

Staff Report

November 30, 2015

TO: Natural Resources Commission

FROM: Katherine Hess, Community Development Administrator

SUBJECT: Nishi Gateway Planning Effort

Recommendation

Staff is requesting comments from the Natural Resources Commission on the aspects of the Nishi Gateway proposal within the purview of the Commission, to be transmitted to the Planning Commission and City Council during their deliberations on the project applications.

Specifically, staff is recommending the Commission determine that the project's location, configuration, and amenities, including the Sustainability Implementation Plan, are generally consistent with the City Guiding Principles in the category of Sustainability.

Background

Over the past few years, the City has been collaborating with UC Davis, Yolo County, and the property owner to explore potential for the Nishi Property as a mixed-use innovation district. This followed the Council's direction on the Business Park Land Strategy to initiate planning of the Nishi property as a mix of university-related research park development complemented by high density urban housing.

The Natural Resources Commission has reviewed various aspects of the proposal, including:

September 22, 2014 Introduction to Nishi Gateway project concept and public review process

October 27, 2014 Review and comment on Guiding Principles for Davis Innovation Center(s) subsequently adopted by City Council as applicable to Nishi Gateway

January 26, 2015 Review of Nishi Gateway sustainability framework (goals, objectives, and recommended actions for future study)

October 26, 2015 Review of Draft Environmental Impact Report. Commission comments will be addressed in the “Response to Comments” section of the Final EIR, anticipated for release mid-December.

Project Description

The proposed project includes a mix of housing and office/R&D uses. Components include

- 440 Residential apartments
- 210 Residential condominiums
- 325,000 square feet of office/R&D uses
- 20,000 square feet of ancillary retail (coffee shop, café, etc.)

The application also includes potential redevelopment of privately-owned properties on West Olive Drive. This redevelopment would occur based upon market decisions by property owners, but impacts will be analyzed in the EIR. Redevelopment of West Olive Drive could provide an increase of approximately 55,000 square feet of office and retail uses. The EIR will also anticipate road improvements on West Olive Drive to provide access to the Nishi property.

The current Draft Land Plan is illustrated below. Additional renderings and the Sustainability Implementation Plan are at <http://cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/development-projects/nishi-and-downtown-university-gateway-district/project-documents>.



Sustainable Communities Grant / Sustainability Implementation Plan

The City, with Yolo County as a co-applicant and UC Davis as an active participant, was awarded nearly \$600,000 from the Strategic Growth Council for sustainability and environmental studies for the Nishi Gateway area and adjacent UC Davis property. The City has contracted with Ascent Environmental to prepare both the sustainability plans and the EIR. Ascent’s subcontractors include Davis Energy Group (energy), Fehr & Peers (transportation), Cunningham Engineering (water and wastewater) and MIG (land planning).

In January, the Commission reviewed the Sustainability Technical Memorandum, which laid the groundwork for the sustainability analyses. The Memorandum included background information on City/UCD/County policies, as well as an analysis of opportunities and constraints for development of the Nishi Gateway. The Sustainability Framework included goals, objectives, and recommendations for further study in several goal areas, including transportation choices, high-performance buildings, and synergy with other design goals. The Commission made additional comments on the Sustainability Implementation Plan at its meeting in September.

Responses to comments made by this Commission, and by the Recreation and Park Commission, are included as Attachment 2 to this report.

Commission Review of Project Applications

Resolution No. 10-053 provides guidance on Commission review of development proposals. It calls for staff to refer development proposals to subject-matter commissions when a proposal is inconsistent with existing policy or has outstanding characteristics in a certain area, before proceeding to the Planning Commission or City Council. Rather than stating a position on a development proposal in its entirety, a commission should provide the pros and/or cons of a project relative to their specific area of expertise.

Specifically, staff is requesting the Natural Resources Commission determine that the project's location, configuration, and amenities, including the Sustainability Implementation Plan, are generally consistent with the City Guiding Principles in the category of Sustainability (Attachment 2).

Staff has the following comments:

The Sustainability Principle speaks to the following sub-areas:

- ◆ Apply Low Impact Development Principles
- ◆ Ensure minimal greenhouse gas (GHG) impacts at the project level
- ◆ Explore opportunities to bolster the goals of the Climate Adaptation and Action Plan (CAAP)
- ◆ Ag Land Conservation / Open Space
- ◆ Other considerations

Staff is working with the consultants and the applicant to make a recommendation on how the Sustainability Implementation Plan should be incorporated into the General Plan Amendment, Preliminary Planned Development, Development Agreement, and Baseline Project Features for the Nishi development. Appendix F of the SIP identifies Implementing Mechanisms for each proposed action. Final entitlement documents will need to ensure that the project remains consistent with overall sustainability commitments and EIR parameters through buildout and continued operation, while allowing flexibility for adaptation in methodology with improvements in technology, policy, and social behavior.

Other Commission Comments Relevant to Natural Resources Commission

The Bicycling, Transportation, and Street Safety Commission reviewed the proposal on October 27, 2015. The Commission concluded that it could not conclude that the project appropriately meets the Transportation Principle because there is not enough information about detailed plans and actual commitments. Other comments potentially relevant to NRC review included:

- ◆ That the proposed internal road configuration is highly desirable and should be incorporated to help mitigate traffic impacts; and

- ◆ Project must commit to a minimum of two entrances / exits: Olive Drive and UC Davis.

The Open Space and Habitat Commission reviewed the proposal on November 30, 2015. The Commission the Project's location, configuration, and amenities are generally consistent with the City Council-approved Guiding Principles for Innovation Center(s) in the category of Ag Land Conservation/Open Space, assuming the Project incorporates the Commission's comments submitted to the City as part of the Commission's review of the Project's Draft Environmental Impact Report. The Commission noted that obligations for agricultural mitigation lands shall consistent with Davis Municipal Code. Other comments potentially relevant to NRC review included:

- ◆ At least a majority of tree and plant species on the Project site should be native species;
- ◆ Green roofs should be maximized (preferred over photovoltaics); and
- ◆ Passive recreation should be allowed in habitat areas, including the drainage basin.

The Recreation and Park Commission reviewed the proposal on October 15, 2015. The Commission concluded that the project's location configuration, and amenities appropriately meet the City Guiding Principles for Low Impact Development and Ag Land Conservation / Open Space. Other comments potentially relevant to NRC review included:

- ◆ Need flexibility in developing park spaces; balance advantages and disadvantages of turfgrass for active recreation areas;
- ◆ Parking should be provided for public use within the project and for access to parks, greenbelt and habitat areas; and
- ◆ Design the detention basin and perimeter areas to discourage camping and maintain safety.

Next Steps

On November 17, the City Council gave direction for a public hearing schedule that would provide the Council with the ability to place the General Plan Amendment on the June 2016 ballot for voter consideration. The Planning Commission is scheduled to have an introduction to the project proposal and applications on December 16, 2016. Planning Commission formal public hearing and recommendation, along with City Council hearing and action, are scheduled for January. Final action would need to be taken by the City Council by no later than February 16 to meet the deadline for a June ballot measure.

Attachments

1. Response to Comments on Sustainability Implementation Plan
2. Guiding Principles for Davis Innovation Center(s)