



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY MEETING #1

Johnson Drive Economic Development Zone Draft Supplemental Impact Report Community Meeting

Thursday, October 22, 2015

6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Hart Middle School Multipurpose Room (4433 Willow Road)

Staff Present

Gerry Beaudin, Director of Community Development

Adam Weinstein, Planning Manager

Eric Luchini, Associate Planner

Steve Kirkpatrick, Director of Engineering

Mike Tassano, City Traffic Engineer

Tracy Dunne, Public Information Officer

Meeting Purpose

A public hearing at the City of Pleasanton Planning Commission was held on September 23, 2015 to solicit public comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR). To maximize public outreach from the neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity of the Johnson Drive Economic Development Zone (JDEDZ), a Community Meeting was held to receive further public comments on the DSEIR. The comments provided at this Community Meeting will be addressed in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (FSEIR). Subsequent Planning Commission and City Council Meetings will be held at a later date, where comments may also be provided. No action was taken on the DSEIR or JDEDZ at this Community Meeting.

1. Welcome and Review of Meeting Purpose.

Adam Weinstein opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Mr. Weinstein explained the purpose of the meeting would be to review the project and receive public comments on the DSEIR. Mr. Weinstein outlined the key objectives of the meeting:

- Provide an overview of the Johnson Drive Economic Development Zone Project
- Provide an overview of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process, and the DSEIR prepared for the JDEDZ
- Provide information on how to provide public input on the DSEIR

Eric Luchini presented the history of the Johnson Drive Economic Development Zone and the project objectives. Mr. Luchini stated that historically the Johnson Drive area has served primarily light industrial uses; however, there have also been some office and small retail uses as well. Mr. Luchini explained how many of these uses have moved to other locations, likely due to the lack of demand for light industrial uses at this time. Mr. Luchini described how the lack of investment and lack of economic production in the Johnson Drive area has resulted in vacant properties and destabilized infrastructure. Mr. Luchini said that City Council has recognized the development potential of the Johnson Drive area and has expressed the necessity of a comprehensive Master Plan to revitalize this area which is the last stretch of highly-visible underdeveloped land along a transportation corridor. Mr. Luchini added that Council has acknowledged the significant costs required to repair infrastructure and the limited tools available. Mr. Luchini explained how Council has determined the solution to add economic value to the area while minimizing environmental impacts is through a comprehensive Master Plan. Mr. Luchini said that ideally this strategy would help transform the area from primarily industrial to more significant and thriving retail. He added that in early 2014 Council established this EDZ program to help identify opportunity sites that were available for redevelopment with the aim to add value to the properties and promote long term economic stability to the community. Mr. Luchini said the JDEDZ consists of 12 parcels (approximately 40 acres) and has been selected as the pilot program location for the EDZ program. He added the goal of the EDZ is to provide consistent framework for the City to review and approve new uses and projects and to encourage development of a diverse mix of uses in the area that would promote long term economic stability.

Mr. Weinstein added that the CEQA requires local governments to analyze the potential environmental impacts the proposed project would have and that the supplemental EIR serves as a disclosure document of those impacts. Furthermore, the supplemental EIR is intended to engage the public, and to evaluate and reduce effects making the proposed project more environmentally sound through mitigation.

2. Meeting Open to the Public.

John, resident of Pleasanton, asked Mr. Weinstein to explain what an EDZ is and what are the goals and objectives of it.

Mr. Weinstein responded it is a land use designation intended to increase economic output.

Jerry Mercola, Commerce Circle business owner, stated his concerns with traffic and parking. He asked if the traffic analysis in the EIR analyzed big box stores or small retail.

Mr. Weinstein responded that no applications have been received; therefore, no specific stores were included in the study. He explained that the EIR uses a worst case scenario based on a mixture of uses and designated square footage. Mr. Weinstein clarified that the EIR analyzed a reasonable amount of development that would be likely to occur, which is roughly 140,000-square-feet of big box stores as well as smaller retail sites.

Debra, resident of Pleasanton, expressed her concern with traffic impacts to the area, specifically the issue of nearby parks that host sporting events on nights and weekends which would be the heaviest traffic time for big box retail. She added that the proximity to BART, Stoneridge Mall, and the freeway would increase the potential for crime.

A resident suggested traffic mitigations might be taken care of by taking out the regional draw of a big box store and putting in community oriented stores.

Steve, resident of Pleasanton, addressed the fact something needs to be developed on the vacant properties but suggested a large hotel might be more conducive to the area than big box retail.

Mr. Weinstein asked to clarify the concern about big box retail. He explained that the EIR lists permitted and conditionally permitted uses which include big box/club retail but there are several other uses as well including a hotel. Mr. Weinstein explicated the proposed site in the JDEDZ for big box retail is logical because of the nature of the site and proximity to the freeway but that other uses are allowed and will be considered.

Matt Sullivan, former City Council member and Planning Commissioner for City of Pleasanton, expressed his concern with the process of the project and whether or not it is fair to the community. Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Weinstein to describe the process of approval if the EIR passes with all the listed uses and later Costco, Walmart, or other club retail applies for the site.

Mr. Weinstein replied that under the current proposal, if they were to submit the project would go through the Design Review approval process. The Design Review approval process involves submitting plans for the building and infrastructure for staff to analyze and approve or deny. The project, if approved on the Zoning Administrator level, could be appealed by Planning Commission and/or City Council.

Mr. Sullivan said it is his understanding that a proposal like this, not in the current General Plan, should be a Specific Plan and as such should have a task force and multiple neighborhood and community meetings. He added that as a Specific Plan each use would come in as a Planned Unit Development application and would go to Planning Commission and City Council and could be referended by citizens. Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Weinstein if the projects approved by the Zoning Administrator are also referendable.

Mr. Weinstein replied, yes, any legislative act can be referended.

Mr. Sullivan addressed how the EIR mentions incentives and streamlining the approval process. He asked Mr. Weinstein what incentives the City would consider giving to the developers.

Mr. Weinstein responded that no specific incentives have been identified, that any proposed incentives would be subject to the City Council approval. Mr. Weinstein explained that several incentive options are being explored including dicing up the City investment in transportation investments and sales tax rebates.

Mr. Sullivan interpreted sales tax rebates to say the public would be subsidizing the developer to build the project.

Debbie, Johnson Drive business owner, asked Mr. Weinstein what will happen to businesses currently on Johnson Drive.

Mr. Weinstein replied that no relocations are required or proposed with this project. He added that all existing businesses will be grandfathered in.

Mr. Weinstein went back to Mr. Sullivan's previous comment regarding the sales tax rebates and stated that no incentives have been decided but rather that different subsidy options are being analyzed to see what will work. He added, a fiscal analysis will be added as an appendix to the EIR to show the revenue gains to the City if the proposed businesses were to move in. Mr. Weinstein offered reassurance that the City is cognizant of using tax-payer funds to subsidize developers.

A resident addressed their concern with traffic in the area, specifically the southbound entrance to I-680, and how the plan does not adequately address the issue.

Barb, resident of Pleasanton, expressed her opinion that the meeting notifications have been inadequate. Furthermore, she stated concerns with noise, traffic, and esthetics.

Bill Wheeler, owner of Black Tie Transportation on Johnson Drive, identified his biggest concern to be traffic. He also addressed the potential for the zoning to devalue both his property and his business. Mr. Wheeler explained that while the existing businesses are being grandfathered in they will not be allowed to expand with the new zoning, so while they are allowed to stay, other factors will push them out. Mr. Wheeler suggested considering an event center rather than big box retail. He also expressed concern with the timing and notification of the meetings.

Mr. Weinstein responded to the issue of meeting notification, stating the City is making an effort to increase public outreach for future meetings.

Kevin Johnson, Manager of the Double Tree Hotel on Johnson Drive, asked why the JDEDZ is limited to the 12 parcels and not the entire area.

Mr. Weinstein replied that the boundaries were driven by property owner interest, city conservatism, and caution.

Mr. Johnson said the traffic conditions need to be better addressed. He added that the Double Tree has performed its own economic analysis about expanding the hotel and adding an event center. The Double Tree analysis concluded the parking mitigation costs would be too expensive and ultimately limit the possibility of growth.

A Val Vista resident asked if any study had been done to address property value impacts.

Mr. Weinstein responded that effects on home values are typically not addressed in EIR's. He explained, generally when an EDZ happens it at very least doesn't have an adverse effect on

property values but that it is something that can be addressed in the response to comments document.

Lynne, Commerce Circle business owner, expressed concern with traffic in the area. She added that there will be a negative impact on the quality of life for those who live and work in area.

Cathy, resident of Pleasanton, asked about the widening of Commerce Circle and how it will affect people who have businesses in the area.

Mr. Weinstein replied that the JDEDZ proposal does not include any widening of Commerce Circle that the infrastructure improvements would be on Johnson Drive. He added that the construction would be strategically planned to have minimal impact, and that those details are still being evaluated.

Cathy asked if CalTrans is aware of the proposed changes.

Mr. Weinstein replied yes, CalTrans is involved with the project.

Cathy asked if the housing had been considered for subject sites.

Mr. Weinstein responded that housing is not ideal for the location due to the proximity to the freeways.

Cathy asked where the new freeway exit would go.

Mr. Weinstein replied there is no new exit proposed.

Ann, a Val Vista resident, expressed concern with sidewalks and the proposal to widen Stoneridge Drive. Ann suggested a pedestrian trail be added to the plan. She asked if the West Las Positas interchange could be addressed to relieve traffic on Stoneridge Drive.

Joanne, a Val Vista resident, asked if CalTrans does not approve the project would it continue.

Mr. Weinstein replied that if CalTrans did not agree to the project the City would have to revisit the viability. He explained that without the traffic improvements suggested in the EIR the City would have to re-evaluate what part of the project would move forward. Mr. Weinstein said that timing is being addressed with CalTrans. He also replied that changes to West Las Positas are not being considered.

A resident asked who is paying for the CalTrans work to be done.

Mr. Weinstein replied that no specific funding has been identified yet, but that it would likely come from City, Federal, and Regional funds as well as from some property owners in the JDEDZ.

Mr. Sullivan addressed the West Las Positas comment, adding that changes to the intersection were removed from the General Plan roughly ten years ago by City Council in an effort to minimize traffic to surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Sullivan explained how changing the I-580/I-680 interchange would reopen the West Las Positas proposals. He asked Mr. Weinstein if the aforementioned fiscal study is considered a public document. Mr. Sullivan discussed previous projects and their impacts as he has witnessed over the years.

Deb, resident of Pleasanton, asked why the I-580/I-680 interchange is being discussed but the streets are not being addressed.

Mr. Weinstein responded that the I-580/I-680 interchange is being discussed because future improvements of the interchange, if completed, would mitigate the Johnson Drive EDZ impacts. He further explained that the draft SEIR analyzes traffic signals, widening of Johnson Drive, the northbound I-680 onramp, and Stoneridge Drive. Mr. Weinstein explicated that while long-term improvements would assist in traffic mitigation, the EIR focuses on near-term improvements.

A resident asked Mr. Luchini if there is a specific time in which the City will select tenants.

Mr. Weinstein responded that the City is not focused on individual tenants or businesses. He explained how the objective of the EDZ is to provide desirable economic conditions that entice businesses to move into.

Mr. Weinstein explained how the purpose of the EIR is to inform the City Council, Planning Commission, and the public of the impacts of the proposed project so that they can make an informed decision.

A resident asked Mr. Weinstein what the JDEDZ EIR cost.

Mr. Weinstein replied he did not have the exact figure but that it was close to \$200,000. He explained that property owners paid into a City account, and then the City paid the consultant for the EIR so the consultant did not have any contact with the property owners who paid for the study.

A resident asked Mr. Weinstein if property owners were given a choice to fund the study.

Mr. Weinstein replied yes, the property owners were given a choice. He added, for example, Black Tie Transportation did not participate.

A resident asked Mr. Wheeler why Black Tie Transportation did not participate.

Mr. Wheeler replied the study had no benefit to the company and that he only just received the first notification about the project two months ago.

Mr. Weinstein added that while people are usually not eager to pay for studies that are undertaken by the City, there were enough participants willing to fund this EIR that the City did not have to ask other property owners nor did the City have to draw from its revenue.

A resident asked Mr. Weinstein who specifically paid for the study.

Mr. Weinstein replied that the company Nearon paid for it.

A resident asked what Johnson Drive Holdings, the owner of all the vacant land, wants to see happen on their property.

Mr. Weinstein responded that the EIR is not a feasibility study for a specific business on a specific site but rather that it is an environmental impact study addressing long term economic change for the entire Economic Development Zone. He explained that if a feasibility study were necessary for a big box store or hotel or anything else that the study would have to be performed independently.

Several residents spoke to the fact the study was funded by the property owners who would benefit from the project and therefore it is a conflict of interest and the City should have sought funding from elsewhere.

Mr. Weinstein reiterated that while the EIR was funded by the property owners in the JDEDZ boundaries they did not have any contact with or influence over the consultant.

Gerry Beaudin, Director of Community Development, clarified that this funding process is common if not standard across the State. He explained that City's don't fund environmental studies because the developers are responsible. Mr. Beaudin described how the City acts as an intermediary between the consultants and developers. He went on to explain that Pleasanton is a city of planned progress and as such the City Council has requested an EDZ to ensure planned development rather than piecing the development together.

Mr. Johnson asked if Nearon has specific plans in mind for the property or if they have already reached out to any businesses such as Costco.

Mr. Weinstein responded that question would have to be directed to Nearon.

Mr. Johnson expressed concern that Nearon is the only one benefiting from the EDZ.

Mr. Beaudin clarified that while Nearon owns 26 acres within the JDEDZ, the JDEDZ covers 40 acres and is a comprehensive land use study that goes far beyond Nearon's property.

Mr. Johnson challenged Mr. Beaudin's earlier comment that the objective of the EDZ is to avoid piecemeal development. Mr. Johnson argued that choosing 12 parcels for the EDZ instead of the entire area is piecemealing the development and contradictory to the goal.

Mr. Beaudin replied that Mr. Johnson can contact the City if he would like his property to be added to the JDEDZ. He further explained that there is thriving economic activity in the area which was recognized when the boundaries were drawn, and that the parcels chosen were those deemed to be most underutilized.

Several residents expressed concern with the notification process for the project.

Mr. Weinstein replied that the City maintains an interested parties list for both mail and email which anyone can opt into, also the meetings are being published on Twitter, the City website, Valley Times newspaper, and the Pleasanton Weekly website.

Mr. Beaudin added that the City is aware of the notification issues and are looking into ways to increase public outreach for future meetings.

Mr. Weinstein thanked everyone for coming out and asked that anyone who didn't receive notice and wants to know about future meetings add their name to the interested parties list in the back.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45pm.

For further information call Eric Luchini at (925) 931-5612 or email eluchini@cityofpleasantonca.gov