



MINUTES

JOINT CITY COUNCIL – PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP

CITY OF CERES, CALIFORNIA
Ceres Community Center – Large Assembly Room, 2701 Fourth Street

Tuesday, November 15, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.

Mailing Address: Ceres City Hall, 2720 Second Street, Ceres, CA 95307-3292
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Members of the public are advised that all cellular telephones and any other communication devices are to be turned off upon entering the Large Assembly Room.

CALL TO ORDER

The City Council and Planning Commission of the City of Ceres met this date in a workshop session at 6:00 p.m. in the Large Assembly Room, with Mayor Vierra presiding.

ROLL CALL

Mayor:	Vierra	Chairperson:	Kachel
Vice Mayor:	Kline	Vice-Chair:	Del Nero
Council Members:	Durossette, Lane, Ryno	Commissioners:	Condit, Molina, Smith

Also present: Sophie Martin, Project Manager – Dyett & Bhatia
Ella Wise, Planner – Dyett & Bhatia

City Staff: Tom Westbrook, Toby Wells, Daryl Jordan, Nubia Goldstein, Steve Hallam, Richard Scola, Brent Smith, Marjorie Blom, James Michaels, Ann Montgomery

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Vierra led the community in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATIONS

Tom Westbrook, Director of Community Development explained the purpose for tonight's

meeting is to receive input on the proposed Land Use Alternatives that are presented. With that direction, we'll begin analysis of the alternatives, followed by Community Workshops to be held in January and February, and then return to the Planning Commission and City Council for the consideration of the preferred Land Use Alternative.

Mr. Westbrook introduced Sophie Martin, Project Manager with Dyett & Bhatia.

Ms. Martin provided a brief PowerPoint presentation on the Preliminary Land Use Alternatives, discussing the project timeline, the goal of tonight's meeting, a summary of the Alternatives and an explanation of the next steps. She asked that the focus of the discussion be to address whether these are the right alternatives to move forward with, stating that it's important to hear from all of the Planning Commissioners and City Council Members, starting with the Commissioners.

DISCUSSION

Mayor Vierra stated that we'll hear from the Planning Commission first, and then take any public comments, followed by remarks from Council.

Planning Commission Chairperson, Bob Kachel complimented staff for the excellent job on the report, noting that all three alternatives make sense. He likes how the alternatives take on Industrial to create possible opportunities. Industrial is a better buffer to agricultural uses than residential.

Commissioner Gary Del Nero noted that it's good that the focus is on where the interchange is, which is a main theme on all three of these alternatives. He added that Alternative 3 with the bridge on Faith Home Road is a huge undertaking.

Commissioner Hugo Molina remarked that he's comfortable with what's being proposed; however, the idea of losing the 126 acres of agricultural land is a concern, as he feels that's one of the staples of our city and area.

Commissioner Couper Condit echoed Chair Kachel and Commissioner Molina's comments, and stated that everyone did a great job putting together the presentation. His concerns are he feels we're shooting a little high with how much we're allocating in residential and industrial and need to have a more realistic outlook on what we'll be doing in 20 years. He would like to see more focus on the infill side and more on preservation of agricultural land, referencing the survey results of 95% in favor of infill and 85% on Ag land. In regards to the Faith Home Corridor, he suggested that maybe we should take out some of the residential on the southern side and put in industrial.

Commissioner Smith commented that she agrees with her fellow Commissioners on the great work that was done and she appreciates it very much. She is happy with the alternatives as a starting point and is interested in hearing what the community has to say.

The Mayor opened the meeting for any comments from the audience.

- Lourdes Perez stated that she has the following concerns:

In reference to the industrial zone, she thinks it's a great idea to connect the east side of the County in Ceres with the industrial zone; however, she's concerned with it being so close to the residential area in Eastgate.

Ms. Perez also has a concern with the Business Park, and reducing that and the beautification process that is being proposed. She realizes that details are not being provided at this moment, but she would want to have pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between residential areas into the commercial zone that is suggested on the interchange; providing pedestrians, providing residents that connectivity into that area. With the expansion of residential, she's also looking at what that would look like for people coming into Ceres.

Ms. Perez added, with regards to the commercial area by the interchange, and she realizes that policies will be discussed at a later time, the specifics as to what type of commerce would be coming in there, would be communicated.

- Dave Pratt commented that he likes what's being presented; filling in a lot of the vacant areas. He added that we definitely do need the Faith Home expressway and the bridge across the river there will have to be changed in the future also, noting that traffic is getting worse by the day.

The Mayor asked for comments from the Council:

Council Member Durossette suggested that maybe a mix between Alternatives 2 and 3, and he agrees that he doesn't want to lose a lot of Ag land. He mentioned that he wondered if Turlock was doing the same thing when they developed Monte Vista Crossings and the other areas. There was some forethought in regards to how they were going to grasp what we had dropped the ball on. Our big home run is that interchange, whenever that comes into fruition.

Council Member Durossette also stated that it's a good report; the consultants have done a great job. At the end of the day, when we come back, it's everything we're going to look at: the financial impact, the infrastructure; can we support, what can we support? When you look at the maps and see 126 acres, and then only 56 acres of Ag land, what does that turn into, as far as dollars for the City as we move on? We currently have hard times right now with our budget. It will be interesting to see when we do come back, and the Community comes together and says, this is what we see. There's a lot of infill we can do; absolutely. But when we look at that interchange area or other areas that are going to help us with the tax dollars; he thinks that's important too.

Council Member Ryno commented that she really didn't have anything to add. The three alternatives are all a good start. Initially she would have thought, because of the farm land along Faith Home, that we wouldn't want to do with what's suggested on Alternative 3, but she thinks we have to move forward, and have to try connect to Beard Industrial

and some other things.

Council Member Lane agrees that this is a great job. The consultants listened to the community well, in addition to the Council and Planning Commission. They've taken it all and put into a document to study. The General Plan is way overdue, obviously. When you look where we're at today, we're not really adding anything. He thinks the direction that the consultants are taking us through is what the Council and Planning Commission have said. He does like industrial up to the housing and the agricultural; that's a good plan along with the Faith Home expressway, someday. It's the perfect document to start with and he knows all three of them have that highway commercial area, which is good to see that this is the plan. He looks forward to seeing what else the consultants come up with.

Vice Mayor Kline stated that this is a good start. A couple questions and concerns that he has:

- The connectivity on Mitchell Road to the Industrial Area or commercial area, that's on the southwest side of highway 99; about the traffic flow and how that would be protected, if that does build out. Those are some of the concerns he has, because as you come off the freeway and head down Service Road, and then have to come down Central and head back the other way, with not having a clear crossing from one side to the other, that would be a concern of his.
- He understands the Faith Home Expressway, but he's not a fan of it. The reason he's not a fan, is because when they did the Faith Home overpass, they didn't put in on and off ramps. So trucks down that road will have to be reverted over to Keyes Road, and find some other way to turn around.
- On the west side, we already have homes, so you can have homes that run on Faith Home Road, right down with the Eastgate area and then all of a sudden you have Industrial on the other side. He can understand the bridge coming across, and stopping right there at Hatch Road, and still having the traffic that we do right now.

Vice Mayor Kline commented that he likes the proposed changes. With all the changes, except for the Faith Home corridor, he thinks it's a great start.

Mayor Vierra remarked that he'll go along with all the comments that have already been made. He's heard comments about us wanting our own Monte Vista Crossings type arrangement. That provides us with freeway visibility and the ability to potentially attract businesses. And quite frankly, as we've all said here, we realize the only way to get the services that we need is by increasing our retail base, which is obviously the combination of what our citizens want, as well as those businesses that our citizens don't necessarily want to utilize, but have tax impacts and are generators for us. So the mix he would like to see and he thinks the consultants have done a good job here, is on the Industrial and the Commercial. He likes the plan along the highway 99 corridor.

The Mayor added that he had mixed emotions, much like Vice-Mayor Kline about the Faith Home Expressway and bridge across to Modesto. He explained why he's torn with this, is we have an existing problem on Mitchell Road with truck traffic, and now we want to look in the future to mitigate that and make things better. What he's rationalizing in his mind, is creating an expressway; it's not a good use of putting anything adjacent to it that creates more stop lights and other things. We create another Mitchell Road, just pushed out a little further. But equally so, he doesn't want it to be just an expressway to Modesto, that's in our City that we have the impacts that we have to absorb. So, before any bridges go over the river to serve the eastside of Modesto, he wants an arrangement with that jurisdiction, that we're not on the hook with providing a thoroughfare through our City to them.

So having said that, the Mayor stated he's mixed about what types of uses he wants adjacent to it. He thinks we need to kind of flush that out, and ask are we going to use that as an expressway much like we see in north Modesto, where its used to get traffic moving very quickly or is it something that we're going to have as a business corridor; or perhaps we should learn from some of the things that we didn't do right on Mitchell Road, to where you have residential and apartments amidst that. He thinks he had part of this conversation with Commissioner Condit this morning about how we have to look at where we put those retail and commercial opportunities around the City. We don't have a lot of opportunity to do that around the thoroughfare, so we need to be practical.

Mayor Vierra remarked that Dyett & Bhatia have done a great job here; they're not really adding any more land to it. One of the things he's heard is that we need to have the larger developable parcels for businesses, much like what Turlock did to the Monte Vista area; that's something that we need in this town. He thinks residential is fine; it's what we have. The consultants have done a great job with what's here and he's ready to take the next step.

Mayor Vierra stated that he doesn't know if we gave the consultants the kind of feedback that they were looking for, with what they've heard.

Ms. Martin remarked that this has been very helpful. What she's hearing is general concurrence that these three alternatives represent confidence that this is what you'd like us to study. It's okay to bring up concerns, especially with regards to traffic; this is why we do this. We don't want to do something that's really no use at all; it's useful to put something on the table and analyze it, to understand what the impacts would be before dismissing it outright. That type of analysis can also help answer some of those questions, like, how should we be designing, designating the area; should we be thinking about the limitations on the frequency of intersections, the frequency of axis points, and so on. That's the type of thing that hearing from you will help us with, so we'll better be able to understand what the expectations of some of those choices are. Similarly, with regards to concerns about infill development and so on, we've been talking a lot about those areas and expansion and so on. None of that is to say that this General Plan can't or shouldn't also promote infill development. They can absolutely occur at the same time, and depending on the direction that Planning Commission and Council want to go, this is just talking about the map; this isn't even getting to the policies yet. You'll want to have a real focused discussion about how to best encourage development and make

use of the underutilized Ag properties that are here in town. We can come up with some real robust policy and recommendations to help the City do that while still allowing for opportunities for spaces along the freeway, that doesn't necessarily serve the same purpose. The City doesn't necessarily have to choose one or other. She thinks that we can get to a point where we can, as discussed earlier; add policies like connectivity to residential neighborhoods, beautification, setting really high standards for the type of development you want to see. And she thinks those types of concerns should be addressed in the policies regardless of which answer you give. She likes the kind of attention to detail; the concerns and ideas that are being brought up, and we will be able to get to those for sure. Some of those will come as a result of the analysis that we do from a fiscal perspective, from a transportation perspective, and some of it we will get to with more policy detail when we start actually drafting the plan.

Mr. Westbrook stated that one of the things he wanted to mention is the concerns shared by Commissioner Condit, Commissioner Molina and shared with Mayor Vierra, in terms of Alternative 3 and how that was brought up. Mayor Vierra, City Manager Wells, Sophie Martin, Marjorie Blom and he met and discussed Measure L that was on the ballot; but it was just on the ballot. We didn't know if it would ultimately pass and there would ever be a bridge across the river. The Planning Commissioners mentioned the loss of the Ag land. This is one of the things that hasn't been done because there are multiple agencies involved, with the County and the City of Hughson. The design of that is kind of leading us to a hard edge on the eastern side of town, so that Industrial reserve would really limit growth to the east for the City of Ceres and then that Ag land that is about a mile to the east of that. That boundary could be considered by the Council and Commission if they desire for it to be a permanent green belt between the two jurisdictions. That was one of the reasons why you saw that industrial; was to kind of preserve that corridor, and then possibly even come further and say at some future point, make that a permanent green belt. That would limit your future growth to the two areas to the south and west. Mr. Westbrook wanted to be sure to address the Commissioners' comments about the loss of Ag land. You may lose something, but perhaps get something more.

Mayor Vierra agrees that's an interesting point. Look at the alternative and keep in mind that if you look at that, Mr. Westbrook makes a very valid point. We have nowhere to go obviously if we lock ourselves to the east; that really only leaves the west and the south. We may want to segment and leave a little room for 40 or 50 years down the road, if you wanted to grow. And again, even a portion to the west of us, is the City of Modesto. We really can't go into that area. The Mayor concluded by saying this has been great and he thinks all of us here want to dive into all the details.

Ms. Martin commented that she totally understands wanting to dig into the details. She promises we'll get there. She thinks that we will find that when they next come back to the community, which will probably be late January or February, these maps will have accompanying information on all the topics that were mentioned. And we'll be able to have a conversation with everybody, with a better understanding of the Pros and Cons, depending on how they respond. We will make some choices and then move from there into the actual policies that will help support the plan.

Mr. Westbrook added that those workshops that are planned for the January/February timeframe; we'll have one in English and with the assistance of Lourdes Perez and the Ceres Partnership for Healthy Children, we'll have one in Spanish as well. The previous workshops were very well attended and we hope to have that same level of participation at these.

City Manager, Toby Wells stated that it's been a great discussion and he appreciates the public being here this evening to hear what's going on. This really is the most important document that the City has ever worked on. He's really excited about where this is headed, as this really is an important document and you can see this planning is really important to the future.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.



Chris Vierra, Mayor

ATTEST:



Ann Montgomery
Deputy City Clerk