

STAFF REPORT

DATE: April 9, 2020

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Sherri Metzker, Principal Planner
Brian Abbanat,

RE: Aggie Research Campus—Subsequent Environmental Impact Report
Traffic and Circulation

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission:

1. Receive the memorandum from staff; and
2. Receive a presentation from the city's traffic consultant; and
3. Receive public comment; and
4. Provide feedback to staff and any specific recommendations for future Planning Commission and City Council consideration on the project's proposed traffic and transportation impacts and mitigation.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, the City Council began to evaluate the need for additional business park lands/facilities to accommodate the long term economic growth potential in the city. In response, the Business Park Land Strategy was prepared. The study looked to the future to determine if the long term supply of business park land was sufficient and ultimately it was determined it was not. Furthermore, the study also pointed out the need to annex additional contiguous lands. In 2010, the Innovation Park Task Force was formed to explore potential sites. With the help of UCD Studio 30, the Task Force prepared a study to identify potential sites for the innovation center. By 2014, the City had sent out Requests for Expression of Interest. From those, 3 groups responded. Responders were encouraged to submit proposals and the planning process would lead to a Measure J/R vote. The MRIC application was submitted in Sept. 2014 while the Davis Innovation Center was submitted in Nov. 2014. Ultimately, the Davis Innovation Center was withdrawn. The 3rd, of the original respondents never submitted, leaving only the MRIC project.

On September 19, 2017, the City Council adopted Resolution 17-125, certifying the Final Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") for the Mace Ranch Innovation Center project ("MRIC"). The planning applications related to the EIR were subsequently put on hold. On June 11, 2019, the City received a letter from the property owners of the MRIC project site (Buzz Oates, Reynolds & Brown, and Ramco Enterprises) requesting the City recommence with processing of their innovation center application, which has been renamed as the Aggie Research Campus ("ARC"). On September 30, 2019, the applicant submitted a project description and a number of

other exhibits related to their application that are under review and are included as informational attachments to this staff report.

The applicant spent the last two years conducting research on modern innovation parks, talking to industry experts, and analyzing the appropriate land uses. The applicant has decided to continue pursuing the appropriate general plan and zoning designations, as well as, an application to annex their proposed Aggie Research Campus project which is located on a 185-acre project site, immediately east of the City of Davis city limits, near the “Mace Curve”, in unincorporated Yolo County. At build-out, the ARC would include up to 2,654,000 square feet of innovation center/business uses and 850 residential units of varied sizes and affordability. More specifically, the ARC project would include space for office, research & development, laboratory, advance manufacturing, prototyping, limited supportive retail, a hotel and a conference center, and include 850 residential units to provide a jobs/housing balance. The ARC proposal has been planned to be in conformance with the mixed-use project alternative that was analyzed in the MRIC EIR. The project is undergoing appropriate CEQA analysis (supplemental EIR), specifically evaluating changed environmental conditions.

The proposed Aggie Research Campus is a research and development business park campus that intends to offer a live/work environment through a comprehensive sustainable site design and broad array of complementary land uses. The proposed project would feature office, research & development, laboratory, prototyping, advanced manufacturing, recreation, open space, and housing. The applicant intends for these mix of uses to attract new economy incubators, entice UCD-spawned businesses seeking a growth location, and provide large-scale locational opportunities for well established companies, particularly those with research ties to the University. The applicant’s objective is to fulfill a clear City need for economic development space and allow existing and new companies to grow and remain in Davis.

The project description provided by the applicant provides a detailed narrative on the proposed project (Attachment 1).

Additional project information can be found at <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/development-projects/aggie-research-campus>.

The City’s Mace 25 Parcel

In the prior MRIC proposal, development of the City’s Mace 25 was part of the project proposal. The current ARC proposal removes the City’s Mace 25 parcel from the development proposal. There are no proposed changes to the agricultural zoning of the Mace 25 parcel nor to the City ownership of the property. The ARC project does propose a 150’ wide, nine-acre agricultural buffer easement on the southern and eastern edges of the Mace 25 parcel. The placement of the agricultural buffer easement will be considered as part of the larger entitlement application discussion at a future meeting.

Project Review Background

The Aggie Research Campus project has applied for a General Plan Amendment, Pre-Zoning, a Sphere of Influence Amendment and an Annexation. These are the land use entitlements that would be the subject of a Measure R vote should they ultimately be approved and referred to the

ballot by the City Council. Baseline project features would also be established and memorialized as part of the Measure R vote. These initial entitlements would establish land use for the project area.

The application for the Aggie Research Campus has been and will continue to be reviewed by staff and various commissions prior to consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council. The recommendations of those commissions will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and City Council as a part of the project approvals. A tentative schedule of commission meetings and project hearings can be found at

<http://documents.cityofdavis.org/Media/Default/Documents/PDF/CDD/Aggie%20Research%20Campus/20200219/tentative%20public%20meeting%20dates%20for%20website.pdf>.

The following commissions have or will be making recommendations to the City Council as part of the current entitlement application.

- Open Space and Habitat Commission - Held November 4, 2019
- Social Services Commission – Held December 16, 2019
- Natural Resources Commission – Held February 24, 2020
- Finance and Budget Commission
- Bicycle and Transportation Street Safety Commission
- Tree Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission

The project would require future implementing entitlements including a Tentative Subdivision Map and a Final Planned Development/Design Review. The project would go back to those commissions with project components specific to individual commission purview as part of the implementing entitlements should the initial land use entitlements be approved.

Open Space and Habitat Commission Meeting Summary

At the November 4, 2019 Open Space and Habitat meeting, the Commission was asked to approve the list of open space and habitat elements that the Commission recommends be included in the “baseline project features” for the Aggie Research Campus development proposal. At that meeting, the Commission approved the following motion:

“The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that, if the City Council approves the Aggie Research Campus project, the following project features should be included in the project’s “Baseline Project Features” and/or Development Agreement:

1. The agricultural mitigation land should be located within the Davis Planning Area;
2. The east side of the east-west channel should be natural like the rest of the channel;
3. Native plants should predominate the channel and agricultural buffer;
4. Burrowing owl habitat should be on the northwest segment of the agricultural buffer, pending confirmation from the City’s wildlife biologist;
5. The agricultural buffer and east-west channel should be managed for habitat;
6. The east-west channel must have a public access easement;

7. Trees and pollinator habitat should be disbursed throughout the site, including in parking areas; and
8. If the agricultural buffer remains on the “Mace 25” site, the agricultural buffer should be wider.

In addition, the Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that (1) one of the project’s “Conditions of Approval” should be that the project come back to the Open Space and Habitat Commission before approval of appropriate final entitlements, and (2) environmental documents should come back to the Open Space and Habitat Commission during the 90-day comment period and after the Response to Comments period.”

The baseline project features recommended by the Open Space and Habitat Commission are being evaluated. Staff will make final recommendations on the proposed baseline project features when the project comes back to the Planning Commission for a hearing. As noted earlier, the future implementing entitlements would go back to the Open Space and Habitat Commission where conditions of approval specific to their purview would be reviewed. The second additional recommendation separate and apart of the baseline features recommendation the Commission made states that the “...(2) environmental documents should come back to the Open Space and Habitat Commission during the 90-day comment period and after the Response to Comments period.” It should be noted that the comment period for the CEQA document is a 45-day comment period, not a 90-day comment period. The CEQA document will go to the Bicycle Transportation & Street Safety Commission and the Planning Commission for discussion during the 45-day review period. Other City commissions are welcome to review the document and provide comments at one or both of those meetings, submit comments as a commission, and/or as individuals.

The minutes from the meeting are included as Attachment 6.

Social Services Meeting Summary

At the December 16, 2019 Social Services Commission meeting, the commission was asked to make a recommendation on the Aggie Research Campus project’s affordable housing proposal, which proposed providing the number of affordable units and affordability mix required by Municipal Code Article 40.05.050 (a) for ownership units and 18.05.060(a) or (b) for rental units, regardless of whether subsection (b) is extended in ordinance past May 31, 2020. Essentially, the applicant’s proposal was that the affordable housing requirements as they stand today would be applicable to the project over the project build-out or Development Agreement term providing certainty relative to their obligations.

The majority of the Social Services Commission ultimately approved the following motion:

“The City require the builder to comply with the affordable housing requirements at the time of construction with a strong preference for onsite affordable units.”

The motion passed by the Social Services Commission is being evaluated. Staff will make final recommendations on the proposed project affordable housing plan when the project comes back to the Planning Commission for a hearing. As noted earlier, the future implementing

entitlements would go back to the Social Services Commission when specific housing proposals and methods of compliance.

The minutes from the meeting are included as Attachment 7.

Natural Resources Commission

At the February 24, 2020, Natural Resources Commission meeting, the commission was asked to make a recommendation on a document entitled, *Aggie Research Campus Environmental Sustainability Guiding Principles*. The applicant proposes that these principles will set the framework under which all future development in the campus will be evaluated for their sustainability features. The NRC provided feedback and determined that they needed more information. Subsequently, it was determined that the item would be discussed again at the upcoming April 27, 2020 meeting, so the NRC can review the SEIR and provide comments as well.

PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Attached to this memorandum is the Transportation and Circulation section from the Aggie Research Campus Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) (Sent to the Commission on March 19, 2020 by Brian Abbanat) This section of the SEIR fully examines the range of impacts to the City's transportation network, including vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrian.

Staff is seeking comments and feedback from the Bicycle Transportation and Street Safety Commission on the Aggie Research Campus SEIR Transportation and Circulation chapter. Staff will record and include the BTSSC feedback and recommendations as staff evaluates the project and prepares final recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council. Staff will also share specific recommendations of the BTSSC regarding the project transportation features with the Planning Commission and City Council as part of the project hearings.

Attachments:

- 1) Proposed Project Description
- 2) Proposed Land Use Plan
- 3) Proposed Open Space Plan
- 4) Proposed General Plan Land Use Designation
- 5) Proposed Preliminary Planned Development
- 6) November 4, 2019 Open Space and Habitat Commission Meeting Minutes
- 7) December 16, 2019 Social Services Commission Meeting Minutes

Aggie Research Campus SEIR Transportation and Circulation Sections

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/development-projects/aggie-research-campus/arc-seir>

Other project information is available at:

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/development-projects/aggie-research-campus>