

### **Planning Commission Meeting August 21, 2008 Summary:**

The Planning Commission met last Thursday to discuss whether the three General Plan Land Use Alternatives and the No Project Alternative (required by CEQA) fully bracket the range of land use options for further analysis through the General Plan Update, EIR, and Public Facilities Finance Plan, to conduct a public hearing, and to request a recommendation on the preferred Land Use Alternative.

The Planning Commission heard a number of public comments on the merits of the alternatives and had a thorough discussion amongst themselves. The Commission made a recommendation that the alternatives fully bracket the range of land use options.

The Commissioners indicated that they were not comfortable making a recommendation yet on the selection of the alternative until they had time to review the application packets received from land owners requesting changes to the General Plan for their individual properties. All of these land owner requests are reflected in at least one of the Land Use Alternatives but they are not all in the same alternative.

The Commission will also be going through each of the Special Planning area and Opportunity sites individually and indicating the preferred land use mix. The Planning Commission will consider these items at their next special meeting scheduled September 11, 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

### **Planning Commission Meeting August 21, 2008 Public Hearing Notes:**

#### **Presentation of Land Use Alternatives for 2030 General Plan** (see presentation)

#### **Questions of staff by the Planning Commission:**

Q: Tom Hayes: Asked for clarification if the 55/45 multi family/single family was close to where we are now.

R: Brendan Vieg: Yes

Q: Mary Brownell: Is the increase in population, pg. 4, 37% growth rate since 1994? Doesn't a lot of that have to do with annexations or new home construction?

R: Brendan Vieg: Not due to annexation, because the entire planning area was taken into consideration. Suggested to look at Lindo Channel all the way to Lassen for mixed use.

Q: Mary Brownell: Is the county's Bell Muir area different than the City's Bell Muir area?

R: Brendan Vieg: More than just geographic differences. Densities of development we each want are vastly different.

Q: Susan Minasian: On pg. 6, asked about possibly modifying the area on Esplanade between Lindo channel and Lassen into a mixed use and possibly south as well. Are you talking about the Chico nut property?

R: Brendan Vieg clarified that no, it does not include Chico Nut. Just means as far as Lindo Channel.

More discussion about why land owner request letters not shared with the Planning Commission sooner. Brendan Vieg mentioned they weren't written to the PC, but in response to the city's request for landowner applications. All of those requests were taken into consideration when coming up with the 3 Land Use alternatives. At least one of the 3 Land Use alternatives adequately reflects what the landowner requested on their property.

Q: Dave Kelley: Regarding AB 32, CA Climate Change Act asked: what's your sense of the effect of good planning principles?

R: Brendan Vieg: We're frontloading on those policies and because there are required by the state, we'll need to develop strategies, a mix of policies and good planning principles.

R: Pam Johns: The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will have to measure this. As we move forward, we may have more quantitative analysis.

Q: Dave Kelley: Study area 3, Bell Muir, is the greenline to be relocated? Is that true the county is going to do that?

R: Brendan Vieg: Caveat, yes they are suggesting that area doesn't constitute a line in the sand, just that the area is a place where it would be most movable.

Q: Dave Kelley: Asked about walkable or complete neighborhoods? Once this moves forward, will we get a chance to look at these?

R: Pam Johns: The density and mix of uses will vary depending on proximity to other services, and results in how we will know when to move forward. We have tools that can show how, and models that will be scaled to help you understand.

R: Brendan Vieg: Added we haven't lost the areas we identified in the 1994 General Plan, but we may not have been as successful as we had hoped implementing the mixed use neighborhood core concept, mainly due to economic issues.

R: Pam Johns: We will have opportunity to make adjustments as we go forward. Reminded everyone that we won't be locked in once we determine a preferred alternative or range of alternatives.

Jon Luvaas: AB 32, CA Climate Protection Act of 2006 mandates the goal of reducing heat trapping gases by 25% by 2020. This goal is also what the City's Sustainability Task Force is recommending, in spite of growth. The Task Force is finding that locally, the vast majority of the emissions in Chico are created by transportation. We don't yet have the data or depth of analysis to let us know what kind of growth pattern we're going to have to have to reduce the emissions this much. Trends and the split between single family and multi-family; between 1990 and 2000 illustrate the bulk of production was in single family. Haven't had 70% single family built since about 1960.

## **Public Hearing**

Alan Gair - Expressed concern with the growth projections and support of no growth or limited growth, advocated for a more conservative approach.

Chris Nelson- Macintosh/Estes, stated personal opposition to all 3 alternatives. Does not feel the Diamond Match land is safe. Mentioned the asphalt cap there is cracked and not well-maintained.

O.J. McMillan- Representing Butte Environmental Council (BEC), supports Alternative C and disagrees with the staff's analysis of the growth alternatives provided in the 8-5 staff report.

Mike McLaughlin- Resident of Paradise, spoke about Alt A, specifically concerning the Skyway, considers it aesthetically as an extension of the town. Suggested the Swartz property, and Nance Canyon, should tread gently on the corridor of the skyway. Should also include a scenic corridor element.

Jason Bougie- Butte Community Builders Association., Bell Muir area, discussed density. Doesn't know anybody that wants to live in an increasingly dense environment. Asked about the discussion points raised in his letter? Asked how the General Plan is going to change the hearts and minds of the people that want to live here?

Bob Kromer- Supports managed and controlled growth. Likes a hybrid of A,B,C. Recommend an approach that makes sufficient land available. Suggested limited land will drive up prices. Emphasized job creation and free trade zones. Described young graduates leaving, and discussed the need to fix situation. Suggested Bell Muir is great area, including mud creek, once the Eaton road extension opens it up.

Grace Marvin- Conservation Chair, Yahi Group, advocated encouraging selection of Alternative C if there is some variation from the existing General Plan needed. Advocated for preserving the greenline. Asked if a water element could be added in the general plan? Suggested it's essential that it should be. Mentioned that Butte Co is adopting water as an element.

Luke Anderson- Supports Alternative C.

Karen Goodwin- Supports sustainability, livability and enjoyable places. The Plan should promote walkability, mass transit and be bike-friendly. Advocated for community gardens, creative mixed uses of businesses, including functional art, and sculptures you can tie your bike to.

Ken Fleming- Believes C is the least destructive, but supports a no option. Concerned about “mini leap frog” if we continue to stretch out the boundaries, supports a water element. Asked if staff had looked at income data for Butte County and the City of Chico for this process?

Debbie Villasenor- Leans toward option C, recognizes the need for sustainability. Looking for more of a hybrid. Would really like to be able to look at the details. “Quality of Life” a community we can live, work and have fun in. Wants to hear more details, about traffic and noise. Advocated for the need to sustain the creeks, to use as an asset.

Elizabeth Devereaux - 1994 GP Task Force, Supports compact urban form, as close to the center as possible, infill, and making sure we complete approved projects that aren't built yet. AB 375 Smart Growth bill will get result in transportation dollars for good planning. Supports a ring transit idea. Suggested not looking at developing pristine land until we've used up the other. Supports Alt C.

Marshall Thompson- Bell Muir property owner, supports growth there, contiguous and virtually surrounded by development. Suggested a good area would be between Rodeo and Alamo. Rather than Alternative A, Alternative B includes Bell Muir, recommends B. Recommend against Alt C. Did not want high density.

Michael Hapinjan- Said there are people that would live at increased densities when given the choice, over living in a non-ecologically viable way.

Richard Harriman - Echoed Elizabeth Devereaux's comments. Suggested looking at the Visalia General Plan mechanisms, for phasing growth. Suggested finishing what was started with the 1994 GP.

Jeanne Thatcher - Asked about university expansion and its impact on the urban core.

Nancy Ostrom - On the GPAC, suggested Historical Preservation needs to be in the plan. Specifically regarding the Esplanade. Understands its designated office mixed use. Concerned with the definition as it reads now.

Carol Whipple - Concerned about the canal that is around the Mud Creek and Bell Muir area. Suggested the Corp of Engineers should be maintaining the land by burning instead of scraping it.

Marshall Thompson - Added that he represents a neighborhood association of about 50, the Bell Muir Neighborhood Association.

Luke Anderson- Supports mixed use concept and advocated it doesn't mean ugly. Used Europe as an example, described how it's quite beautiful and quaint.

### **Alternatives Bracketing Discussion:**

Jon Luvaas - discussed the first step strategy for tonight.

1. Review the alternatives and make sure that they bracket the full range of growth alternatives; add opportunity sites of interest.
2. Review pros and cons of the various alternatives.
3. Discuss how we might mix/match pieces of the various alternatives

Tom Hayes: Thinks the 3 alternatives certainly do bracket the projected growth. How move forward within the context of the 3; certainly it's going to be a different looking thing. Policy and analysis should be structured such that it grows out of the preferred alternative. He voiced his appreciation the work of staff, consultants and all the information presented and especially the comments provided tonight.

Q: Mary Brownell: Speaking about alternative A, specifically both sides of Hicks, if further study determines fewer constraints, would the area or could the area be expanded?

Q: John Merz: Advocates for the no project alternative, the 1994 General Plan. Asked, can we superimpose zoning designations over the 1994 plan and create a new alternative?

Q: Jon Luvaas: The 1994 plan was supposed to be a 20-year plan. Since the population is 7,000 less than was projected, does that extend the life/viability of the 1994 General Plan?

R: Pam Johns: The 1994 GP has been implemented to a substantial degree. Now in 2008 we know more about where that projection landed.

R: Brendan: Alt C really is our 1994 General Plan with new designations applied.

Jon Luvaas: Discussed the possibility of eastern Park Avenue - from Durham hwy to 99. Currently a mix of light industrial, commercial, heavy industrial and even a hotel. Really don't have a plan there. Not a lovely part of town. Thinks that it should be added for opportunity site analysis. Not sure it's great for residential, but maybe on the back of lots.

R: Brendan Vieg: Suggested the possibility of an urban reserve (fairgrounds).

Jon Luvaas: Talked about Eaton at Morseman, and how the south side Tuscan property was rezoned. Asked why staff eliminated the commercial at the intersection. Suggested if mixed use neigh core (MUNC) is eliminated the General Plan, then it needs to go in nearby. Stated the area is getting a lot of growth. Would like to see a MUNC there. Suggested the need for MUNC between 99 to Cohasset on Eaton, due to lack of commercial zoning. Suggested another opportunity for MUNC at Lassen/Godman.

Tom Hayes: Talked about Eaton area currently designated as Multi-Family Residential based on airport issues. Suggested about putting commercial there instead, less conflicts.

Jon Luvass: Talked about Cohasset and Eaton, the little mall there is nice. Does not think a good MUNC needs to be 8-12 acres. Suggested the need for more small stuff, markets, and cafés.

Tom Hayes: East Ave Marketplace serves as a MUNC. We haven't really lost any; they just haven't happened, we created two new ones in Meriam Park. Concept not lost.

Dave Kelley: Agreed with Jon and Tom about the need to place MUNC strategically.

Jon Luvaas: Suggested zoning or use definitions could be tightened up.

Tom Hayes: Offered an example to illustrate something that gives identity to a neighborhood. Fifth and Ivy, a neighborhood core can be a lot of different things.

John Merz: Stated South Entler and North Chico wouldn't be in my "alternative".

Jon Luvaas: Likes the idea of making the most of what we have; building on the momentum of implementing the goals of the 1994 General Plan.

Q: John Merz: Suggested opportunity sites are maximizations in many cases. Those numbers haven't been crunched. It's all based on the assumptions put in. Referred to the regional housing needs for Chico - it's one of the things he's really worried about. What the state expects Chico to do. Is it a mandate or a guideline?

R: Brendan Veig- Thinks we may be able to meet our Regional Housing Needs Assessment (REHA) #s in our existing General Plan, but what we're looking at here is out 20 yrs, not 5 yrs.

R: Pam Johns: Suggested it's important to note that staff looked at development of undeveloped land, but did not take into account the redevelopment of existing developed sites. If there was a deficit, it would need to be made up by redevelopment.

Jon Luvaas: Stated any property in Chico may redevelop; it may just be a question of when.

Dave Kelley: Suggested the role of the Planning Commission is to look at the plans in terms of feasibility. Then dial it back to what we think will work. If the Planning Commission only looks at Alternative C, then they are doing a disservice to the community.

Dave Kelley: Offered a Motion- Forward the 3 land use Alternatives A, B, and, C and the no project alternative. Confirm they fully bracket the range of alternatives, as amended

by Jon Luvaas's comments. Lassen, east of 99. Eaton, between Morseman and 99. Eastern Park from Durham hwy to 99.

Seconded by Tom Hayes.

Vote: 7-0

### **Discussion of Pros and Cons:**

John Merz: Stated he wants another option, since the no project alternative cannot be altered. He suggests "D" which would be the current General Plan with some changes in land use or designations.

Susan Minasian: Concerned about opportunity site #7 (Downtown) - what would be the effect on the downtown? Suggested a bikable, walkable downtown. We have more seniors. They can't get on their bike or can't walk. We are going to have to talk about that ugly word "parking". Want's to be sure we really protect the downtown. Interested in exploring B. Does not see a lot to like in Alternative A. Suggested taking B and adding some elements of C to it. Regarding the market and single family homes, she asked the question: Do we have an obligation to save the developers from themselves or allow them to take a certain amount of risk?

Dave Kelley: Suggested B is more representative of what it sounds like people want. May be improved to protect the environment. GPAC almost unanimously agreed.

Tom Hayes: Suggested Alternative B as a starting point. Would do a disservice if the Planning Commission did not look at the larger picture and then dial back from there. Suggest even designating areas as urban reserves. Timing of actual development. Alternative B needs to have a realistic analysis of the constrained areas and what can really be developed there and what can't. Along Bruce, West Airport area, are those even on the table anymore? Or just a portion of them? Personally believes the City need mud creek in the preferred alternative to drive the development of the NWCSP. Mentioned the alignment to the treatment plant. Mud Creek will determine how Bell Muir develops. Acknowledged Midway the most controversial, breaking the green line. Does not think the landowner on Entlers idea is very feasible without the Nicholas property. Raised questions about the land use configurations for Macintosh and Estes, wonder why the City would put industrial office mixed use on the west side of the rail road tracks. Suggest very low density residential.

Kathy Barrett: Concurred with Tom. Didn't like A, but thinks C is too limiting, so actually likes starting out with B.

Jon Luvaas: Suggested starting with C and expanding, rather than start with B and cutting. B has 3 areas so highly constrained that development is extremely unlikely. Plan counts on development being likely. Parts of Alternative B and C simply will not develop under federal law and will be included in the HCCP. Regarding land west of airport, there

are some slight possibilities, but some areas are heavily constrained. Regarding areas west of greenline, there may be a few that make sense. Stated he would be willing to consider, east of rail road tracks, particularly, but with exceptions. Stated from a planning standpoint, having all of Mud Creek and Bell Muir as a master plan area would be ideal, but need to take realities into account. Mud Creek is outside the greenline, 400+ acres of land used for agriculture. Landowners claim it's bad soil. But, it does fine with a great number of crops. Very viable for long term practical use. A personal source says if Mud Creek goes into the plan, this plan will go into referendum. East of rail road tracks, the area adjacent to the south Entler property, just west of the greenline (midway property) has rough period of past struggle over that area 20 years ago. Stated opposition due to moving into orchard land. Summary, alt B is a non-starter.

Mary Brownell: Suggested starting off with C and adding some areas that make sense. She says she knows what living on west side is like and knows the constraints that tracks place on residents. Suggested an above-ground crossing needs to come first, before development on the Westside. Added information about Macintosh Estes area on the map, and stated there is a Union Pacific spur on it (tracks aren't there). Hesitant to put residential growth in an area (Otterson) that could grow commercially. Does not like idea of moving the greenline. Suggested the feasibility of Doe Mill Honey Run as a growth area, tack it on to C, study it and see if its viable. Stated Bell Muir has the most potential, if you look at it from an aerial map. Recommended group meetings with the neighbors, get their input. Wants to start with C and see how to add into it.

John Merz: Reminded the other commissioners he still wants C minus. Suggested either C or the existing plan as a starting point.

Q: Susan Minasian: With such a divided commission, is there an option for you to bring back both B and C?

R: Pam Johns: Great discussion, but want to clarify that all 3 will come back.

Q: Mary Brownell: Asked about the Pomona Special Planning Area 13? Suggested not much info available.

R: Brendan Vieg: Referred her to a section in the 8/5 report.

Mary Brownell: Mentioned trouble with developing higher density in the extreme outlying areas.

Q: Jon Luvaas: Asked for the commission to suggest a range of likelihood. Suggested including that input as component before getting too carried away.

R: Pam Johns: Stated she asked BAE if there were some rules of thumb. Depending on market conditions, age of an area, and redevelopment resources; with so many factors predicting the future very speculative.

Dave Kelley: Suggested when dealing with office mixed use or commercial mixed use – the result is usually commercial or office, but the residential is voluntary. You can have the incentive, but you can't guarantee that you're going to get residential over commercial or office.

**Finish General Plan discussion**

10:42pm

Polled the commission about September 11, 2008 special meeting.

Will be continuing the General Plan discussion on September 11, 2008 meeting.

**Attached:**

Letter 1 - Butte Environmental Council

Letter 2 - Kromer

Letter 3 - Thompson

Letter 4 - Torres