

Open Space and Habitat Commission

Summary of Commission Actions Related to the Proposed Mace Ranch Innovation Center (“MRIC”)

March 7, 2016

First Vote

Question #1: Should the MRIC project, as proposed, be built on the MRIC property?

The Open Space and Habitat Commission does not recommend the proposed MRIC project, because it will result in the substantial net loss of the following noteworthy combination of open space values:

1. Prime agricultural land (96.6% classified as Farmland of Local Importance)
2. Open space on the City’s perimeter (“Urban Fringe”)
3. Potential habitat for threatened species such as Swainson’s hawk, burrowing owl, and white-tailed kite (“Biological Resources”)
4. Views of significant landmarks, namely the Sierra Nevada and the Sacramento skyline (“Scenic Resources”) and aesthetic qualities more generally, and
5. Opportunity for a community farm on the City-owned 25 acres in the northwest corner of the site.

The Open Space and Habitat Commission urges the City Council to strongly factor in the loss of these open space values in the Council’s decision-making process.

On a motion by Commissioner Millstein, seconded by Commissioner Aptekar, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the language above. (2 Commissioners absent)

Second Vote

The Open Space and Habitat Commission recommends that the City’s 25 acres of open space -- acres that were purchased by the City with open space funds to be used as open space -- are kept as open space, either as a farm or habitat area. There should be no buildings on the City’s 25 acres of open space, except those necessary to maintain the farm and/or habitat area.

On a motion by Commissioner Aptekar, seconded by Commissioner Millstein, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. (3 Commissioners absent)

Third Vote (A Set of Votes)

Question #2: Focusing on those areas that fall within the purview of the Commission, is the proposed MRIC project consistent with the City Council’s Guiding Principles for Innovation Centers?

On the City's Ag Mitigation Requirement ...

The MRIC project as proposed does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles for ag mitigation because the project applicant has not submitted a formal ag mitigation plan that shows how the project proposes to meet the City's adjacent and remainder ag mitigation requirements.

The project applicant's informal proposal to use the City's Howatt/Clayton property to meet the City's ag mitigation requirements does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles because it does not comply with the City's ag mitigation ordinance because: (1) the City's Howatt/Clayton property is neither physically adjacent to the MRIC site, nor does it provide "extraordinary community benefits," and (2) the City's Howatt/Clayton property is not at risk of being developed, it is located within a flood zone, and it is unknown whether its land is of similar ag quality to the MRIC site.

[On a motion by Commissioner Hoshovsky, seconded by Commissioner Aptekar, the Commission voted 4-0 to approve the language above \(1 Commissioner recused himself, 3 Commissioners absent\)](#)

On the City's Ag Buffer Requirement ...

The MRIC project as proposed does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles for ag buffers because the proposed ag buffer does not comply with the City's ag buffer ordinance which requires that: (1) the City own the fee title interest in the 50-foot-wide portion of the ag buffer, and (2) the City either owns the fee title interest in, or a conservation easement on, the 100-foot-wide portion of the ag buffer.

[On a motion by Commissioner Aptekar, seconded by Commissioner Bone, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. \(3 Commissioners absent\)](#)

On storm water treatment and flow control through bio swales that allow conjunctive uses (habitat, wetland and water quality) ...

The MRIC project as proposed does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles for bio swales because an unknown portion of the drainage ditch running through the MRIC site would be underground and would not provide conjunctive uses (habitat, wetland and water quality). The north and east sections of the ag buffer could be consistent with the City Council's Guiding Principles, but not all of the proposed bio swales on the MRIC site meet the City Council's Guiding Principles.

[On a motion by Commissioner Millstein, seconded by Commissioner Bone, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. \(3 Commissioners absent\)](#)

On usable open space/habitat opportunities overlapping with the drainage systems, including pathways systems throughout with public access and interpretive exhibits ...

The MRIC project as proposed does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles for public accessibility because: (1) there is no guarantee that public access would continue to be permitted in the future on private land, and (2) there are no proposed interpretive exhibits.

On a motion by Commissioner Millstein, seconded by Commissioner Hoshovsky, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. (3 Commissioners absent)

On use of native species and drought tolerant landscaping that creates wildlife habitat value, such as native pollinators ...

The MRIC project as proposed does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles for native species because the current proposed plant palette does not focus on native species that create wildlife habitat value, such as providing resources for native pollinators.

On a motion by Commissioner Aptekar, seconded by Commissioner Millstein, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. (3 Commissioners absent)

On maximize interconnectedness of open spaces and minimize open space with fragmented and linear edge effects ...

The MRIC project as proposed does not meet the City Council's Guiding Principles for minimizing open space with fragmented and linear edge effects because the proposed open spaces are fragmented and linear.

On a motion by Commissioner Hoshovsky, seconded by Commissioner Millstein, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. (3 Commissioners absent)

Fourth Vote

Question #3: What comments or recommendations does the Commission have regarding the proposed project's design and proposed features?

General

- Concentrate development near I-80 to maximize the open space area; leave more of site undeveloped (reserve area north of drainage ditch for demonstration ag lands) and maintain view scape for people travelling on Mace Curve

Parking

- Minimize surface parking; project includes too much surface parking
- Parking structure would be preferable; provide vertical parking

Native Pollinators

- Plant primarily native species (California natives generally and Central Valley natives specifically) that provide resources to pollinators and other wildlife

Net Ecological Benefit

Project should produce a “net ecological benefit” by including many of these types of the following features:

- The east-west drainage canal should provide a functional riparian corridor and enhanced wildlife connectivity, and
- A portion of the site should provide functioning burrowing owl habitat, and
- The ag buffer should be for habitat not orchards, and
- A portion of the site should be reserved for a valley oak restoration site, and
- The site should include a habitat area with minimized edges (i.e., minimize the edge-to-area ratio), and
- A habitat corridor all the way to the Yolo Bypass should be considered.

City’s 25 Acres of Open Space

- Don’t develop anything on the City’s 25 acres of open space
- If the City’s 25 acres of open space are developed, then the developer needs to:
 1. purchase the City’s 25 acres of open space for fair market value and the sales proceeds should be used to reimburse the City’s Open Space Fund; and
 2. secure an alternative site for a community farm as part of the MRIC project’s ag mitigation requirement.

East-West Drainage Ditch

- A riparian corridor should run all the way through the project and be at least 300 feet wide; should connect to other wildlife corridors

Ag Buffer Requirement

- The ag buffer should comply with the City’s ordinance on ag buffers and the City Council’s Guiding Principles for Innovation Centers
- There should be less orchards and more habitat in the ag buffer
- An ag buffer should be on the northwest side of the project too

Ag Mitigation

- The ag mitigation land should comply with the City’s ordinance on ag mitigation and the City Council’s Guiding Principles for Innovation Centers

On a motion by Commissioner Millstein, seconded by Commissioner Hoshovsky, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the language above. (3 Commissioners absent)