

Staff Report

October 14, 2004

TO: Recreation and Parks Commission

FROM: Vicki Crescitelli, Community Services Administrator
Pat Riley, Senior Parks Supervisor
Katherine Hess, Community Development Administrator

SUBJECT: Covell Village Application Review

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Recreation and Parks Commission take any public comment and make recommendations to the City Council on the following aspects of the Covell Village project applications:

1. Is the amount and distribution of park, greenbelt, and open space appropriate?
Staff recommendation: that the "Linear Green" be replaced with a landscaped median, and that the central north-south greenbelt be widened to a minimum of 100 feet, with a greater width adjacent to the multifamily and high-density areas.
2. Does the parks, greenbelt, and open space network make appropriate connections with the remainder of the city system?
Staff recommendation: that there be a contiguous off-street path from the north edge of the project to the Covell Boulevard undercrossings.
3. Does the Commission support the proposal for timing of the park, greenbelt, and open space improvements?
Staff recommendation: that the project include developer construction and maintenance of parks and greenbelts concurrently with residential development.
4. Does the project overall contribute to the Parks and Recreation system for the City of Davis?
Staff recommendation: 1)that the project include community-serving recreation uses 2) there be an opportunity for the City to discuss community needs for the privately-owned "community building and 3) an analysis be completed on the impact on existing recreational facilities and programs (e.g. athletic fields ,pools, recreation programs) if the project does not include recreational facilities.

5. 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 recommend Covell Village Partners provide information on the conditions, if any, that the Nugget Fields would be deeded to the City of Davis.

Background

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 413 acres, including the habitat and hospice areas at the north edge. More detailed information on all components of the project is 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 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 Environmental Impact Report 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.
- **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.

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 Recreation and Parks Commission. Staff is requesting that the Commission review those comments and determine whether they will be adequately addressed during this review process.

Recreation and Parks Background

Attached are a site plan and an applicant narrative on parks, greenbelt, and open space components of the project proposal. The application includes:

- 1,515 total residential units, including 1,108 single-family and 407 multifamily units.

- 20.2 acres of parkland dedicated to the City of Davis
- 23.2 acres of greenbelt dedicated to the City of Davis
- 62.5 acres of drainage/habitat dedicated to the City of Davis
- 7.5 acres of “greenstreet” along Covell Boulevard (public right-of-way that will accommodate landscaping or pedestrian/bicycle facilities.
- Pedestrian/bicycle undercrossings of Pole Line Road and F Street/railroad tracks at approximately the midpoint of the development, to connect to the Northstar pond/greenbelt and the greenbelt south of Nugget Fields.
- Non-city recreation facilities include a 30,000 square foot health club and an 11,250 square foot community building.

Under agreement with Davis Joint Unified School District, Nugget Fields would be purchased by Covell Village Partners and transferred for use as a community asset.

The applicant is not proposing any non-standard provisions for improvement or maintenance of the parks or greenbelts. The preliminary fiscal analysis shows the project would generate a mild positive cash flow for the City of Davis upon completion.

Recreation and Parks Issues Analysis

Staff from the Parks and Community Services and Community Development Departments have identified the following questions with the project proposal.

1. Is the amount and distribution of park, greenbelt, and open space appropriate?
2. Does the parks, greenbelt, and open space network make appropriate connections with the remainder of the city system?
3. Does the Commission support the proposal for timing of the park, greenbelt, and open space improvements?
4. Does the project overall contribute to the Parks and Recreation system for the City of Davis?
5. Are there 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.

1. Is the amount and distribution of park, greenbelt, and open space appropriate?
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The application includes:

- 1,515 total residential units, including 1,108 single-family and 407 multifamily units.
- 20.2 acres of parkland dedicated to the City of Davis
- 23.2 acres of greenbelt dedicated to the City of Davis
- The 9-acre Nugget Fields site to be purchased from the Davis Joint Unified School District and donated to the City of Davis

Staff notes:

The City's standard park and greenbelt requirements for this project would be:

Parkland: 18.63 acres, for the 1515 residential units.

Greenbelt: 23.8 acres of greenbelt, based upon 238.6 acres of developed residential land.

Habitat: No standard; drainage as required by engineering analysis.

The park land includes a 10.7-acre park adjacent to the school district site in the middle of the project, and five mini-parks averaging less than 2 acres within the neighborhoods. Greenbelts link the mini-parks from north to south and provide an off-street north-south spine through the development. Habitat areas include a main east-west corridor in the location of the current Channel A, and a large drainage/habitat area north of the urbanized development.

Staff has comments over the distribution and configuration of the park and greenbelt areas:

- The non-contiguous greenbelts and numerous mini-parks have limited usability, particularly for active recreation. In addition, the small areas are expected to have higher per-acre maintenance costs than larger spaces.
- The parks, greenbelts, and open space are disproportionately loaded to the north and east areas of the project site. Staff is particularly concerned that there is limited green space – only a narrow greenbelt – to serve the higher density and affordable housing at the southwest corner of the site.
- The bicycle path at the northeastern corner of the project (between the site and the City-owned former landfill property) is of minimal width. Design details have not been provided to allow evaluation of whether it will be attractive to recreational users. The Police Department will be asked to evaluate connections and visibility for this path.
- Staff is not concerned about the slight reduction in greenbelt from the ten percent standard. The habitat area of the improved Channel A will likely serve as both habitat and greenbelt, as will the southern portion of the large habitat area.

Specific staff recommendations

- 1a. That the Recreation and Parks Commission recommend that the “Linear Green” be replaced with a landscaped median; and
- 1b. That the central north-south greenbelt be widened to a minimum of 100 feet, with a greater width adjacent to the multifamily and high-density areas.

2. Does the parks, greenbelt, and open space network make appropriate connections with the remainder of the city system?

The application includes:

- Grade-separated crossings of the railroad tracks/F Street and Pole Line Road, connecting to Northstar Park and Nugget Fields.
- Grade-separated crossings of Covell Boulevard, connecting the project to Oak Tree Plaza.

- Extensions of Moore, Donner, Picasso, and the new “Main Street” into the ConAgra property (proposed for development by Lewis Communities)
- At-grade bicycle/pedestrian crossings of Pole Line Road to connect to the train north of the Wildhorse golf course.

Staff notes:

- The General Plan “Primary Bicycle Network” exhibit shows grade-separated bicycle crossings of F Street/RR at Anderson Road and of Pole Line Road at the north edge of the city limits. The applicant has stated that the proposed (southern) connection will be more useful to both recreational users and those seeking connections to Nugget Fields, Northstar Park, and other destinations to the east or west.
- There is no complete off-road north-south path through the project. The main greenbelt in the center of the project does not have a direct connection to the Covell Boulevard crossings. The east-west connection is contiguous through the project.

Specific staff recommendation

- 3a. That there be a contiguous off-street path from the north edge of the project to the Covell Boulevard undercrossings.

3. Does the Commission support the proposal for timing of the park, greenbelt, and open space improvements?
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Staff notes:

- The proposal to transfer Nugget Fields to the City of Davis was not part of the original application, but has been included in the applicant letter of October 11, 2004. No details have been proposed for timing, or for operations and maintenance costs.
- Under standard city development practices, developers are responsible for improving habitat/drainage areas and greenbelts at the time of residential development. The city is responsible for improving parks as funds are available.
- The City of Davis is generally responsible for maintaining parks, greenbelts, and habitat areas. Initial reviews of the fiscal impacts of the project show a mild positive fiscal impact for the city, including standard assumptions for maintaining parks and greenbelts.
- Development Agreements for other projects have called for early improvement of park sites, with developers being subsequently reimbursed by the city as funds become available. Maintenance during the interim period has also been included in the negotiations.

Specific staff recommendation

- 3a. That the project include developer construction and maintenance of parks and greenbelts concurrently with residential development.

4. Does the project overall contribute to the Parks and Recreation system for the City of Davis?

Staff notes:

The project proposal includes the following advantages:

- Sufficient parks and greenbelts to meet or exceed city standards
- Assurances that Nugget Fields will be retained for community use
- Completion of a critical link in the city's peripheral bicycle network
- Community building providing meeting space (ownership and details unspecified)
- Likely, sufficient property tax revenue for maintenance of parks, greenbelt, and habitat areas and for expansion of city services with capacity for addition (like many recreation programs).

The project proposal includes the following disadvantages/concerns:

- Minimal benefit in community-serving recreation or park facilities
- Impact to City programs and services that do not have capacity for expansion (Children's Nutcracker, pool and tennis facilities)
- No identified funding source for City maintenance and operation of Nugget Fields.

Specific staff recommendation

- 4a. That the project include community-serving recreation uses, such as athletic fields, a dog park, or a swimming pool;
- 4b. That there be an opportunity for the City to discuss community needs for the privately-owned "community building;" and
- 4c. That Nugget Fields not be transferred to the City of Davis without adequate resources for operations and maintenance.

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

Attachments

1. Site plan and applicant narrative
2. List of public comments assigned to Recreation and Parks Commission