



CITY OF LA CENTER • WASHINGTON
SUB-AREA PLAN

**La Center Junction Sub-Area Plan
Open House Public Workshop #3 Summary**

DRAFT

Tuesday, August 11, 2009
4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDEES:

Amy Chase
Susan Gilbert
Steve Horenstein
Mike Hord
Terry Haskell
Dean Schrader
Roy Heikkala
Al Luiz

Julia Griffith
Sandy Perrott
Linda Dennis
Ken Boal
Larry Kraemer
Caren Carlson
John Bockmier
Les Greear

Greg Thornton
Ed Boal
Dale Lang
Dick Siegel
Jerry Smedes
Jim Boal
J.V. "Bud" Webster

PROJECT TEAM AND ADDITIONAL STAFF:

Dale Miller, City Planner, City of La Center
Bart Stepp, Public Works Engineer, City of La Center
Jeff Sarvis, Public Works Director, City of La Center
Karen Ciocia, Normandeau Associates
Dena Horton, Normandeau Associates

EVENT OVERVIEW:

A public workshop for the La Center Sub-Area Plan (SAP) project was held from 4 – 6 p.m. on Tuesday, August 11, 2009 at the La Center Community Center located at 1000 East 4th Street in La Center, Washington. Twenty-three attendees signed in (see Appendix A – Sign-in Forms) and viewed maps of land use Alternative X and Y and maps of the transportation Options 1, 2, and 4 (see Appendix B – Transportation Options Maps). Project staff members were available to share information and answer questions. Information regarding annexation and the current use program were made available to meeting participants (see Appendix C – Open House Handouts). Comment forms were provided to record attendee input (see Appendix D – Comments Received).

The open house workshop was promoted via an insert in the sewer bill distribution and a newsletter was sent via first class mailing to 121 property mailing addresses. Copies of the newsletter were available for at several locations in the city limits of La Center including City Hall and Public Works offices.

PROJECT BACKGROUND:

Karen Ciocia facilitated the meeting and provided brief welcome and introductory remarks. Dale Miller discussed the project history. He explained the need for creating more jobs in La Center and the La Center Junction as the area to be developed for the City's economic future. The purpose of the subarea plan is to define anticipated development, identify necessary supporting infrastructure, and developing a plan for financing infrastructure improvements at the Junction. Dale provided a history of the public involvement efforts to date and explained that the Western Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) Hearing Board appeal was overturned so the land at the Junction is now in the City's urban growth boundary again. At this point, no additional appeals have been filed.

ALTERNATIVES AND DISCUSSION:

Land Use Alternatives

Dale Miller explained that the land use and transportation planning has considered alternatives if the casino resort is developed as well as if the casino resort is not developed. He briefly described the land use alternatives as:

Alternative X – the current City zoning plan

Alternative Y – most of the current City zoning plan remains the same, however the NE quadrant of the Junction is altered.

Dale explained there was a negligible difference in terms of job potential, households, and tax revenue generation between the two alternatives. He stated that the City currently has Alternative Y as the preferred alternative. Dale asked if anyone present objected to Alternative Y as the preferred alternative. There were no objections. Les Greear requested that the record reflect his desire to have his property, which currently falls within the contingency land area, remain outside the subarea plan boundaries. Dale explained that the contingency land area will only be granted to the City of La Center if the Cowlitz Tribe's property is put into trust for the casino resort development.

Transportation Alternatives

Bart Stepp reviewed transportation Options 1, 2, and 4 and explained that the subarea plan will move forward with a preferred land use alternative and several transportation options. Each option has an A and B to consider planning with and without the casino resort at the Junction. Option 3 was eliminated as a result of previous public input received. Several attendees asked for detail on specific roads and connections for each of the transportation options and Bart outlined the proposed configurations, particularly regarding future configurations of Paradise Park Road. He reminded the attendees that the configurations presented are not the actual alignments but are configurations to show connections, flow, etc. and that the Washington State Department of Transportation requires a certain amount of separation between intersections and interchanges. He pointed out that Option 1B most closely resembles the configuration the Cowlitz Tribe proposed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the casino resort. Bart also stated that minor connector roads will likely need to be developed to assist with traffic circulation.

The attendees were invited to ask questions of the project team to answer. The following questions and answers were provided:

Questions & Answers

- Q: The property at the Junction where the Mobile gas station is was previously zoned as commercial but is now in industrial/employment campus. Can the zoning be changed back to commercial for that property?
- A: Yes, the property is approximately 2 acres and can be corrected to reflect commercial zoning instead of industrial/employment campus.
- Q: Will farming still be allowed on properties that are going to be zoned mixed use?
- A: Foregoing the current agricultural use is not required so yes, farming can continue.
- Q: What is the status of litigation?
- A: The expansion of the urban growth boundary for La Center in the Clark County comprehensive plan was appealed as an unlawful conversion of natural resource state to urban lands. The Western Washington Growth Management Hearing Board agreed. However, the Clark County Superior Court overturned the decision in May 2009 and so the lands are back in La Center's urban growth boundary. A second appeal was filed in early July 2009 to the Washington State Court of Appeals. If the land being disputed is annexed into the City of La Center, then the case becomes a moot point.
- Q: Will the new bridge connect or follow 24th Street and connect to 329th to La Center Road?
- A: A second crossing will be needed to deal with growth and traffic capacity, but the City has not settled on an exact alignment for the bridge.
- Q: Will the land use determine which transportation option can be used?
- A: No, regardless of which land use alternative is chosen, the transportation options will meet the needs outlined so the land use will not determine the transportation option to be chosen.
- Q: If the Shell station is going to be left without a road, then how will gas trucks and other freight trucks access the business and turn around to get out safely?
- A: The state and federal regulations will need to be followed, but if the business' current access will be terminated, then another access will be provided. The options laid out are not exact alignments.
- Q: What will happen after this meeting?
- A: A presentation package will be delivered to the planning commission and they will hold a meeting to get input, the City Council will meeting and also get public input. A financing package will also need to be developed including taxes, impact fees, wastewater development charges, etc. The package is anticipated to be delivered to the planning commission by the end of September.
- Q: Is this the cheapest way to get infrastructure and to work with the Cowlitz Tribe?

A: The Cowlitz Tribe is a property owner too and the City Council directed the staff to discuss transportation options with the representatives of the Cowlitz Tribe.

Annexation and Current Use Presentation

Dale Miller provided a brief presentation on annexation and the current use program. If the City of La Center annexes out to the Junction, then the legal issue with the county comprehensive plan becomes a moot point. He explained the potential fees and penalties for a 20 acre property. The attendees also had questions related to annexation and the current use program. The questions and answers were as follows:

Q: Can a property be annexed without any plans for development and stay in current use? What is the trigger for being forced out of the current use program?

A: Yes, so long as the agricultural use is not pre-empted. The riparian habitat and critical areas would not need to be counted, but the remainder of the property would be assessed. There is some financial savings benefit to preserve natural resources such as agriculture, forestry, etc. The date of annexation is the trigger because new zoning applies, however the zoning can be modified to allow the use to continue.

Q: Who pays for annexation to the City of La Center?

A: Property owners pay a fee to be annexed into the City.

Q: If the properties at the Junction are annexed to the City, then is the City responsible for utilities?

A: The City will provide the services, however property owners must pay for the services.

The attendees were invited to review land use alternative maps and transportation options maps and discuss any additional questions or concerns with the project team.

FOLLOW UP:

- A joint briefing with the Planning Commission and City Council to provide an update on the planning process and summary of public input.
- It may be helpful to schedule another open house to present the final plan to the public.

Appendix A – Sign-in Forms

Appendix B – Transportation Options Maps

Appendix C – Open House Handouts

Appendix D – Comments Received