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Date: 1/10/05

## Memorandum

**January 3, 2005**

**TO:** Open Space Commission  
**FROM:** Mitch Sears, Open Space Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Covell Village Project Review – Draft EIR and project alternatives review

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### Overview

This memorandum addresses two topics related to the Covell Village proposal: (1) review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report and (2) continued review of project alternatives.

### Draft EIR

The Commission was provided a copy of the Covell Village Draft EIR on compact disc in mid December. The purpose of an EIR in the project review process is to provide information to decision makers (City Council), on the potential impacts of the project on the environment and appropriate measures to mitigate those impacts. The Commission is being asked to review the Covell Village DEIR for adequacy in identifying potential impacts, describing those impacts, and identifying associated mitigation measures.

In order to assist the Commission in its review, staff have listed the sections in the DEIR that are directly related to the role and responsibility of the Commission. Comments from the Commission on the DEIR will be included in and responded to in the Final EIR. As individuals, Commissioners are able to comment on all sections of the DEIR. Individual comments should be forwarded directly to the Community Development Department prior to the end of the public comment period for the DEIR (January 28, 2005).

The following sections have been identified by staff as relevant to the role and responsibility of the Commission as an advisory body to the City Council on open space, agriculture, and habitat issues:

DEIR Section	Description	Notes
1, 2,& 3	Introduction & project description	Overview
4.0	Intro to analysis	
4.1	Aesthetics	Impacts to viewsapes

4.2	Agricultural resources	Impacts to ag resources
4.3	Land Use	Impacts to existing and planned land uses
4.8	Biological resources	Impacts to biological resources
5	Alternatives	Identifies project alternatives and environmentally superior alternative
6	Statutorily required sections	Cumulative impacts analysis

Staff have also created a table to assist commissioners in recording comments and recommendations related to the draft EIR (Attachment 1). A consistent format for comments will help the Commission in forming its final recommendations on the draft EIR. The attached comment template was used to organize the Commission’s comments on the UC Davis LRDP EIR in 2003. An electronic copy can be provided to commissioners interested in using the template.

Next Steps (draft EIR)

As noted above, the Commission is being asked to review and comment on the adequacy of the DEIR. Staff suggests that the Commission hold a preliminary discussion regarding the draft EIR at its January 10th meeting and discuss how best to organize its comments. If necessary, the Commission can schedule a second meeting in January to finalize its comments on the DEIR and on the proposed project.

**Project Alternatives – Small Urban Farms Concept**

On Saturday January 8<sup>th</sup>, the City Council will conduct a workshop on the Covell Village project (9am – 1pm in the Community Chambers at City Hall). One topic the Council will discuss is the option of providing higher density urban development south of Channel A and establishing compatible agricultural uses north of the channel. At its December meeting, the Commission briefly discussed this type of project layout. For the Council’s workshop, staff developed this project concept further to identify potential advantages and disadvantages.

The staff report for the Council workshop is included as attachment 2. The report provides an overview of the project and major issues identified to date. Staff calls the Commission’s attention to sections 2.a, 2.b, 2.c, 7.a, 7.b, and 7.c which bear directly on the commission’s role of advising the Council on how projects impact/improve open space resources.

The small urban farms concept paper was developed by staff to outline one potential use of the land north of the channel if a higher density project is selected by the Council (Attachment 3). As outlined in the concept paper, staff has identified an alternative for

the area north of the channel that appears to complement a higher density housing project while more directly meeting open space protection goals, supporting sustainable agriculture, and improving opportunities for public education regarding agricultural issues. Staff recognizes that this unique land use proposal will need significant analysis if it is to be ultimately incorporated into the Covell Village project.

Next steps (small urban farms concept)

At the time of the writing of this report, the Council's January 8<sup>th</sup> workshop has not taken place. Staff anticipates that the Council will provide additional direction at its workshop regarding further analysis of the alternatives described in the concepts paper. Staff will communicate any direction provided by the Council at the Commission's January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Attachments**

1. EIR comment table template.
2. City Council Covell Village Workshop staff report (January 8, 2005).
3. Covell Village Small Urban Farms Concept Paper (December 2004).