

M E M O R A N D U M

To: City of Union City
From: Dyett and Bhatia
Re: Union City Station District NOP Meeting – February 11, 2021
Date: February 22, 2021

Following is a summary of the Union City Station District NOP Meeting held on 2/11/2021 at 6:00 pm via Zoom. The intent is to highlight comments from members of the public on environmental issues and alternatives to the proposed project made at the scoping meeting so that the EIR preparers can address them in the Draft EIR.

PANELISTS:

- Carmela Campbell
- Derek Farmer
- Aaron Welch
- Gabriella Folino
- Andrew Hill

ATTENDEES:

- Timothy Swenson
- Liz Ames
- Chetan Angadi
- RB
- Antonio Munoz
- Glenn Kirby
- Jonathan Pettey
- G Cauthen

PRESENTATION

- Andrew Hill, Principal with Dyett & Bhatia, presented on project background, purpose, environmental review process, and timeline.
 - Scoping period: January 26, 2021- March 6, 2021 with comments due by 5:00 pm. The City will provide a grace period and accept comments in writing through March 8.
 - Background: Union City is preparing a Station District Specific Plan to guide future development in the area surrounding the Union City BART Station. The City will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Specific Plan pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
 - Objectives/Agenda

- Project Description: Planning Area
- Specific Plan Timeline/Organization/Strategies
- Environmental Review Process
- Purpose of EIR
- CEQA Requirements: Resource Categories/ Scoping Comments
- Project Resources
- Opportunities for Comment/Questions and Comments

SUMMARY COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC

The following is a summary of public comments on environmental issues to address in the Draft EIR raised by participants at the February 11 scoping meeting:

- **Alternatives** - Several participants emphasized the need for an EIR alternative that considers higher density around the BART station in order to reduce VMT and promote transit use.
- **Hazardous Materials** – One commenter noted that there are two “clay capped” hazardous materials sites in the planning area. Sites that could contain hazardous materials should be identified in the EIR, including the restoration site and the site and the site on the Northern side of the sound wall behind the Amtrak. Mitigation measures should be developed as needed to address related impacts.
- **Preservation** – Another commenter expressed the need to preserve the agricultural farmland on the Peterson and Ramirez farms and the historic Peterson farmhouse within the Gateway subarea.
- **Conservation** - Conservation and protection of old Alameda and Alameda Creeks is an important environmental issue to address. The EIR should also address water conservation measures to replenish the ground water aquifer.
- **Liquefaction** – One commenter noted the Gateway site is in a liquefaction zone.
- **Fiscal Analysis** – A fiscal analysis should be conducted for new development including the funding for new roadways and civic building required to support the city services. If new facilities are needed, the environmental impacts of constructing these facilities should be addressed in the Draft EIR.

DETAILED COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC:

- Glenn Kirby: While I am intrigued by the mention of Agri-hood for the gateway would like more understanding as to what that is, it sounds a little unusual for a city. Would it involve a zoning designation that would lay out what the agricultural component would be and restrictions on chemicals?
 - Response (Carmela): In the summer/early fall this team went through a robust public outreach process looking at alternatives for different land uses within the Station District Specific Plan Area. Prior to that, we had wrapped up a General Plan effort, the Specific Plan process was to refine the land use vision. The Gateway site has been part of the housing element for the past 25 years. Has been identified for housing for many years, at first it was included as single-family housing. We are looking at more higher density housing. Through the specific plan process, there was a lot of feedback about the existing agricultural uses on the property. An example of the agri-hood concept exists in Santa Clara with an agricultural reserve– going beyond a community garden. Right now, are trying to provide a framework so if a future developer comes in, they will have an idea of the City’s vision.
- RB: #1. I do not see any data in the report about all this new office and retail development. Union City is in a fiscal crisis right now because they have not developed appropriate office and retail development and I do not see how this project is going to do that. #2. You discuss housing; housing does not pay for itself unless you adequately create the financial mechanisms for it to work and Union City has not done that. I want that addressed in the EIR, and I want to see the data supporting the retail and office development that you claim is going to happen because if it was going to happen it would have happened already. It has happened in Hayward and Fremont but is not actually happening in Union City. Thank you.
 - Response (Carmela): There is a vision for this area, within the core, the City owns three parcels (blocks) that we have identified for offices. We are in an exclusive negotiating agreement with a developer, who does BioTech development. With everything that is going on, and what is happening with the office market, I cannot tell you when it will come to fruition. But what we always think about when we consider Union City being successful, we believe in a jobs housing balance and think it is critical. We do have a housing development proposed to the Station East area, and as part of the project, the City is having a fiscal impact study prepared.
 - Response (Andrew): The EIR is a primarily environmental impact document but does get at the fiscal implications in a few different ways. One of the fundamentals will be projections, which will be grounded in economic realities over the 20-year life of the plan. Also, certain aspects like the public services aspect of the EIR that would increase the need for fire stations, police stations, schools, which could have an impact on city finances. As Carmela said there is a fiscal impact analysis that is part of the plan.
- Liz Ames (BART Director for Union City): I ran on a campaign that questioned the East West Connector, now the Quarry Lakes Parkway. Roughly 200 million dollars or more, the area in question where the road is that goes through the Gateway site which goes

through the Ramirez and Peterson Farms and possibly will take out the Peterson farmhouse, which is of national significance. The question is, as a BART director we want to focus on transit-oriented development and walkability, and a job housing balance, I know a lot of folks want to see that. But really this project is an expressway loaded with housing on it. I hope to see housing at the marketplace, the community had spoken out about preserving the Gateway site as a conservation site, it is really close to our watershed. I would like the City to look for ways to preserve the gateway site, adapt to climate change, adapt a vision where we are not installing a 4-way expressway that connects to a 6-way expressway. If that is possible consider making it a conservation area, or a linear park, and focus the development in a ½ mile radius around the BART station. I really hope the City turns this around to be a more traditional Transit Oriented Development. At this point it seems like a suburb with an expressway and it just is not going to give us the results, the viability of the station is going to be auto-centric. Thank you.

- Response (Andrew): It sounds like that question is about a specific alternative in the EIR looking at ways to address potential traffic impact, options for further densification around the station, to get around some of the impacts that were discussed. There are going to be a range of feasible alternatives which could reduce or avoid the impacts of the proposed plan so that sounds like good information which can inform those alternatives.
- Response (Carmela): Quarry Lakes Parkway has gone under its own review and CEQA and has been approved. It is considered part of the planned network. Any outcome of the environmental document will have no bearing on the project, as it is an approved project. Includes robust bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Jonathan: My question is towards the two caps which are in the core part of the district. I do not know if I missed this in previous meetings or reports, but was wondering how the City was going to address those if they should be developed? With specific concern about the community, which is sandwiched between the play gaps, most people know that next to the BART train tracks, and the smaller one on the other side of the sound wall behind the Amtrak.
 - Response (Carmela): The restoration site was part of the former Pacific State Steel factory. The majority of what is in there, in terms of contamination is slag, which is large pieces of metal, of course that is an issue, should it rain have those heavy metals leaking into the water. It was then capped, and so seal, we consider this a long-term vision for development, no current plans for development, at its top its 7 acres, if you were to remove the dirt it is a 16-acre site, if we were to develop this site it would be under strict regulation. Right now some development is allowed on top of the Cap. In the environmental document there will be information regarding this site and reference to its status. Re the second property: believe it is owned by Alameda Property. We will research to find out more regarding this site.
- G Cauthen: Professional engineer and the president of the Bay Area Transportation Working Group, calling something transit oriented does not make it so. In the Bay Area about 25% of all trips are commute trips and of that 25% only about 15% of those are transit commute trips. Only 4% of total trips are transit commute trips, if that figured doubled, then 7-8% trips are transit commute trips, makes it 90% of trips still automobiles, unless

- we make a real attempt to attract people away from the car, for all of the trips, then transit is transit in name only. People want to build a completely new highway to the housing developments door. The rest of the development there is a lot of commercial uses being planned, one way we could address this issue in a logical way, make the destinations for non-transit uses be accessible by walking by biking anything but getting in a car.
- Response (Andrew): Important focus of the plan will be TDM strategies, also will point out that studies have shown that work-related trips that are more likely to use transit, and there is a fair amount of office planned near the station which will help address the impotence of TOD the commentator referred to. The Transportation Analysis will show how the plan will help shift modes of transportation.
 - RB: Andrew, I appreciate your comments in response to my comments and understand that you will analyze vehicle miles traveled. I think Mr. Caufen is right spot-on, what is going to happen is there will be a lot of housing development there, single-family housing which is tied to a car and not to a car which will create even more traffic and will need to be analyzed by the EIR. The problem that Union City has had, the problem is that real Transit Oriented Development, you need to bring in uses that are tied to transit. I hope that part of the environmental analysis you really look at this, that as part of the environmental analysis, is the city going to do an independent fiscal impact analysis of the plan? That individually corroborates what is presented in this plan.
 - Response (Carmela): When projects come in they are required to do a fiscal impact analysis, to make sure they are not going to be costing the city in the long run. Two developments have reduced car parking, trying to set a future where folks do not need to depend on their cars so much. We are looking to add residential and increase density in the Market Place.
 - Response (Andrew): All of these comments feed into the alternatives with higher densities that could do more to facilitate transit-oriented development and it seems like there is a lot of support for that and so will be taken into consideration.

QUESTIONS FROM ZOOM Q&A:

- Liz Ames: Gateway Alternatives should include: re-establishment of prime agricultural farmland for the Peterson and Ramirez farms, conservation of protection of old Alameda and Alameda Creeks, preservation of the historic Peterson farmhouse. All these conservation measures could be considered as a priority conservation area and address the city's municipal code standards for parklands, Yours, Liz Ames, BART Director.
- Liz Ames: The Marketplace Alternatives: housing rather than building housing on a green field site for an agri-housing project proposed at the Gateway site. Yours. Liz Ames, BART Director.
- Liz Ames: Conservation measures should be considered in response to climate adaption plans for the city. The Gateway site is noted to be in a liquefaction zone. This was not proposed in the EIR for the East West Connector. Yours. Liz Ames.
- Liz Ames: The EIR should address water conservation measures to replenish the ground water aquifer. Liz Ames.

DYETT & BHATIA

Urban and Regional Planners

- Liz Ames: Riparian corridors and a linear Park should be reestablished instead of storm water retention basins proposed on agricultural land/ Ramirez farm.
- Liz Ames: Please also consider an alternative – that the Quarry Lakes Parkway be not considered to connect with the East West Connector, an expressway connection to 1880 to 238.
- Larry Gissible: Development of the Core section will eliminate the Union City Parking Lot for BART riders. There is limited parking at the BART station. Already people park illegally at the Market Place. What will be done to replace the parking??
- Liz Ames: The robust public outreach asked for preservation of the Ramirez Farm and Peterson farmhouse and asked for the City to consider housing within the ½ mile radius of the BART Station. Extending housing on a potential conservation area, is not necessary nor is a vision for climate adaption. Yours. Liz Ames.
- Liz Ames: Why not work with a non-profit to preserve the Gateway site for conservation purposes? Liz Ames, BART Director
- Liz Ames: Looking forward, Union City is a commuter city will not jobs near Transit. The East West Connector is funded by taxpayers and is not funded by developers. Please show the fiscal analysis of all the development and include the funding for new roadways and civic building required to support the city services. City finances are critical to the cities health and the city is in a financial crisis.
- Glenn Kirby: The scope and scale of this plan will result in significant demand on infrastructure. There is a proposed arterial roadway referred to as Quarry Lakes Parkway. This proposed roadway would complete the circulation system for all modes of travel and facilitate services to the district. I believe that if this plan is approved and the Quarry Lakes Parkway is not provided there will be significant impacts on the district and the surrounding area. The completion of the roadway circulation system is necessary to avoid significant traffic impacts.
- Liz Ames: The East West connector and Quarry lakes Parkway (over \$200M) is not fully funded and should be considered as an alternative, not a preferred project. The Planning and Economic Director mentioned not to evaluate the option removing the Quarry Lakes Parkway and moving housing closer to BART within the ½ mile radius. Thank you, Andrew, for a proposal my constituents have asked for which is considering the housing near transit – within the ½ mile radius from BART and reevaluate housing closer to BART! Building a suburb near a 4-lane roadway is a decades old planning model. Yours. Liz Ames, BART Director.
- Chetan Angadi: Can you put more street lights on 11th street and make it fancy like future downtown, it too dark even to walk near fountain?
- Liz Ames: Union City has had trouble delivering jobs near transit and has had an exclusive negotiating agreement for several years now by only a 2-story office building has been constructed. We can't assume the BART station will be a town center without more density near the station rather than sprawling housing outside the ½ mile radius. I along with the BART Board in 2019 approved the eastern pedestrian/bike access. The transportation section should also look through the regional supercommuter traffic the

DYETT & BHATIA

Urban and Regional Planners

East West Connector/Quarry Lakes Parkway and local housing/ auto generated traffic. Please again consider alternatives without the expressway. Housing and jobs should be using transit not cars, yet the proposal is a suburban design. Thank you. Liz Ames.

- Liz Ames: The framework to make a site less dependent on autos, is to develop less roads and more multi-modal alternatives. Yes Andrew – higher density no expressway, but a linear multimodal park to a gateway conservation area is going to attract a place to live, work, play and recreate. It will revitalize the station we all want!!!
- Liz Ames: Please consider our water replenishment of our aquifer, conservation and planning to address climate adaption for the next 50 years, if possible. Planning and land uses do not address how we can cope with significant changes in climate. Thank you!!!!