



## CITY OF BENICIA

### SEENO BENICIA BUSINESS PARK PROJECT

*Community Meeting | January 7, 2009 • 6 to 10 pm | Mary Farmar Elementary School*

#### I. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Elizabeth Patterson welcomed community members to the meeting to discuss a letter received from Discovery Builders that asked the City Council to reconsider its rejection of the Seeno Benicia Business Park proposal in December if the developer agreed to a number of new conditions. The mayor underscored that the evening's meeting was intended as a community forum, not as a venue for further Council discussion of the project. She then introduced Daniel Iacofano of MIG, the consultant facilitating the meeting, who outlined ground rules for a productive community conversation about the project's status.

#### II. PROJECT BACKGROUND & STATUS

Daniel presented a brief summary of the current state of the business park project, noting that the City Council had rejected the developer's proposal for the project in December, but Discovery Builders had requested that the Council reconsider if Council and the community accepted a set of new conditions. The community meeting was scheduled in response to this letter to provide a forum for discussing the site, the proposed project, and the opportunities and challenges therein.

#### III. TOWARD A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING PROCESS

Daniel began the meeting by inviting community members to submit speaker cards on topics of special concern to them. Speakers were called up in a random order and asked to limit remarks to three minutes. Community members who wanted to speak on multiple topics were free to submit multiple speaker cards. Diana Sherman, also of MIG, recorded comments graphically by topic.

##### *Vision and Guiding Principles*

- Use local hires.
- Make process transparent.
- Maximize community engagement.
- Envision green gateway.
- Take time to do it right.
- Ensure environmental protection.
- Include green technology.
- Consider environmental impact on people.
- Consider multi-objective uses.
- Apply sustainable planning philosophy.
- Employ adaptive reuse of schools.
- Develop proactive recruitment plan for green/clean technology industries.
- Be proud of project.
- Encourage consensus based process.
- Use General Plan health element as a tool.
- Build on the General Plan.
- Put forward a community-based vision.
- Establish iron-clad performance agreements.
- Create an inclusive process.
- Promote transit-oriented development.



- Make a long-term commitment to the community.
- Apply holistic planning principles.
- Make the project economically sustainable and feasible.
- Develop a specific plan for the site.
- Start fresh.
- Identify what the community does want, not just what it doesn't.

### *Issues*

- Local jobs means reduced greenhouse gas emissions, less traffic, less climate impact, reduced commuting, and jobs closer to home.
- The project should create jobs for Benicia residents.
- The existing business park is 50 years old—plan this one for the next 50 years!
- Will specific plan, new agreement, and subsequent EIR change basic concerns?
- Can land trust just buy the land?
- What about a new developer?
- Leave land idle if there's no good plan.
- Provide training for green jobs.
- Create jobs for the future.
- Ensure a zero-carbon footprint.
- Consider pollution impact, especially on children.
- Put project in now—the economy will come back!
- How much habitat enhancement will be involved?
- As tax base rises, city costs rise.
- What's most suitable for the land?
- Consider nearby residents and extend Semple School benefits to these residents.
- Is land suitable for workers if it's not okay for residents?
- Is there demand?
- What about windmills with solar panels and range cattle?
- Traffic on East Second is an issue.
- What about other uses for Mills?
- Include native plant protection.
- Strive to have city staff who can be involved in the long run.
- Encourage transit-oriented development.
- Provide a mass transit system (at developer expense).
- Think about small retail on First.
- Capture local dollars with retail and other uses.
- Don't grade the hills—build in clusters between the hills.
- Remember that you can't buy mitigation for poor air quality.

### *Process*

- A specific plan (paid for by the developer) should be a requirement.
- Require substantial community involvement early in the process—this is the key to success.
- Need a new, not just a revised, project.
- Promote the vision of a green gateway.
- A development agreement would be good.
- Need an oversight committee that reports regularly to the community.
- Need someone from the City on site during construction.
- Provide residents with information and confidence.



- Require an outside manager for the project who would be paid by the developer and would report weekly to the City.
- Include significant penalties or performance bonds for infractions.
- Require a comprehensive economic analysis.
- Develop a community-based process.
- Make sure PLA applies to everything, including future tenant improvements.
- Include form-based code.
- Ensure that the City enforces rules.

#### ***Schools Agreement***

- Include the school district agreement in this process and consider action with respect to Mills School if problems emerge.
- How do we know the schools agreement will be included?
- Why is the school representative a non-voting member? (This is because the school representative has issue-specific interests.)
- Separate application and project terminology—new project with an existing application.

#### ***Additional Information Needed***

- Explore what “green” means (e.g., food processing, solar on warehouses, etc.).
- This is a complex process—make it easy for people to understand.
- Need more information on health impacts.
- Need further economic studies to identify the right land use.
- Create a public economic analysis.
- Who will pay for the specific plan? The development should pay.
- Residents have doubts.
- Conduct a First Street economic study to ensure that there are no negative impacts on existing retail.
- Will freeway commercial fill?
- Which suggested changes will make it into the letter?
- Complete the baseline greenhouse gas inventory and include commute emissions.
- Make mitigations clear for all.
- Does motion to reconsider have to be decided on February 3? (No, it can be extended.)
- What do you want? Where? How can it happen?
- When does a proposed new agreement get hammered out for review?
- What methodology will guide a specific plan?
- Do we want a project or not? If so, define what this is.
- The City should take the lead!
- Conduct a land use market study.
- Did initial auguring go 15 feet down to test for sacred sites and Native American objects?
- How will the community know if the City is over-constraining the project? There’s a lot of competition!
- What is the benefit of a developing a specific plan with a selected developer? Can you get the same outcome from a developer agreement?
- You need vision and assurances. There are significant off-site implications. This would need in-state planning guidelines and a phasing component. You could also do this as a planned unit development (PUD).
- How set in stone is a specific plan? There’s a big investment in process and infrastructure. This requires a formal process to modify this, though it’s rare for a specific plan to be significantly changed, as it’s very cumbersome.
- Where is the balance between benefit for the City and economic benefit for the developer?
- Can you write an adaptable specific plan? (Yes!)



### *Process Timeline*

- Extend timelines (e.g., six months).
- Twelve months is ambitious—rushing the process leads to loss of trust and credibility.
- Project should take time, not be on the City revenue schedule.
- What is the next step if Council reconsiders its decision? The Council needs a clear work plan with time points, guiding principles, and outcomes. The letter could be a basis for a collaborative process. The letter could also be jointly-authored by Council and the developer.
- Clarify the vision for the site.
- Timing depends on existing documents, but 12 to 18 months could be realistic.
- How long would a development agreement take? This is tied to zoning and the plan, but probably 12 to 18 months—the process is the same as for a specific plan.
- Need an articulated timeline: a date of decision, go/no-go points, response to all concerns, identification of the consultants. What by when?

## **IV. SUMMARY & NEXT STEPS**

At the close of the meeting, Daniel identified eight key areas to explore further as the Council weighs its options:

- Creating a specific plan requirement;
- Developing a community-based vision;
- Conducting a land use market study;
- Identifying the meaning of “green” industries and technology;
- Determining how to create iron-clad performance agreements;
- Maximizing community engagement;
- Determining who should pay for the planning process; and
- Establishing a realistic timeline.

Al Seno of Discovery Builders also had an opportunity to address the community and provide a preliminary response to the feedback, and expressed his interest in working with residents and Council to craft a project that would be both environmentally and economically feasible. The community and Council agreed that the results of the community meeting would be summarized and distributed to Council and the developer in time for Discovery Builders to prepare a response before the February 3, 2009 City Council meeting, where the letter and the project status would be on the agenda.