evaluate the City’s current traffic calming ordinance that establishes a menu of acceptable traffic calming measures and criteria for determining when and where traffic measures should be installed in existing areas. Update the ordinance to be more specific about when traffic calming measures shall be implemented as part of new development.
- h. In coordination with the Solano Transportation Authority (STA), school districts, parent teacher organizations, neighborhood associations, and the school community, develop a Safe Routes to School plan for at least the area within 1.5 miles of each school. The plan shall designate Suggested Routes to School for walking, bicycling, and public transportation that include improvements to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort, such as continuous street sidewalk and pathway connections, controlled street crossings, and separate, clearly delineated spaces for pedestrians and cars. It will also identify and prioritize areas that are in need of further investment, such as new sidewalks, sidewalk repairs, crosswalks and signals, curb cuts, lighting, and signage.

³ Sharrows are markings painted on roadways indicating that auto traffic is expected to share the lane with cyclists.

C. Transportation Level of Service (LOS) Policy Options

Level of service describes the operating conditions experienced by roadway users. For cars and trucks, level of service is a qualitative measure of the effects of a number of factors, including speed and travel time, traffic interruptions, freedom to maneuver, driving comfort, and convenience. Levels of service are designated LOS A through F, from best to worst, which cover the entire range of traffic operations that might occur. LOS F represents conditions where the volume of traffic exceeds the capacity of the roadways and the flow of traffic breaks down, resulting in stop-and-go conditions and long queues of vehicles.

For the purposes of this memo, the LOS policy options focus on the policies to support the goal and vision for the city's transportation system rather than the specific procedures or methodologies that are used to calculate the LOS or apply the LOS standard.

Background

Within the General Plan Transportation Element, the LOS policy sets a standard by which the existing and future transportation system is measured. The LOS policy provides a means to measure whether the performance of the transportation system meets the goals and vision for the city. In application, the LOS policy is used to identify needed capital improvements to accommodate growth as part of this General Plan Update while meeting the LOS standard. In addition, through implementation of the General Plan, the LOS policy sets the significance threshold for which future development in the city is evaluated for impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and to which mitigation measures would be required to maintain the LOS standards.

Although the existing LOS policy allows for exceptions, the standard is relatively stringent compared to other cities in the region. This can lead to costly infrastructure needs and deter development because new development projects must build or fund improvements such as wider

roadways, new signals, or new turn lanes in order to maintain the flow of traffic at the LOS standard. In addition, in some cases, widening is not enough to mitigate to the current LOS C standard and a feasible improvement cannot be identified, so it is impossible to meet the standard. Finally, there are some reasons that communities may accept a lower LOS standard and slower traffic on some streets: slower traffic generally creates a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, and can also make drivers more likely to notice and stop at local businesses along the roadway. Therefore, The Planning Center | DC&E recommends that the City consider LOS policies that allow more flexibility while still avoiding significant traffic congestion and incorporating quality of life benefits.

Existing LOS Policy

The City's existing LOS policy is found in General Plan Section 6.1, Standards for Traffic Service and Street Improvements. The concept of LOS is introduced as the standard for measuring traffic flow and the hierarchy of roads is depicted. The City's LOS standard is set forth in Policies 6.1-G 1, 6.1-G 2, and 6.1-G 3. These policies state the following:

- 6.1-G 1 Strive to maintain LOS C as the minimum standard at all intersections, interchanges, and road links. Design improvements to provide for LOS C in the year 2025 based on the City's development forecast.

- 6.1-G 2 LOS D, for a particular intersection, interchange, or road link, shall be allowed by a decision maker on a project as an interim level of service where improvements are programmed by the City which will improve the level of service to LOS C or better. LOS D may also be approved by the City as an allowable standard by the City Council or designee for infill areas or situations where existing development or other practical considerations limit improvements.

6.1-G 3 LOS E or LOS F for a particular intersection, interchange, or road link may be allowed by the City Council on the basis of one of the following findings:

Finding 1

- The interchange, intersection, or road link that will experience the projected lower level of service is an infill or isolated area; and
- There is no practical and feasible way to mitigate the lower level of service; and
- The project resulting in the lower level of service is of clear, overall public benefit.

Finding 2

- A capital improvement project is reasonably scheduled to be completed which will improve the projected level of service to LOS D or better; and
- The interim impact of the projected traffic congestion is offset by the public benefits of the project.

Finding 3

- The City has entered into a development agreement which legally commits the City to approve the proposed project.

This existing policy covers all intersections (signalized and unsignalized), interchanges, and road links. Current implementation of this policy establishes LOS based on typical midweek AM and PM peak hour traffic volumes.

In addition to the General Plan policies, the Chapter 14.13 of the City Municipal Code, titled Traffic Impact Mitigation, describes the traffic impact analysis procedures, which implements the policies of the Circulation Element of the General Plan relative to LOS. Section 14.13.180.060 specifies the methodology the City uses to measure congestion at street intersections. As previously mentioned in the July

21, 2011 memo to the Steering Committee, the City is considering changing the methodology used locally to define LOS. It should be noted that this change would affect how the City evaluates traffic congestion regardless of whether the current LOS policy is revised.

Policy Options

The Planning Center | DC&E and Dowling Associates, the transportation consultant for the General Plan Update, reviewed the City's existing LOS policies, and in light of the background information provided above, identified the following issues and possible ways to structure the LOS policies within the Transportation Element in response.

The policy options below are based on policies from other cities or suggested modifications to existing policies. These options will be refined upon input from the Steering Committee and from City staff.

As noted above, the City's existing policy covers both signalized and unsignalized intersections as well as all interchanges and road links. However, City staff and consultants are considering changing the policy to apply only to signalized intersections. Therefore, the policy options below would apply only to signalized intersections.

1. Overall Lowering of LOS Threshold

The City could revise existing policy to maintain LOS based on mid-level D as the threshold throughout the City. This would provide more flexibility to the City to allow for new development projects and lower infrastructure costs. If the revised policy were written to follow the existing policy, it would read:

- A. Strive to maintain mid-level LOS D as the minimum standard at all intersections and interchanges. Design improvements to provide for LOS D in the year 2035 based on the City's development forecast.

2. LOS Standards based on Roadway Type

The City of Fairfield recently adopted a new LOS policy based on the type of roadway affected. It states that the City shall "...maintain a P.M. peak hour Level of Service of "D" or better for arterial streets, Level of Service "C" or better for collector streets, and LOS "B" or better for local streets, unless other public health, safety, or welfare factors determine otherwise."

Similar to the LOS policies in the City of Fairfield, the City could adopt LOS policies that are based on the functional roadway types. These roadway types would be defined in the Transportation Element and shown in the transportation diagram. These LOS policies would be sensitive to the roadway context. For example:

The City shall maintain the following LOS standards based on roadway type:

- A. Intersections on or crossing arterial streets shall not operate below mid-level LOS D. At intersections where a collector crosses an arterial street, the mid-level LOS D standard would apply.
- B. Intersections on or crossing collector streets shall not operate below LOS C. At intersections where a local street crosses a collector street, the LOS C standard would apply.

3. Multimodal LOS Standards

The existing LOS policies cover only vehicular traffic. Although cities are not required to have a LOS policy that covers modes other than vehicles, the California Office of Planning and Research's (OPR) *Update to the General Plan Guidelines: Complete Streets and the Circulation Element* suggests several possible modifications to the Transportation Element to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network, including performance measures for bicycling and walking, or multimodal LOS standards. Updated multimodal LOS policies could balance the need for vehicular circulation with that of other alternative modes, such as transit, bicycling, and walking. Multimodal LOS also provides a means of better

understanding the trade-offs between modes as they share the public right-of-way. The multimodal LOS method is designed for evaluating “complete streets,” context-sensitive design alternatives, and smart growth from the perspective of all users on the urban street.

The City could adopt multimodal LOS standards using the latest 2010 Highway Capacity Manual or other quality of service standards that have been developed for bicyclists and pedestrians. Most multimodal LOS standards use a similar “level of service” concept and provide LOS “grades.” However, instead of referring only to a driver’s perception of traffic operations, multimodal standards provide a LOS grade for a roadway corridor for each mode – auto, transit, bike, and pedestrian – based on the user’s perception of the quality of service provided by the street.

As a measure of the quality of the pedestrian’s experience, the Pedestrian LOS methodology included in the latest 2010 Highway Capacity Model is most sensitive to traffic volumes, buffer width between sidewalk and traffic, number of street trees, and parking occupancy. Using this methodology, a pedestrian LOS C standard might be represented by a tree-lined street where the traffic lane is separated from the sidewalk by parked cars. The Bicycle LOS depends upon the width of the paving between the outside lane stripe and the edge of pavement, pavement conditions, and vehicular speeds and volumes. For example, a bicycle LOS C for a roadway with a bike lane will require good pavement conditions.

Dowling recommends the following:

- ◆ Consider adopting LOS or quality of service standards for bicycling and walking based on the latest 2010 Highway Capacity Manual, bicycle LOS and pedestrian LOS, and other such measures as the bicycle compatibility index (BCI), Bicycle Environmental Quality Index, and Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index.

- ◆ Consider accepting lower traffic LOS at certain locations, such as downtown or adjacent to schools, where bicycling and walking could be considered as the priority modes and would be adversely affected by improvements to maintain the traffic LOS standard. Similarly, the City could adopt a policy accepting lower traffic LOS at key commercial/mixed use nodes where the right-of-way is restricted by existing buildings, which would be impacted by traffic flow improvements. For example, at the intersection of Elmira Road and Peabody Road, widening to add additional turn lanes to achieve an LOS C would affect both bicyclists' and pedestrians' travel through this intersection. The effect on bicyclists and pedestrians could be quantified using multimodal measures, such as pedestrian crossing and wait time, which would increase due to longer crossing distances and longer signal cycles.

Policy options to address multimodal LOS include:

- A. Maintain a pedestrian LOS C standard within identified pedestrian activity areas based on the 2010 Highway Capacity Manual methodology. A pedestrian activity area is defined as downtown or within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile walking distance of a school.
- B. Maintain a bicycle LOS C standard for all roadways with an existing or proposed bike lane based on the 2010 Highway Capacity Manual methodology.
- C. All proposed traffic improvement projects shall analyze and disclose impacts to pedestrian wait times, pedestrian crossing safety, and bike lanes or bike routes prior to approval.
- D. Accept lower traffic LOS at certain locations, such as downtown or adjacent to schools, where bicycling and walking could be considered as the priority modes and would be adversely affected by improvements to maintain the traffic LOS standard.

4. Context-Sensitive LOS Standards

The existing LOS policies in part relate the LOS standard to land use, specifically the “infill or isolated areas” in Policies 6.1-G 2 and 6.1-G 3. The City could adopt updated LOS policies that are based on surrounding land uses. This approach would reinforce the relationship between land use and transportation by setting LOS standards that relate to the land use context. This would relate to the land use diagram and would require that the specific areas be well-defined. In the example below, “revitalization zone” and “future growth areas” would be defined with a map and/or text description. For example, the Opportunity Hill area might be identified as a “revitalization zone,” while the East of Leisure Town Road area would be a “future growth area.”

Policy options based on surrounding land uses would be:

- A. The City shall maintain LOS D at all signalized intersections in the revitalization zone to allow for infill development and higher density development at transit centers.
- B. The City shall maintain LOS C at all signalized intersections in the rest of the city and in future growth areas to ensure that the transportation needs of future growth and existing development are addressed.

Alternatively, the City could consider a LOS standard for local and residential streets that is based on the quality of life for residents along the streets rather than a volume-to-capacity ratio. Possible other metrics incorporate safety and vehicle speed, such as the 2010 Highway Capacity Manual Multimodal LOS, or apply a volumes-based threshold that is based on residents’ perceptions of the impact on quality of life, such as the Traffic Infusion on Residential Environment (TIRE) index.

Similar to a policy adopted by the City of San Pablo, Vacaville could adopt a policy such as:

- C. Develop and manage local and residential streets to limit average daily vehicle volumes to 2,500 vehicles or less and 85th percentile speeds to 30 miles per hour or less.

- D. The City shall maintain a minimum LOS C at arterial and other major intersections where LOS D levels of congestion might contribute to an increase in traffic seeking shortcuts through nearby neighborhoods.

A T T A C H M E N T

S U M M A R I E S :

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CITY OF VACAVILLE GENERAL PLAN
STEERING COMMITTEE

City Council Chambers, Vacaville City Hall
650 Merchant Street, Vacaville

July 21, 2011
6:00 p.m.

Vacaville General Plan Update
Meeting #9:
Policy Issues
Meeting Summary

Committee Member Attendance

Chairman Joe Niccoli
Vice-Chair Pamela Greaves
Frank Crim - Absent
Brett Johnson
Dawn La Bar
Shannon Nadasdy - Absent
Denise Suihkonen
Steve Wilkins
James Woolsey

Staff in Attendance

Community Development Director Maureen Carson
City Planner Fred Buder
Senior Planner Tyra Hays
Acting Assistant Director Steve Sawyer
Park Planner Hew Hesterman
Community Services Director Kerry Walker
Public Works Director Rod Moresco
Assistant Director of Utilities Royce Cunningham
Senior Civil Engineer Steve Sawyer
Associate Civil Engineer Ozzie Hilton
Joanna Jansen, DC&E
Tanya Sundberg, DC&E

1. Roll Call:
2. Communications: None
3. Approval of Meeting Summary – April 14, 2011
Committee Member Crim moved, Vice-Chair Greaves seconded. Motion approved 9-0
4. Business from the Floor:

Peter Blicher related information regarding an economic summit which voted to pursue a study with the goal of reducing developer impact fees that could have bearing on what will be discussed later.

5. Status Update of the General Plan Process and Land Use Alternatives

Joanna Jansen, DC&E provided a brief overview of the process and the three land use alternatives that were approved by the City Council. The traffic, infrastructure and public services workbook should be completed and published in late August, and will be discussed as part of three meetings.

Community Development Director Carson provided a quick update, and reviewed the outreach that has occurred with other agencies and community groups when introducing the three alternatives and options. Once the alternatives are available for public review, there will be outreach to other responsible agencies.

6. Overview of the Process to Development Policies and Actions

Next policy development tasks: 1. Workshop on Saturday August 20th. 2. Draft preliminary goals, policies, and actions. 3. Steering committee meeting to review draft goals, policies, and actions. 4. Incorporate final policy options into draft General Plan.

7. Steering Committee Discussion on Policy Issues

a. Agricultural Buffer

1995 master water agreement with SID establishes 500 foot -buffer between agricultural lands and residential uses.

Development more than 1,000 ft east of Leisure Town Road requires an amendment to the master water agreement.

Amendment may consider expansion or contraction of buffer and appropriate uses within the buffer.

The master water agreement states that expansion of the Urban Service Area Boundary must consider expansion of the width of the agricultural buffer.

Development within the Northeast Area could require an additional agricultural buffer.

Public Comment:

Tom Phillippi, PEI, spoke on behalf of the Jepson Estates landowners. He provided illustrations for three options for the location of the 500 ft. agricultural buffer and the type of uses that could occur in the buffer. He answered questions from the Committee, adding that the property owners own property on both sides of the buffer alternatives and no farm land would be affected. He also reviewed how detention basins could be utilized.

Community Development Director Carson reviewed the Cities Urban Growth Boundary that goes up to the PG&E lines. She clarified that they don't anticipate having jurisdiction of that area until after 2028.

Ms. Jansen reviewed the buffer in the three different alternatives, adding that their discussion needs to consider the following:

How wide should the buffer be?

What uses should be allowed within the buffer?

Should a buffer be required adjacent to non-residential uses?

Where should the agricultural buffer be located; inside the urban service area? In the agricultural service area? Or straddling both?

Jim Gilliam, representing JLM Ranch, reviewed the area he represents, adding that a residential use is appropriate. He noted concern about placing agricultural next to the rural residential.

Public Comments:

- Potential issue of the growth boundary encumbering land.
- 600 feet is not an adequate buffer.
- Consider the legal ramifications of detention basins.
- Parks and open space should be accessible to people.
- Concern about locating detention basins east of the power lines, potential of kids riding dirt bikes in the area.
- Provide some type of access for maintenance.
- Existing uses in the area, such as farm animals may not be compatible with new residences.

Committee Member Comments:

- Consider providing passive open space.
- Provide a buffer adjacent to non-residential urban uses.
- 500 feet would be an acceptable width for an ag buffer.
- Provide landscaping within the buffer, but not paths that would encourage people to walk there.
- Be observant of the cost for maintenance of linear parks.
- Concern about creating parks that aren't really parks.

7:30 break

b. Policy Plans-Infrastructure Constraints and Permitted Use

- Inadequate infrastructure limits development in the Interchange Business Park, Golden Hill Business Park and Vaca Valley Business Park policy plans.
- Some commercial, manufacturing, and industrial uses allowed in the business park policy plans require sewer capacity beyond what is available.
- Some sewer capacity is allocated to users who will likely not use it, thus "stranding" capacity.
- Development within these policy plans will also require traffic mitigation due to Level Of Service deficiencies on Vaca Valley Parkway.

Public Comment Opened:

- Maintain the uses that are allowed in the Vaca Valley Business Park.
- Infrastructure should be available to accommodate hotels and restaurants.
- Membership organizations generate less traffic.
- Provide outreach to policy plan land owners and ensure they understand what changes may occur with their property.
- Concerns with allocated sewer capacity and how do we reimburse current rate payers.

Committee Member Comments:

- Improvements to the infrastructure should consider long range development.
- Sewer rights should not be a commodity for a land owner, but should be controlled by the City.
- If capacity is not being used in one area, it should be able to be reallocated in other areas.
- Having adequate capacity could be used to entice businesses to Vacaville.
- Receive a commitment from a user before building up capacity so we don't have capacity that won't be used.
- Provide flexibility.

c. Parks – Acquisition and Maintenance

A sustainable park system must properly fund three carefully balanced components:

1. Land - Right amount, location, and type
2. Development – Quality design, satisfying recreational needs, and providing safe environments
3. Maintenance – Maintaining original design quality

Vacaville's basic design requirements include:

- Utilization of the site's natural beauty including terrain features, creeks, mature trees, view sheds, etc.
- Provide for the recreation needs of the community.
- Provide a safe environment, meet safety and accessibility standards, and utilize durable materials.
- Design must be cost-effective to maintain.

Basic park maintenance costs include:

- Regular mowing and care of turf, trees, and shrubs.
- Clean up of trash, vandalism, and graffiti.
- Repair and periodic replacement of equipment, irrigation, paved surfaces, etc.
- Utilities – water (subsidized at 24%) and electricity

Cost per acre can vary greatly depending on access, design, development intensity, plant materials, detail, etc.

Three questions to consider

- Should the City continue to aspire to provide the current park standards?
- Should new development be required to provide the current park standards to the new residents?
- Should the City ask its residents to implement a citywide Landscape Maintenance Assessment District to more fairly fund park maintenance?

Public Comment:

- Jepson Ranch land owner's proposal provides park land.
- Parks can provide incentives and are great amenities to potential home buyers.
- Increase the amount of park space and improve access.
- Parks are more expensive to maintain than open space.
- Park overlays should not be eliminated from school property sites.
- Look at ways to provide parks and open space to areas where they are not currently available.

Committee Member Comments:

- Parks are an amenity that attracts people to our community.
- Should not reduce the standards just because we aren't currently meeting it.
- Use caution when creating bike/running paths so they do not provide areas where people can hang out.
- Be proactive in finding organizations to assist with graffiti removal
- Utilize fee for service.
- How we fund or create a citywide maintenance district may change as a result of how the State addresses redevelopment.
- Consider utilizing the Quimby Act

d. Level of Service for Traffic

- Level of Service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of the flow of traffic.
- LOS is rated A through F, from best to worst.
- Transportation Element of existing General Plan establishes a goal to main a LOS C, but allows for LOS D LOS E and LOS F under specific circumstances.
- LOS standards have implications for new development

Public Comments:

- LOS C is not an adequate standard.
- Standards should be raised rather than lowered.
- ITE standards should be utilized.
- Traffic is a large irritation to citizens.
- Development can be restricted by the high cost of infrastructure.

- LOS C is not economically feasible.
- LOS D is standard for most communities.
- The community is paying for improvements that will never occur.
- If uses are placed close together, citizens don't have to travel as far.
- Consider different LOS depending on the street and its usage.
- Development is being restricted in the community because of our current fees.

Committee Member Comments:

- Be realistic and don't set standards that cannot be met.
- Development east of Leisure Town Road will impact other parts of the community.
- Important to maintain a benchmark standard so that they don't continue to drop in the future.
- In some areas, the LOS could be lowered and still be acceptable.
- Utilize roundabouts.
- Be flexible to allow different standards for different road types.
- Provide bike lanes where possible.

9:55 break

e. Other issues:

John Thompson spoke on behalf of the Vacaville Unified School District. He requested that they continue to promote the downtown and provide mixed urban uses in that area. He added that we need to consider how the General Plan can promote the principles that are in the Opportunity Hill Master Plan.

Peter Blicher requested that the interests of existing residents and business owners are what should be addressed in the General Plan. We need to consider if we want Vacaville to be an urban or suburb-type city. He noted concern about the number of variances for development standards that are granted.

f. Correlation Between General Plan and Zoning Code

Ms. Carson reviewed the issue of zoning at the higher density with the option of lowering the density at the time of development. To reverse policies for in-fill could cause issue with neighborhoods, and compatibility with neighborhoods. She clarified that they are asking for direction on whether to continue the current policy of having base density apply to infill project which would respect existing neighborhoods and uphold expectations.

Public Comment:

- The housing density is already too dense. If you want a denser zoning, create that zoning.
- There are assumptions made for infrastructure planning based on the zoning.

Committee Member Comments:

- Provide examples of how other communities handle this situation.

9. Ms. Jansen reviewed the schedule of upcoming workshops and meetings.

Adjourn 10:40.

Workshop Summary

Vacaville General Plan Update Community Workshop #2 – Policy Issues August 20, 2011

Community Workshop #2 was focused on policy issues and took place on Saturday, August 20, 2011 at the McBride Senior Center. Approximately 32 people attended the workshop, forming five groups during the small group discussion. The workshop focused on creating policies for the General Plan Update related to four specific topics: the agricultural buffer, traffic Level of Service, parks, and infrastructure planning in policy plan areas. The policy discussion topics were chosen based on public input received at previous workshops and General Plan Steering Committee meetings. Workshop participants were broken up into small groups to discuss these four policy topics. The summary of the discussions below is organized by policy topic.

AGRICULTURAL BUFFER

How wide should the agricultural buffer be?

Most breakout groups agreed that agricultural buffer should be at least 500 feet, and at least one group would consider a buffer larger than 500 feet. For some groups, the use of agricultural pesticides was a big issue to consider when determining the width of the agricultural buffer.

Should a buffer be required adjacent to non-residential urban uses such as stores, offices, or warehouses?

Most groups agreed that the buffer should be required adjacent to non-residential urban uses, although there was not complete consensus on this issue. In addition, one group suggested that the decision to require an agricultural buffer should be based on potential health impacts related to agricultural pesticides.

Where should the agricultural buffer be located?

This question relates to the location of the agricultural buffer in relation to the City's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and the PG&E easement that is located immediately east of the UGB, which is actively farmed. The groups had varying opinions on this issue. One group reached consensus that the buffer should be located within the UGB so that the City could maintain control over the uses in the buffer, while another group had a four-to-one split in favor of locating the buffer within the UGB. Another group could not reach consensus on this issue, and suggested that the City look to the Solano Irrigation District (SID) for input. One group supported locating the buffer both within and outside of the UGB, using the 385-foot PG&E easement outside the UGB, plus 115 feet inside the UGB.

What uses should be allowed in the agricultural buffer?

Although this question was not included in the list of pre-determined questions, many groups weighed in on this issue based on comments that were raised during the question-and-answer period earlier in the

workshop. Most groups agreed that non-residential, low-intensity uses should be located within the agricultural buffer including detention ponds, alternative energy facilities, walking paths, and open space. Some participants were concerned about the safety of people using the buffer area for park and recreation purposes given the proximity of the PG&E transmission lines.

TRAFFIC LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

What Level of Service (LOS) policy makes the most sense for Vacaville?

Groups generally agreed that a single LOS policy doesn't make sense. Rather, groups supported establishing different LOS standards for different land uses, different parts of town (e.g. lower standards for business parks), and on different roadway types (e.g. lower standards on major roads). In general, the groups supported allowing lower standards in these different scenarios in order to help promote economic and job development, while one group supported lower LOS standards in order to promote walkability. Two groups agreed that LOS C (the City's existing LOS standard) or better should be the standard in residential areas.

PARKS

What are appropriate park standards and requirements for Vacaville?

All the breakout groups agreed that the City should maintain the current park standard requirement of 4.5 park acres per 1,000 residents. Groups also generally agreed that the City's existing ½-mile radius park service standard should be maintained, although one group thought that this standard should be flexible. Another group suggested that residential areas be required to be within 1 mile walking distance of a park.

What tools should the City use to help achieve its park standards and fund maintenance of City parks?

All the breakout groups were in support of implementing a citywide Landscaping Maintenance Assessment District to fund park maintenance as long as it imposes a reasonable fee. Some groups suggested that the City should find revenue to maintain parks from new development and that there should be better management of existing tax revenue.

Should new pocket parks be allowed?

Groups varied in opinion on whether new pocket parks should be allowed. Some groups generally supported pocket parks, but were concerned about the maintenance costs and whether they would result in fewer large parks. One group thought that pocket parks were not as useful as large parks.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING IN POLICY PLAN AREAS

How should the City address infrastructure planning for undeveloped land inside the policy plan areas?

Groups generally agreed that the policy plan areas are important for the City's economic health and for the creation of new jobs in Vacaville. Because of this, some groups supported reducing the traffic standards and all groups supported finding ways to increase the wastewater capacity in the policy plan areas. One group suggested a pay-back plan in which the City funds infrastructure improvements and is paid back by businesses, while several groups suggested that the City study this issue further. In addition, one group indicated that the City should continue to be flexible in what land uses are allowed in order to promote economic development.