

## **Baylands developer approaches final project pitch: Discussion slated to be among last before officials begin summer deliberations**

By Austin Walsh Daily Journal Staff May 23, 2017

With official deliberation looming soon on the horizon for a transformative development proposed at the Brisbane Baylands, the developer is slated to make a final pitch for the divisive project.

The Brisbane City Council will hear details Tuesday, May 23, from Universal Paragon Corporation regarding the company's proposal to build 4,000 new homes, almost 7 million square feet of commercial space and a variety of additional amenities on a 660-acre site hugging the San Mateo and San Francisco county line.

The presentation is scheduled to be the penultimate public hearing in a series of discussions designed to break the massive proposal into smaller segments, before councilmembers begin formal discussions next month.

Jonathan Scharfman, general manager for the developer, characterized the discussion as a last crack at discussing the merits of the project.

"Our purpose is not to go over necessarily our proposal again, but really present our vision and give our closing arguments for why we believe the project is good for the city, the region and the planet," he said.

He said the project will both address a regional demand for housing while also remediating contamination pooled underground from years of industrial uses.

“We developed a plan that was in response to Brisbane’s drive to clean up a legacy pollution site and move the needle on climate change by making the most sustainable development possible,” he said.

He bolstered sustainability claims by citing research from environmental agencies that consider transit-oriented projects the most responsible fashion of development.

“Experts have concluded that the number one way to move the needle on climate change with a project like ours is to localize the housing near jobs and transit,” he said.

Residents will be granted the final opportunity to chime in on the project during a final community discussion Wednesday, June 7, but many have already taken a position.

Battle lines have been drawn by residents seeking to preserve their existing community while citing concerns over whether the contaminated Baylands soil is suitable for development.

Resident Danny Ames addresses such fears in a letter addressed to city officials.

“Why should we put at risk diluting our little town’s political strengths, our infrastructures, our quality of life, our open spaces to enrich the coffers of a few developers who want to make bank on S.F. less than responsible housing planning,” he said, in a letter available on the city’s website.

Project proponents though counter those concerns with claims the development is needed to meet the growing demand for living on the Peninsula, near the area’s wealth of lucrative jobs.

Assemblyman David Chiu, D-San Francisco, expressed his support for the project and called on his fellow elected officials to approve the housing, citing its proximity near the city's Caltrain station.

“The most sustainable way to grow is to build housing near jobs and transit. The Brisbane Baylands plan as proposed by the developer accomplishes just that,” he said. Scharfman said he too acknowledges the issues raised by community members regarding the size and scope of the project.

“We really appreciate Brisbane residents' concerns about the potential impacts of a project of this scale on the character of their town, and we believe the geographic buffer between downtown Brisbane and the core of the developed area on the Baylands will help create an open space buffer to mitigate that impact,” he said.

To those citing soil contamination as an insurmountable hurdle, he pointed to projects such as the Mission Bay development in San Francisco as a precedent for such a project.

In all, Scharfman said he believes the meeting will be a final chance to forward the merits of a project he considers vital and “the only responsible way to meet the city's sustainability objectives.”

The Brisbane City Council meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 23, in council chambers, 50 Park Place, Brisbane.

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