



MEMORANDUM

Date: July 12, 2004

To: Planning Commission
cc: City Council

From: Planning Department Staff

Subject: **General Plan Update Memo No. 6: Southeast Pleasanton Area**

INTRODUCTION

The first five memos in the current series of General Plan Update land use reports dealt with a general overview of land use in Pleasanton, potential sites for additional housing (2), the East Pleasanton area, and future opportunities for land use in the Hacienda Business Park. The following memo pertains to land use in Southeast Pleasanton, and the final report will analyze the “other” remaining undeveloped areas of Pleasanton. As with the previous memos, the following provides an initial look at land use issues and options. Any potentially resulting General Plan changes would require the balancing process described in Memo No. 1, with changes being balanced against neighborhood, citywide, and regional constraints.

No specific action is requested of the Commission at this time. However, it would be helpful for the Commissioners to discuss any potential concerns and options for Southeast Pleasanton matters raised in the following memo and at the meeting.

SOUTHEAST PLEASANTON STUDY AREA

Southeast Pleasanton consists of all land within the General Plan Planning Area that is bordered by an alignment of I-680/Bernal Avenue/First Street to the west, and Vineyard Avenue to the north. The General Plan land use designations, Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) line, and planned traffic circulation routes for this area are illustrated in Attachment 1.

One site within the study area, Vintage Hills Shopping Center, was previously discussed in Memo No. 2 in conjunction with potential additional housing. It is therefore not presented again in this memo.

Nine specific Southeast Pleasanton sites are evaluated below. These include:

1. Ruby Hill
2. Vineyard Avenue Corridor
3. Foley Ranch
4. Kottinger Hills
5. Lund Ranch II
6. Happy Valley
7. Koopmann Ranch
8. Little Valley Road Neighborhood
9. General Electric Property

Although Southeast Pleasanton covers approximately one-third of the 48,000-acre General Plan Planning Area, it includes only limited developed area. More than 80 percent of the Southeast Pleasanton area is designated on the General Plan Map to be left as permanent Open Space (Public Health and Safety and Wildlands Overlay). Much of this land is also situated outside of the Pleasanton and Alameda County UGB Lines.

In addition to the General Plan Map, the text also provides policy guidance relating to the “Southeast Hills” area, as follows:

Land Use Element Background (page II-8) – “Consideration should be given to preserving large open space acreage in South Pleasanton by a combination of private open space and a public park system. Trail rights-of-way and land should be acquired by way of developer dedications, as well as by bond measures, corporate and personal donations, regional, State and Federal funding programs, etc. Attempts to achieve public access to open space areas and trails should not create onerous impositions on property owners.”

Land Use Element Policy 12 – “Preserve scenic hillside and ridge views of the Pleasanton, Main, and Southeast Hills.”

Land Use Element Program 12.2 – “Study the feasibility of preserving large open space acreage in the Southeast Hills by a combination of private open space and public park system.”

Conservation and Open Space Element Program 4.5 – “Investigate methods and pursue opportunities to retain areas designated on the General Plan Map as Wildlands Overlay for permanent open space use through acquisition, conservation easements, establishment of land trusts, etc.”.

The only isolated or “island development” beyond the UGB are the “Little Valley Road” neighborhood (Rural Density Residential) and the General Electric property (Industrial). Both are located just north of State Route 84.

The General Plan provides for a substantial system of public trails (Attachment 2) to ultimately be developed throughout Southeast Pleasanton and its outlying areas. Many of these are planned to integrate into East Bay Regional Park District Master Trails System.

URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARIES

Both the City of Pleasanton and Alameda County have established urban growth boundary (UGB) lines for their jurisdictions. The City’s UGB was adopted in 1996 by a vote of the citizens, and the County’s line was adopted through County Measure A in the year 2000. Both lines are situated in substantially the same location.

Pleasanton Urban Growth Boundary

The General Plan Map delineates an UGB around the edge of land planned for urban development at General Plan buildout (Attachment 1). The line distinguishes areas generally suitable for urban development and the provision of urban public facilities and services from areas generally suitable for the long-term protection of natural resources, large lot agriculture and grazing, parks and recreation, public health and safety, subregionally significant wildlands, buffers between communities, and scenic ridgeline views. The UGB is intended to be permanent and to define the line beyond which urban development will not occur.

Lower densities are encouraged along the inside edge of the UGB to provide a transition/buffer for preventing potential conflicts with uses immediately beyond the boundary such as agriculture and wildlands.

Since the Pleasanton UGB is considered to be permanent, future adjustments are discouraged. However, minor adjustments may be granted, which meet all of the following criteria: (1) are otherwise consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan; (2) would not have a significant adverse impact on agriculture, wildland areas, or scenic ridgeline views; (3) are contiguous with existing urban development or with property for which all discretionary approvals for urban development have been granted; (4) would not induce further adjustments to the boundary; and (5) demonstrate that the

full range of urban public facilities and services will be adequately provided in an efficient and timely manner.

Since the UGB was enacted as a voter initiative, any potential future adjustments beyond “minor” ones as described above would require an affirmative vote of the citizens of Pleasanton. The City Attorney has indicated that this applies to both expansions of the UGB as well as contractions (inward modifications).

Alameda County Urban Growth Boundary

In November 2000, the Alameda County voters approved “Measure D” which related to, among other things, the previously adopted County UGB and related land use matters. The County UGB line is shown on the “East County Area Plan” map and is aligned substantially the same as the Pleasanton UGB.

Any County General Plan Amendment, such as redesignation of a land use outside the County’s UGB to increase allowable density beyond that permitted by Measure D would require a vote of the people. Any change to the UGB would also require approval by the voters. In addition, the County is prohibited from providing or authorizing expansions of public facilities or other infrastructure that may be called for under existing city and county general plans in East County, which would create more capacity than needed to meet the development allowed by Measure D. However, the Board of Supervisors may approve housing outside the UGB in East County to meet State housing requirements if, subject to the requirements of State housing law, criteria specified by the Initiative can be met.

COMMUNITY ISSUES RAISED TO DATE

The major issues summarized in the recent “General Plan Update Community Meetings Summary Report” that relate directly to Southeast Pleasanton include: preserving agriculture and open space, topography, scenic hillside protection, over-sized single-family housing, and traffic and circulation (Hearst Drive, Sunset Creek Lane, and the Happy Valley Bypass Road). Less often noted issues include: maintaining rural densities and life-styles, protecting special status species, oak tree protection, water use, delaying future residential development until school capacity is available, location of the UGB, support for the Happy Valley Bypass Road, future neighborhood park locations, and trail development.

STUDY SITES

As noted above, nine sites are evaluated in the current memo. Each are presented below with regard to current conditions, related planning considerations, and options for potential General Plan Update changes. The location and General Plan designations for each site are presented on Attachment 1.

1. Ruby Hill

The Ruby Hill project covers 1,303 acres and includes housing, open space, a private 18-hole golf course, vineyards and two wineries. A total of 850 homes are approved for the site in conjunction with a development agreement with the City, of which 690 homes have been constructed, 51 are under construction and 109 remain to be developed. No General Plan Update issues were raised specifically with regard to Ruby Hill during the recent community meetings.

2. Vineyard Avenue Corridor

A specific plan was adopted for the 384-acre Vineyard Avenue Corridor area in June of 1999. The plan permits a mix of mainly 189 new single-family homes, vineyards, open space, a community park and an elementary school. Development agreements have also been approved for most of the previously approved project specific development plans.

Thus far, the realignment of Vineyard Avenue along the Arroyo del Valle, side streets for the future elementary school site, and some utilities has been nearly completed. Also, single-family homes are now under construction on the Greenbriar property, and PUD plans have been approved for much of the remaining housing allowed by the Specific Plan.

As with Ruby Hill, no General Plan Update related issues have been raised specifically with regard to the Vineyard Corridor.

3. Foley Ranch

The 1,754-acre northern portion of the unincorporated Foley Ranch is located adjacent to Ruby Hill to the east and Highway 84 to the south. The site is used for cattle grazing.

The General Plan Map designates approximately 90 acres in the northwest corner of the site (west of Lund Ranch) as Rural Density Residential. This designation carries with it a five-acre lot density or 18 total potential housing sites. The remainder of the property is designated as Open Space (Public Health and Safety and Wildlands Overlay). An important element of the long-range City Trail System is planned for the area (Attachment 2).

No General Plan Update related issues have specifically been raised with regard to the Foley Ranch. However, any of the open space preservation items outlined above could apply to potential future plan changes for the site.

Notes:

- Preliminary planning discussions with representatives of the Foley family indicate their desire for the City to not preclude the potential of limited future development in the northwestern portion of their property.
- Approximately 20 acres of relatively flat land exists on the Foley property just east of the Spotorno property that presents rural density housing and/or park opportunities. Vehicular access to this area would probably only be possible through the Spotorno property to the west due to the steepness of terrain.
- Due to steep site terrain, and ridgeline preservation policies, the development opportunities exist mostly in valley areas of the site that are not generally visible from the outlying community.
- Per the above referenced General Plan policy guidance, it would be appropriate to consider whether to explore the feasibility of preserving considerable acreage of land designated by the General Plan as Open Space in this area through a combination of private open space and public park alternatives.
- Limited flat land acreage exists at the northeast corner of the Ranch next to Ruby Hill which could potentially be redesignated for rural or low density residential use. This area is located just outside of the UGB, so a future adjustment would be required.

4. Kottinger Hills

The 562-acre Kottinger Hills site was annexed to the City in 1991. It is currently owned by Jennifer, Fredric and Kevin Lin. Terrain is moderate to steeply sloping. Street access is provided by way of Hearst Drive which connects to Bernal Avenue through the Kottinger Ranch Development.

General Plan land use designations site include 489 acres of Rural Density Residential (one home per five acres or 98 homes maximum) and Open Space. These designations are separated by the City's UGB line.

A Planned Unit Development (PUD) rezoning of the site was approved by the City Council in October 1992, but subsequently overturned by a voter referendum in November 1993. The proposed project consisted of 86 single-family homes, an 18-hole golf course and private open space. The referendum only affected the PUD rezoning, not the underlying General Plan land use designations.

A new land development proposal was recently submitted by the Lin family and is now being reviewed by the City. It consists of 98 single-family homes and 495 acres of permanent open space. An extension of Hearst Drive is proposed to be used to provide vehicular access to the project.

The process of preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) for the new project was also recently initiated. An environmental “scoping session” will be scheduled in the near future to take public comment and provide direction to the City’s EIR consultant team with regard to environmental issues to address and alternative concepts to consider.

Notes:

- Existing street access points to serve future on-site development are limited to Hearst Drive and adjacent local private street. Any other point of access would require a lengthy connection over one or more neighboring properties with hilly terrain.
- Street “quality of life” capacity on Hearst/Concord are potentially affected by developments, depending on density and street network.
- It is feasible to connect potential future development sites to other streets with emergency vehicle access (EVA) routes in order to provide secondary access to ensure safety to future project residents.
- The 562-acre parcel contributes substantially to the quality and character of Pleasanton’s natural surroundings. Sensitive environmental planning to protect this valuable amenity will be crucial in order to implement numerous General Plan policies.
- The manner in which the undeveloped open space is utilized in the future presents a potentially major recreational opportunity for the City.
- Numerous creeks with associated riparian vegetation traverse the site, providing habitat for a variety of species.
- It is estimated that 12,000 trees, primarily blue oak, California buckeye, coast live oak and valley oak species exist on the site that would create a substantial constraint to potential future development in specific areas.
- Potential habitat for several special status species including California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and possibly others exists on-site that will necessitate careful future environmental planning.
- Some areas of high fire risk exist that would require special safety measures for future development.
- Most accessible development sites would require construction of a new higher elevation water tank to provide standard City water pressure and safety.

5. Lund Ranch II

The Lund Ranch II area covers 195 acres and is located within the City limits. It is owned by a development partnership including Greenbriar Homes, but leased back to the Lund family for cattle grazing purposes. The site is composed of rolling hills and swales with additional areas of steep slopes. Primary vehicular access is planned as a part of the North Sycamore Specific Plan (NSSP) to be provided through the NSSP street system.

The General Plan designations for the site include 58 acres of Low Density Residential, 123 acres of Rural Density Residential, and 13 acres of Public Health and Safety with a Wildlands Overlay. A portion of the southeast property line is coincident with the UGB.

Greenbriar Homes has submitted a request to the City for PUD Development Plan approval for a 150-unit, single-family residential development on 80 acres of the 195-acre site. The remaining 115 acres is proposed to be dedicated to the City as permanent open space area, with the developer providing the construction of approximately 0.66 miles of pedestrian trails through this open space. The sole vehicular entrance to the development would be through an extension of Sunset Creek Lane in the NSSP area.

The process of preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) for the proposed project is now underway. Public hearings for the project application and EIR are tentatively planned to begin in several months.

Notes:

- Due to street connection decisions made in the past (planned closures of Lund Ranch Road, Independence Drive, etc.), future on-site development would be accessible to vehicular traffic only by way of a single connection to Sunset Creek Lane, thus funneling all traffic through this street and beyond with the resulting impacts to adjacent residents.
- The single-street access condition would necessitate the use of one or more emergency vehicle access (EVA) routes to ensure safety to future project residents.
- The existing 195-acre open space parcel contributes substantially to the quality and character of Pleasanton's natural surroundings. Sensitive environmental planning to protect this valuable amenity will be crucial in order to implement numerous General Plan policies.
- The manner in which the open space is utilized in the future presents a major recreational opportunity for the City.
- Several creeks with associated riparian vegetation traverse the site, providing riparian habitat for a variety of species.

- It is estimated that 1,000 trees, predominantly blue oak and valley oak exist on the site that would create a substantial constraint to potential development in numerous specific areas.
- Habitat for several special status species including California red-legged frog (potential), California tiger salamander, and possibly others exists on-site, which will necessitate careful future environmental planning.
- Some areas of high fire risk exist on-site that would require special safety measures for future development.

6. Happy Valley

A specific plan for the 860-acre Happy Valley area was approved by the City Council in June of 1998. Related amendments to the General Plan were also approved at that time to ensure consistency between the two plans.

The Specific Plan includes an 18-hole municipal golf course and 34 new, approximately half-acre home sites on the former “Golf Course Properties”. The Upper Sportorno Valley Area is designated with 15 acres of Medium Density Residential and five acres of Low Density Residential. Housing density in the flat Greater Happy Valley is generally one home per two acres. A maximum total of 183 new homes are permitted within the Plan Area. Vehicular access to the south Happy Valley area is to be provided by a bypass road designed to country road standards. Temporary access to serve the Golf Course from the Happy Valley Loop will be necessary until such time as the Bypass Road can be constructed.

Construction of the Golf Course is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, and the Golf Course is planned to be opened for public play following grass grow-in next spring. Substantial street, water and sanitary sewer improvements designed to serve the currently planned densities of development within the Plan Area have been completed in conjunction with the Golf Course project.

The Spotorno Family is currently working with Greenbriar Development to explore the options for future residential development and the Bypass Road alignment on the Spotorno property.

Notes:

- Happy Valley residents have expressed repeated concerns regarding the lack of progress toward completing the Bypass Road link through the Spotorno property. The links through the North Sycamore Specific Plan Area and through the Golf Course housing area are scheduled to be completed later this year.

- Some residents within the North Sycamore Specific Plan area have expressed unhappiness about future Golf Course and Spotorno property development traffic being directed through their neighborhood.
- Recent engineering studies for the 15-acre Spotorno Medium Density Residential area show the existence of a major landslide that creates a constraint to future development at this site, and calls to question the viability of medium density housing here.
- City staff has been exploring potential options for locating a future neighborhood park in Happy Valley to serve the South Pleasanton residents. The desirability of developing a park in South Pleasanton was raised numerous times during the General Planned Update community meetings.

7. Koopman Ranch

The 853-acre, unincorporated Koopman Ranch is located immediately south of the new Golf Course. It consists mostly of steeply sloping land and is used for cattle grazing. The site is designated as Open Space (Public Health and Safety and Wildlands Overly) on the General Plan Map.

The Koopman Ranch is widely recognized for the innovative grazing and habitat management practices employed on the site. In addition, the Koopman family has recently entered into agreements with a private developer and the City of Pleasanton to place approximately 30 acres and 107 acres, respectively, into permanent conservation easements to serve as wildlife habitat mitigation for off-site development projects. Staff feels that this is an excellent way for public and private entities to form partnerships to benefit each in a way that also helps to achieve the General Plan objectives for preserving open space in the Southeast Hills.

No General Plan Update related issues have been raised specifically with regard to the Koopman Ranch. However, all of the open space and environmental preservation issues outlined earlier in this memo could apply to any potential plan changes for this site.

8. Little Valley Road Neighborhood

The unincorporated Little Valley Road Neighborhood covers approximately 310 acres and is located north of Highway 84 and west of Little Valley Road. It contains approximately 20 parcels that range from two to 45 acres, and are used predominantly as horse farms and estate lots. The area's only vehicular access is provided by the private, dead end Little Valley Road, which has access only from Highway 84.

The General Plan Map designates the neighborhood as mostly Rural Density Residential with limited Open Space (Public Health and Safety and Wildlands Overlay). The site is located beyond the City's UGB, however; the General Plan states that: "since this neighborhood is an existing partially developed area, five-acre minimum parcel sizes may be permitted without the provision of standard urban water and sewer service, subject to public health and safety consideration."

In July, 1997, Alameda County adopted a Specific Plan for the Little Valley Road area. The Plan allows further subdivision and an overall density of approximately one home per five acres.

No General Plan Update related issues have been raised specifically with regard to the Little Valley Road Neighborhood.

Note:

- The Pleasanton General Plan is not fully consistent with the County Specific Plan land use designation for the neighborhood in that the Pleasanton Plan calls for a limited amount of Open Space in the northern portion. City staff feels that an adjustment to the Pleasanton Plan to match the County Plan would be useful to consider at this time.

9. General Electric Company Property

This 1,632-acre unincorporated site is formally referred to as the General Electric Vallecitos Nuclear Center (VNC). It is located immediately north of Highway 84 and east of the Little Valley Road Neighborhood.

All GE activities are concentrated in a separately fenced 100-acre area in the southwest corner of the property. The remainder of the land is leased for cattle grazing. The 100-acre area is designated by the Pleasanton General Plan as General and Limited Industrial and the remaining land is Open Space (Public Health and Safety and Wildlands Overlay).

Site facilities include laboratories and a series of shielded cells that are used to examine radioactive materials. They also are used in the manufacture of radioisotope products that are used in both nuclear medicine and industrial applications.

There are four nuclear reactors located at VNC. Three of these have been permanently shut down, and the nuclear fuel has been removed from the site. The fourth reactor is used in nondestructive examination of industrial items.

For purposes of licensing, General Electric representatives have indicated that it is very advantageous to maintain the site in its present condition. Thus, they have no current plans to divest any portion of the site for other uses.

No General Plan Update related issues have been raised specifically with regard to the General Electric property.

NEXT STEPS

Following the Southeast Pleasanton area discussion on July 12, the Commission is scheduled on July 22 to discuss the “other” remaining undeveloped sites in Pleasanton that have not been addressed to date. This will conclude the current land use background/options input phase of the General Plan Update process. Each of the options identified by the Commission during the current series of land use workshops will be the subject of more detailed study and comparison during “preferred solutions and alternatives” phase of the Update process beginning in the Fall.

In addition, staff will be completing a major background/alternatives report resulting from input received from all of the other City commissions in the near future. The purpose of the report will be to provide information and recommendations from each of the commissions regarding aspects of the General Plan that relate specifically to them. This report (along with similar input from the Economic Vitality Committee) will be completed in August for presentation to the Planning Commission in September.

Upon completion of the above work, the City is scheduled to proceed this Fall and Winter to the next step in the Update process, which will involve the narrowing of options and preparation of the “Draft Preferred Solutions and Alternatives Report”.

Attachments: 1. Southeast Pleasanton Area Map
2. Community Trails Master Plan