

## Staff Report

**NRC Agenda**

**Date:** 1/24/05

**Item:** 8

January 20, 2005

**TO:** Natural Resources Commission

**FROM:** Sue Gedestad, Operations Administrator  
Bob Weir, Public Works Director

**SUBJECT:** Covell Village Draft Environmental Impact Report

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### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends the NRC review the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Covell Village proposal and make comments on the adequacy as it relates to the areas in the NRC purview.

### **Background and Analysis**

#### **Project Description**

The project proposal contains 1,515 residential units and a 16-acre Village Center on 422 acres at the northwest corner of Pole Line Road and Covell Boulevard. The project would also include support features and public amenities including a School District site; a fire station site; land for non-profit uses including a nursery school, church, senior care facility, hospice, and community building; and substantial parks, greenbelt, and drainage/habitat areas.

Residential uses proposed are predominantly single-family attached and detached units, including 185 age-restricted senior homes. There would be 407 multifamily units in mixed-income complexes, affordable housing land dedication sites, and live-work or apartment units in the Village Center. The Village Center would include retail, office, restaurant, hotel, and health club uses, plus a gas station and convenience market.

#### **Review Process**

Various aspects of the proposed project have been reviewed by city commissions, including the Planning Commission, over the past few months. These reviews are continuing into January. The City Council held workshops on the applications on January 8 and January 22, 2005, and will further discuss the project on the evening of January 25, 2005.

The current schedule for the application review calls for formal public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council at the end of February and City Council determination at the beginning of March. If the applications are approved by the City Council on March 1, the target would be a Measure J election in June 2005. The fallback election date is November 2005 if the timeline slips.

#### Environmental Impact Report Process

Any discretionary land use action is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Because of its size and potential impacts, the Covell Village proposal requires an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

In summary, the EIR process is:

- **“Scoping,”** with an opportunity for the public to comment on the issues that should be addressed in the EIR. The City took comments on the project scope in summer 2004, including a public meeting on June 30.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Report** with an analysis of the proposed project’s impacts on the environment, possible measures that would mitigate impacts, and assessment of alternatives to the proposal that might reduce or eliminate impacts. The DEIR looks at impacts of the proposed project, and “cumulative” impacts reflecting likely future changes in the area or the region. The DEIR for Covell Village was released on December 10, 2004, with a comment period ending January 28, 2005.
- **Final Environmental Impact Report** with a response to comments received on the adequacy of the DEIR.
- **Findings for approval** if a project is approved.

As a reminder, CEQA does not prohibit an agency from taking an action that will have a negative impact on the environment. Before taking such an action, the City must determine that all feasible mitigation measures have been incorporated, and that there are specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other benefits of the project that override the significant and unavoidable environmental effects. The City of Davis has previously used overrides for several large project approved in the mid 1990s and for the General Plan Updates, particularly regarding impacts to agriculture, air quality, and traffic.

#### Draft Environmental Impact Report conclusions

The Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Covell Village applications analyzed two equal-weight alternatives: the 1,515-unit proposed project and an alternative with 1,990 units. The goal of providing the alternatives was to give the City Council flexibility to adjust the project without re-initiating the environmental review. Another alternative (the “Reduced Acreage Alternative”) analyzed in the EIR, but not at an equal-weight level, – involves keeping the 1,515 requested units but constraining development to the area south of Channel A. Although not analyzed at an equal-weight level, this variation (or “alternative”) does appear adequately

covered under the broader equal-weight alternatives in that it contains elements of each and thus could be considered without significant modification or recirculation of the EIR.

The attached table contains excerpts from Table 2-1 in the Draft Environmental Impact Report which summarizes the impacts and required mitigation measures for the Proposed Project and the High Density Alternative. Please note one erratum: The Chapter 2 Summary Table states that Impact 4.4-2, Impacts to Segments of Pole Line Road and Covell Boulevard under existing Plus Project conditions is *Significant and Unavoidable*. The text of the DEIR (page 4.4-52) identifies a mitigation measure for this impact that is not listed in the Summary Table, which would reduce impacts to Pole Line Road, north of Covell Boulevard to a less-than-significant level for both the Proposed Project and the High Density Alternative. However, the impact remains *Significant and Unavoidable* for the segment of Pole Line Road south of Covell Boulevard and the segment of Covell Boulevard between J and L Street.

It should be noted that comments are due on January 28, 2005 by 5:00 p.m. Written comments can be mailed or delivered to the Community Development Department (addressed to Ms. Katherine Hess) 23 Russell Boulevard, Davis, CA 95616.