

# *City of Brisbane*

## *Agenda Report*

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** William Prince, Community Development Director

**DATE:** November 6, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Baylands Specific Plan Environmental Impact Report- Alternatives Development Process

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive a presentation from ESA and Dyett & Bhatia regarding their proposed approach to develop project alternatives to be considered in the forthcoming Baylands Specific Plan environmental impact report (EIR), and provide direction as the Council deems appropriate.

**BACKGROUND:**

In the public scoping process for the forthcoming Baylands Specific Plan EIR, the development and analysis of project alternatives has repeatedly been identified as a critical element. Ensuring that this process maximizes public participation is a major point of emphasis, as it provides the opportunity for the community to develop a vision for the Baylands, and for this vision to be articulated and visually presented as one or more project alternatives. The community-driven alternative(s) would subsequently be analyzed in the forthcoming EIR, along with the developer's proposal. In the City's Request for Proposals issued to qualified environmental consultants interested in preparing the EIR, the alternatives development process was highlighted as a critical task, and consultants were directed to specifically define their approach to this task, with particular emphasis on how they would engage the community in the process.

The City received four proposals to prepare the EIR, and all four consultant teams were interviewed by the consultant selection committee appointed by the City Council. Again, the alternatives development process was a major factor in the evaluation of the proposals and consultant teams. Following the interviews, the panel unanimously recommended the selection of the environmental consulting team led by ESA to prepare the EIR. In addition to having an excellent grasp of the project's potential environmental issues, and assembling a strong technical team, ESA also demonstrated the highest level of understanding regarding the importance and sensitivity of the alternatives development process. In recognition of the importance of this task, ESA teamed up with Dyett and Bhatia, a leading Bay Area planning firm with expertise in General Planning, urban design, and public facilitation to create an alternatives development process incorporating extensive public input (visioning and alternatives workshops, public open house, and City Council/Planning Commission study sessions), along with the preparation of supporting graphics to enable the community to better visualize its choices.

**DISCUSSION:**

Negotiations with ESA regarding EIR scope and cost are proceeding in anticipation of bringing a contract for Council consideration in the near future, and have resulted in further refinement of the scope pertaining to alternatives development. The recommended scope is as attached as Exhibit 1. The recommended changes increase the amount of public involvement, reflecting a proactive approach to reach all segments of the community, including those who are unwilling or unable to participate in scheduled public workshops.

Given that the alternatives development process is such a critical element of the overall EIR, staff has scheduled tonight's item to allow the consultants to present an overview of their recommended approach and proposed scope of work for alternatives development, as well as to discuss their relevant qualifications and experience. Marty Abell of ESA, the EIR project manager, and Rajeev Bhatia of Dyett and Bhatia, manager of the alternatives development process, will be making the presentation. City Council comments or feedback would be useful in refining the scope of work for the final contract.

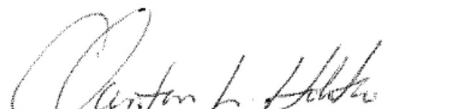
Staff would further note that the alternatives development and review process will have direct applicability to the City's ongoing General Plan update and serves a valuable purpose beyond preparation of the Baylands Specific Plan EIR.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The project applicant is obligated to pay for the cost of EIR preparation, which will be in the 1.1 million to 1.3 million dollar range, including the alternatives development process discussed above. Final scope and cost are still under negotiation. Staff acknowledges that the recommended approach for alternatives development, while responsive to the City's needs and direction, is far more extensive and costly than the alternatives analysis typically found in an EIR. As noted above, the process will also generate information of citywide benefit, to be used in the City's General Plan update.

In recognition of these circumstances, staff believes it would be appropriate for the Redevelopment Agency to share in the cost of the public-intensive alternatives development process as recommended. Staff recommends that the property owner pay the cost of the work scope included in ESA's original proposal, (approximately \$84,000), while the Redevelopment Agency cover the cost of the additional public meetings and public outreach as recommended in the updated work scope (approximately \$50,000). Final costs are still under negotiation, and the final details regarding cost sharing would be presented to the City Council for approval in conjunction with the EIR contract on a subsequent date.

  
Community Development Director

  
City Manager

**Attachments:**

Proposed Work Scope Development of Alternatives

## **Alternatives Development: Community participation/decision-maker meetings program**

Proposed additions are noted in underline. All tasks are grouped under Task 3, with the exception of the last one, which is described under Task 6.

- City Council/Planning Commission Kickoff Workshop
- Stakeholder Meetings (one round)
- Community Issues and Visioning Workshop (one)
- Community Workshop on Preliminary Alternatives
- Neighborhood/key group briefings (16 meetings, at various stages)
- City Council/Planning Commission Briefing on Alternatives
- Newsletter on Alternatives
- Community “Open House” on Alternatives (one)
- Council/Planning Commission Workshops on Final Alternatives and Evaluation (Task 6)

### **Task 3: Develop Alternatives**

As was clear from the City’s public scoping meetings, and as stated in the RFP, the development of EIR alternatives will be very important to the Brisbane community, and will require extensive discussion. From a CEQA perspective, alternatives should be designed to minimize impacts of the proposed project. They should also help accomplish the City’s policies for the area as articulated in the General Plan, including maintaining a low-rise profile, maximizing open space (especially south of the Bayshore Basin drainage channel) and public accessibility, respecting the environmental sensitivities of the setting and proximity to the Bay, promoting a diverse mix of use, preserving views, and promoting multi-modal accessibility. A minimum of 25 percent of land (exclusive of private-ownership aquatic area) is to be set aside as open space. In addition, the City has identified sustainability as a key tenet of development. The alternatives should be designed to help further these policy and environmental considerations, with yardsticks (or Thresholds of Significance) designed to measure progress toward attaining these goals.

This task will entail a great level of public participation. The outreach program should help create trust in the planning process and provide opportunities for the vigorous discussion of and effective input regarding the

Specific Plan and its environmental consequences, and issues, visions, planning principles, and growth and development scenarios.

The following specific subtasks are proposed:

- **Conduct a Kickoff workshop with City Council and the Planning Commission (Dyett & Bhatia [D&B]).** Staff and consultants will meet with members of the City Council and the Planning Commission (preferably in a joint workshop) to discuss their ideas and priorities for the Specific Plan, and specific issues and objectives they would like to see incorporated in the alternatives. The objective of this meeting will be to give decision-makers the opportunity to describe their own priorities for the planning process to the consultants and others. The approach to public participation will be described at the meeting, list of stakeholders to interview reviewed; these will be refined based on Council/Commission comments following the meeting.
- **Interview Individual Stakeholders (D&B)** Representatives of public agencies, community members, business leaders, neighborhood groups, environmental advocates, City Council, etc. will be interviewed to identify their issues of concern and get feedback about specific issues identified.

This step is critical, because often people will be much more candid in a one-on-one or small group interview. We will ask a series of questions so that we learn the about major issues of concern, deal breakers, desirables, and the political factors that may come into play. We would conduct 20 such meetings (with one or two participants at each meeting—or a total of about 30-35 individuals) over a two-three day period. A report summarizing stakeholder findings will be provided and published.

- **Prepare and Hold One Community Issues and Visioning Workshop (D&B).** While three scoping meetings for the EIR have been held, this workshop will be designed to be interactive and engage the community in shaping development visions. The meeting will be designed as a community event, structured to facilitate the participation of a wide diversity of residents, business people, and other key stakeholders. Following presentation of the Specific Plan and its principal components, participants will gather in small groups to facilitate discussion. After initial exploration of issues and visions, groups will engage in a hands-on, structured but interactive exercise. Each group will be provided with maps, aerial photographs, markers, and scaled color paper “chips” representing various amounts of development. Participants will have the option of modifying the Draft Specific Plan or creating their own scenarios. Emerging visions and ideas will be shared with the large group as whole.
- **Prepare Indicators (D&B).** D&B will distill the community input into a list of preference indicators that will help to shape the alternatives. These indicators will not be designed to duplicate impacts that will be assessed as part of the EIR (such as traffic level of service), but rather to focus on land use and urban design factors that can be mapped or measured and

easily visualized. While the indicators will emerge from the public meeting, they are likely to include factors such open space and accessibility, various aspects of sustainability, development within one-half mile of rail transit, views of the development, and impacts on vistas of the Bay and the hills.

- **Prepare Preliminary Alternatives (D&B).** Following community input and preparation of indicators, D&B will prepare three alternatives that reflect community input and the City's goals and policies for the Baylands area and that help achieve the objectives outlined by the community in the workshop. The key ingredients for the alternatives would include land uses and how they are mixed, development scale, intensities (floor area ratios), other standards (lot coverage, building height), open spaces, parking (structured or surface) and transportation improvements. The interplay of these factors will result in a variety of outcomes. Performance of the alternatives, as well as the Draft Preferred Plan, under the various indicators will be quantified. D&B could do some exploratory work on transportation impacts of the preliminary alternatives, but detailed assessment of the transportation impacts would have to wait until alternatives are fully described.
- **Conduct Workshop on Preliminary Alternatives (D&B/Project Team).** The Project Team will lead a community workshop to discuss and compare the alternative plans. The format for the public workshop will be reviewed with City staff. The team has tested various formats for alternative comparisons and found that the most successful have been workshops open to the public where small groups focus on specific issues and then present their findings and preferences to others in an open forum. This format will enable the Project Team to determine which alternatives have community support and should be carried further or be further refined, and also allow the Planning Commission and City Council to gauge public reaction before decisions are made.

As an optional item, D&B can set up alternatives and indicators in GIS (using customized Scenario 360 that will run on ArcGIS platform). Alternatives can be loaded onto laptops to provide a starting point for community members, with interactive display of indicators as changes are made. While D&B has in-house capability to do this, this exercise will require considerable time in creating a GIS database and "place types" (or land use mixes) that community members can manipulate, with a very short-duration usefulness (workshop only). Additionally, such an exercise will not be three-dimensional in nature.

- **Neighborhood/Key Group Briefings (16 meetings, at various stages; D&B).** At several stages in the process (gathering of issues and concerns, preparation and discussion of alternatives, for example) the consulting team will provide briefings to interest groups and organizations in locations where these groups (such as PTA, Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood groups, Mother of Brisbane, etc.) meet. Our budget assumes that preparation time for these meetings will be minimal, as any material presented would largely comprise of that prepared for other meetings or for the EIR analysis.

- **Conduct City Council/Planning Commission Briefing on Alternatives.** Decision-makers will be briefed on the preliminary alternatives and community reaction to them, so decision-makers can weigh in or provide specific direction to the team on development of finalized alternatives should they so desire.
- **Assess Feasibility and Prepare Detailed Alternatives (D&B).** Following decision-maker input, five land use alternatives intended for detailed review and analysis will be prepared, in consultation with City staff. These would include a “no-project” alternative, potentially a modified Specific Plan alternative, as well as three other alternatives (for example, development clustered on the northern portion in proximity to transit, maximum open space in the southern portion and around the lagoon, greater mixing of office and commercial uses, etc.).

The alternatives will be sensitive to the issues, opportunities, and constraints identified in the community workshops, and will offer real choices. For instance, no plan alternative will show development at locations that have been conclusively identified as inappropriate due to environmental hazards, sensitive habitats, or other constraints.

The alternatives will incorporate concepts of sustainability and address the challenge of adapting these concepts to Brisbane. To ensure that land uses relate appropriately to the road network, the alternatives will identify new streets and connections or changes to existing street directions, intersections, or other features. The alternatives will reflect existing community plans, specific plans, and other planning efforts.

For each alternative, D&B will quantify performance under various indicators, such as number of employees within various walking distances of transit, amount of open space, and accessibility of open space to Brisbane residents.

- **Prepare Newsletter on Alternatives (D&B).** This newsletter, designed for citywide mailing, will summarize the key alternatives being considered for the Specific Plan, and will be richly illustrated with land use plans and other drawings. Opportunities for public input will also be included. It is assumed the City will be responsible for printing and mailing.
- **Conduct Community “Open House” on Alternatives (included in budget).** D&B will present salient features of the alternatives to the community in an “open house” format. After a presentation, members will be invited to ask questions and offer comments at stations that will have rich visuals and other information on all alternatives.
- **Prepare Computer Model of One Alternative.** D&B will prepare a computer-based block model (“cereal box”-like; i.e., not finely-articulated volumes, and no building textures or vegetation) of one alternative (in addition to the proposed project), based on the open house or the survey. This model will be able to be viewed from any angle, and

in still or in motion. Still views can be rapidly generated (in a few minutes) at a public meeting/hearing; animations require longer rendering times, and will have to be preset in advance of any hearings.

### Task 6: Evaluate Alternatives

As indicated in Task 3, above, the EIR will develop and evaluate five alternatives to the Phase I Specific Plan. Three of these alternatives will be developed through the proposed community participation process. A fourth will likely be a variation of the proposed Phase I Specific Plan and will be developed by the Project team in consultation with City staff. The fifth will be the No Project alternative, as required by CEQA. We propose to evaluate one of these alternatives (the "Preferred Alternative") at a level of detail equal to that of the evaluation of the proposed project, and to evaluate the remaining alternatives at a lesser level of detail, as permitted by CEQA Guidelines. The Alternatives chapter of the EIR will describe each alternative and present a comparative matrix for the project and all alternatives that will indicate the degree of significance of their impacts and whether the impacts would be greater, lesser, or similar to those of the Phase I Specific Plan.

The Alternatives chapter will also address three alternatives for the Framework Plan to help ensure the EIR will be legally adequate to support approval of the Framework Plan.

**Council/Planning Commission Workshops on Final Alternatives and Evaluation (D&B).** The final Alternatives that will be included in the EIR and evaluation of their impacts will be presented to the City Council and/or Planning Commission (one meeting), to ensure that the alternatives and assessment are comprehensive for decision-making purposes.