

TO: JAMES L. APP, CITY MANAGER
FROM: BOB LATA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: MAYOR'S LETTER TO COUNTY REGARDING
EL POMAR – ESTRELLA AREA PLAN AND EIR
DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2003

Needs: For the City Council to note and file the attached letter from the Mayor to the County Planning Commission regarding the El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Facts: 1. Attached is a copy of a letter sent by the City with comments on the El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan and EIR.
2. This letter has already been sent to the County in order to comply with their request for comments by February 18, 2003

Analysis
and

Conclusion: The attached letter is consistent with prior City comments on county area developments and their unmitigated impacts on City facilities and services.

As the letter indicates, the EIR recommends a policy that would call for development of a regional traffic model that would quantify impacts; that would seem to be a positive step forward.

The El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan also incorporates a constructive notice provision regarding the City's Municipal Landfill, as was requested by the City in comments filed with the County in May 2001. These provisions should help avoid land use conflicts.

Policy

Reference: County's Draft El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan and Environmental Impact Report

Fiscal

Impact: None to provide comments; plan implementation is anticipated to have long-term impacts on City facilities and services unless those impacts are adequately mitigated.

Options: a. Note and file the attached letter from Mayor Mecham to the County Planning Commission regarding El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan and Environmental Impact Report.
b. Amend, modify or reject the foregoing option.

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February 10, 2003

Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission
County of San Luis Obispo
County Government Center
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

SUBJECT: El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan and Environmental Impact Report

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the subject documents, and for the specific responses to our letter of May 16, 2001 that have been incorporated into the El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan.

As we understand the El Pomar plan, it would provide for up to an 80 percent increase in population over current levels. Particularly when combined with other City and county-area growth and development, we would anticipate that there would be a significant cumulative impact on area resources, particularly in terms of traffic that would come through Paso Robles along Highway 46 East, Creston Road, Niblick Road, Charolais Road, and the respective bridges over the Salinas River.

The EIR for the El Pomar – Estrella Area Plan recommends that “the County complete a North County Circulation Study in cooperation with the cities of Paso Robles and Atascadero, which would develop a regional traffic model to quantify impacts to roadways and bridges from new development. The circulation study shall be utilized in the development of a traffic impact fee program, which will fund future roadway improvements in the North County. The City would welcome adoption and implementation of this recommendation.

More broadly, population growth in the rural areas in the vicinity of Paso Robles will have continued impacts on City facilities and services, to include but not be limited to use of Parks & Recreation Programs, Library, and mutual aid for Emergency Services. In the same context as mitigating traffic impacts upon the City, we would welcome examination of tools with which to mitigate impacts on other City facilities and services. Consistent with the City’s letter of May 16, 2001, which is included in the EIR, we would appreciate the plan and EIR addressing these impacts.

With two relatively recently approved County-area developments (Rancho Santa Ysabel and the Paso Robles Vineyards AG Cluster) there has been County cooperation to establish conditions of approval that would require applicants /subsequent property owners to pay the City's development impact fees that are in place at the time of issuance of building permits.

It would be appreciated if a similar condition be established on new building permits and future parcel maps / subdivisions in the vicinity of Paso Robles (at least within the City's adopted Planning Impact Area, which is identified in the Salinas Area Plan). Paying the City's standard development impact fees in conjunction with new development in this geographic area would help mitigate impacts on City streets, bridges, and other city facilities and services that are used by new County residents.

Impacts to the Paso Robles Groundwater Basin are addressed in the EIR. The EIR indicates, "...cumulative impacts from the proposed Area Plan Update, along with further development within the Salinas River Planning Area and continued expansion of agricultural development, would have significant impacts to groundwater supplies since the perennial yield of the aquifer will be exceeded." One of the referenced mitigation measures in the EIR is the Nacimiento water transmission project. The City would encourage both active and careful examination of this option in order to address long-term water demands for both the Salinas and El Pomar-Estrella Areas.

With regards to wastewater impacts, the EIR concludes that there would be no significant impact if Regional Water Quality Control Board standards are met. The EIR also cites that the effectiveness of existing septic systems ranges from "complete filtration to system failure, which may result in potential contamination of groundwater or percolation of untreated sewage to the ground surface." The City would request that the Plan call for programs to proactively address circumstances where there is system failure and establish effective policies to avoid contamination of groundwater resources.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding these comments. Should you have technical or background information needs, please contact Bob Lata at (805) 237-3970 / fax: (805) 237-3904 / e-mail: bob@prcity.com

Thank you for consideration of the City's concerns and your past willingness to address City concerns regarding ways in which the County can mitigate impacts of County area development upon the City of Paso Robles. We would appreciate your further considerations in the same direction.

Sincerely,

Frank M. Mecham
Mayor

cc: City Council
Board of Supervisors

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