



Staff Report

November 15, 2004

TO: Natural Resources Commission

FROM: Sue Gedestad, Operations Administrator
Katherine Hess, Community Development Administrator

SUBJECT: Covell Village Project Review

Recommendation

1. Staff recommends the Natural Resources Commission take public comment and make preliminary recommendations to the City Council on the following aspects of the Covell Village project applications:
 - a. Energy and water conservation.
 - b. Alternative transportation methods.
 - c. Trash collection.
2. Staff recommends that Commission discussion of the air quality impacts from traffic, impacts of the former landfill, and water be deferred until the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is available for public review.

Overview

The purpose of this report and agenda item is to provide the Commission with an opportunity to comment on general design and policy questions related to the project as currently proposed. The Commission is not being asked (nor is expected), to render a final recommendation on the project at this time. To the extent practical, given the level of project detail available, the Commission is being asked to make general recommendations on a number of issues outlined later in this report. The Commission is also encouraged to identify and provide feedback to staff and the applicant on other issues within its purview. The Commission (and staff) will have an opportunity to review and comment on the project and its potential impacts as additional information is developed and project details are finalized (e.g. review and comment on the draft EIR).

Background and Analysis

The city is processing applications for the “Covell Village” development proposal, at the northwest corner of Covell Boulevard and Pole Line Road. The project includes 1,515 residential units and 210,000 square feet of non-residential uses, plus parks and open space, a school site, and a fire station site. The total site is 422 acres, including the habitat and hospice areas at the north edge. More detailed project information is also available at www.cityofdavis.org/covell.

The project site is currently outside the City limits and designated for “Agriculture” on the City of Davis General Plan map. The property owner has submitted an application for General Plan Amendment, Rezoning, Development Agreement, Annexation, and Affordable Housing Plan. The project would require support of both the City Council and the voters to be approved.

The applications are being considered through three processing tracks:

- **CEQA** – An EIR is underway, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act. The environmental consultant should have the Draft EIR available for public review in fall 2004. The Commission will have an opportunity to comment on the draft EIR in early 2005.
- **Policy** – Extensive public outreach is proposed for the policy review. The project applications are scheduled for review by several city commissions, including this one.
- **Technical** – City staff are evaluating issues such as street width, accommodations for waste removal, street lighting, and zoning standards. This track also includes an analysis of the likely impacts the project would have on the City of Davis capital and operating budgets.

The applications are anticipated to be scheduled for formal public hearing in spring 2005.

The application includes:

- 1,515 total residential units, including 1,108 single-family and 407 multifamily units.
- A “Village Center” that includes office, retail, community, and residential uses
- 41.3 acres of parks and greenbelt
- 66 acres of drainage/habitat lands
- 5.3 acres at the northern edge of the site for a hospice facility
- A 10-acre parcel to be transferred to the Davis Joint Unified School District

Site plans for the Covell Village proposal are attached (Attachment 1).

Public comment on this project has been extensive, including written and electronic correspondence as well as testimony at two Planning Commission / City Council meetings. Attached is a summary of comments that have been “assigned” to the Natural Resources Commission (Attachment 2). Staff is requesting that the Commission review those comments and determine whether they will be adequately addressed during this review process. Comments on two other issues related to the NRC’s charge have been targeted to another commission. The Open Space Commission is reviewing the proposal for agricultural mitigation, and the configuration of the habitat and wetland areas.

Attached is an applicant narrative on environmental and energy-efficiency components of the project proposal (Attachment 1). Staff has identified the following questions as primarily within the purview of the Natural Resources Commission for this phase of the review:

1. Are there adequate provisions for energy and water conservation in the proposed subdivision?
2. Are there adequate provisions for alternative transportation methods?
3. Should trash collection in the alleys be encouraged?
4. Are there other comments or recommendations the Commission wishes to forward to the Planning Commission and City Council as they make decisions on the Covell Village applications?

Each question will be addressed separately below.

1. Are there adequate provisions for energy and water conservation in the proposed subdivision?
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Staff notes

- The applicant is proposing to build a subdivision that combines aspects of new urbanism and environmental sensitivity. Basic components include east-west street orientation to encourage natural heating, lighting, and ventilation; surface drainage and a habitat/wetlands area for storm water runoff, and mixed uses in the "Village Center."
- The majority of the land area in the proposed subdivision would be residential uses, primarily single-family residential. The applicant is proposing the following energy- and water-conserving features:
 1. Requirement that each house be consistent with the requirements of the dark sky ordinance and the water conservation ordinance.
 2. Requirement that each house be provided with a Davis Energy Group Nightbreeze ventilation system, or equivalent.
 3. Insulation for all hot water pipes.
 4. Certified duct testing for heating and cooling ducts.
 5. Motion sensing photocell lights in alleys above garage doors.
 6. Conduit for photoelectric arrays on garages.
 7. Operable skylights are encouraged.
- Commercial areas would be subject to standard requirements for parking lot shading and outdoor lighting control.

Preliminary Staff Recommendations

- a. That landscape and lighting requirements for single-family homes be clearly identified in the design guidelines for the project. The water audit requirement in the landscape ordinance may not be appropriate for individual homes. Since the Outdoor Lighting Control Ordinance focuses on commercial properties and exempts single-family residences, appropriate standards will need to be established. Suggestions from the Commission are appreciated.
- b. That photovoltaic panels be installed on a specified number of the homes. One option may be that PV systems be required with development of all lots exceeding 6,700 square feet (estimated to be 24 percent of all single-family lots).
- c. That the applicant give serious consideration to requiring the following in the development regulations:
 - Rooftop gardens for Village Center buildings
 - Light Emitting Diodes for street and parking lot lighting
 - Structured parking for commercial or multifamily uses
 - Require gold or platinum compliance with LEED standards for commercial and residential development from the US Green Building Council
<http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/publications.asp#LEEDRS21>.

2. Are there adequate provisions for alternative transportation methods?

Staff notes

- The applicant is proposing to encourage Neighborhood Electric Vehicles through the provision of charging outlets in garages, an area reserved for NEVs in the parking lot of the commercial Village Center, and provisions to allow NEVs in the grade-separated crossings under Pole Line Road, Covell Boulevard, and Anderson Road/railroad tracks.
- On November 4, the Safety Advisory Commission is being asked to recommend that NEVs not be allowed in the undercrossings unless provisions are made to eliminate any potential conflicts between the NEVs and bikes/pedestrians.
- The proposal incorporates bicycle lanes on most main streets through the subdivision. An east-west bicycle path is provided in the center of the site, connecting to undercrossings of Pole Line Road and Anderson Road/railroad tracks. The main north-south off-street greenbelt joins the street network just north of the Village Center (see bicycle map, attached). The Recreation and Parks Commission and the Safety Advisory Commission have been asked to comment on the location of the off-street bicycle paths.
- The applicant is proposing to establish assessments on property owners in the development to provide funding for Unitrans services to and from Covell Village. The program would allow residents and employees of the development to ride the buses with no additional charge upon boarding. The assessments and program would last for a period of seven years.

Preliminary Staff Recommendations

- d. That the applicant be encouraged to consider additional provisions within single-family areas to support use of NEVs, such as appropriately-sized garage or parking spaces or NEV-only parking areas on residential streets.

3. Should trash collection in the alleys be encouraged?
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Staff notes

- The proposed site plan has components of a “New Urbanist” subdivision style. Approximately 80 percent (staff estimate) of the single-family lots would be served with alleys. Approximately 20 lots would have no direct street access, but be served with an alley in the rear and a greenbelt in the front.
- The applicant is proposing that trash collection, along with driveway access and some utilities, be directed in the alleys. Elsewhere in Davis all trash collection is from the main street.

Preliminary Staff Recommendations

- e. That trash collection in the alleys be discouraged.

4. Are there other comments or recommendations the Commission wishes to forward to the Planning Commission and City Council as they make decisions on the Covell Village applications?

Staff notes

- The Environmental Impact Report for the project proposal is underway. We are hoping that the draft EIR will be available for public review at the end of this month. The Natural Resources Commission will likely be interested in reviewing the EIR, particularly the sections on air quality, water, and on the former landfill north of the Covell Village site.

Next steps

The project applicants will continue to present the proposal to City commissions and gather input. The draft EIR is anticipated to be completed and distributed for public comment in early 2005. Staff anticipates that the Commission will have the opportunity to review and make final recommendations on the EIR and the project in early 2005.

Attachments

1. Applicant narrative and site plans.
2. Public comments under purview of Open Space Commission.
3. Bicycle circulation exhibit.