

Summary of Lemoore General Plan Update 2030 Steering Committee Meeting #5

Wednesday, May 9, 2007 5:30pm-8:00pm
West Hills College Conference Center
555 College Avenue, Room 256, Lemoore

On May 9, 2007, members of the General Plan Steering Committee met with the consultant, Dyett and Bhatia, to discuss the draft Noise and Community Design elements for the General Plan Update, as well as to address two memos prepared for the City and consultant by community groups, one memo on a proposed historic preservation ordinance, and the other on proposed zoning recommendations. In addition all present experienced a demonstration flyover by aircraft from the Naval Air Station in order to know firsthand what future residents of West Lemoore might experience with increased development on the west side. This memo summarizes the comments received at the meeting and the requests for information.

Noise Element Discussion and Flyover Demonstration

In the Noise Element discussion, committee members described the tradeoffs that Lemoore has had to make in order to decide where to grow: Does the town convert prime agricultural land to urban use, or build in the noisier area toward LNAS where the land has less agricultural value? This decision to build in West Lemoore is seen by some as going back on a promise made to the Navy years ago not to encroach on the land they need to function properly. The Navy has land use policies with the County conferring exclusive agricultural use up to 23rd street. It is zoning, however, and a vote of 3-5 changes it, as is true for any land use. Participants acknowledged that the mitigations proposed by the consultant are the only ones that exist, and that the land use decision was the one that reflected the priorities of the community and the necessity to provide room for more housing and economic development.

Then Captain LNAS stated he values the great enduring relationship that has existed between the station and Lemoore; that this relationship will remain well into the future; that the station is of extreme value to the navy and the nation; and that no one in the room is specifically the problem. He stated it is the people thirty or forty years from now that will be the problem. "That is the precedent we have seen in the Navy... everyone is sincere when they say we love you, but then [LNAS] has not always been proactive in controlling these [land use] changes. Our children and our children's children are the ones who will be calling their congressmen asking for change." The Navy spokesman acknowledged it is a difficult decision for the City and said he thought the mitigation measures proposed are the ones they usually see. However, historically some of these mitigation measures have not been particularly effective in avoiding conflict. He advised the city not to assume these measures are going to avoid all problems. He said it needs to be a conscious decision and the town is doing the prudent things to mitigate it. The Navy spokesman also restated the Navy's official position that they do not condone residential development within the 65 dB contours generated by their aircraft operations.

Committee members pointed out that in earlier stages of the General Plan Update people had called for reducing the residential intensity in the west in many ways, and those adjustments had been incorporated into the Land Use Diagram even before the Noise Element was created. Others mentioned that while it is nice to have lower density in a noise area, the lower the density the lower the relative acceptability of the noise.

All present stepped outside to experience two Navy flyover demonstrations: two aircraft each, in formation and with flaps down and gear down (“dirty”) which are the conditions that generate the most noise. Noise measurements were taken outside for each flyover, and resulted in an SEL of 109.7dB and 106.7dB respectively, and an Lmax of 99.8dB and 97.6dB respectively.

The consultant took a few moments to ask every committee member to voice his or her individual opinion on the success of the Noise Element in achieving the best desired end for Lemoore given the decisions that have already been made pertaining to appropriate land uses. The result was a unanimous opinion that the Noise Element was appropriate. Final remarks included suggestions that the Plan offer as many ideas as possible for notifying new residents of the noise conditions in the area so the mitigations are implemented properly and thus made more effective.

Community Design Element Discussion

The Steering Committee responded to the Community Design Element by saying they thought the community was already heading in the right direction in terms of pin-pointing good design choices, and that this Element does a good job in focusing and clarifying that effort, as well as providing new supportive information to make the process more systematic, more consistent, and officially directed by the General Plan rather than implemented only at the level of regulation and development review.

There was general support expressed for a policy regarding a dark sky ordinance and the general reduction of light pollution. There was also support expressed for bringing store fronts to the street, and moving parking to the back.

There was general disapproval of prominent garages on the fronts of houses. According to one committee member the neighborhoods that work the best are those that have alleys in the back and alley access to garages. While front garages were unpopular, others expressed concern that placing garages on the sides or backs of homes would reduce the useable rear yard space that some people find desirable. On the other hand, another committee member observed that some people who have big lots and are tired of taking care of their yard would like to have the opportunity to have a bigger home on a smaller lot with less yard maintenance required. The committee requested more information in the Plan and policies regarding the layout and design of houses and lots such that garages could be better integrated or hidden by design, while preserving a variety of sizes of rear yards.

Other requests for additional information or attention to Community Design included:

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- A clear example of pedestrian scale design;
- More information on the purposes of street lighting, the differences between standards for different areas, and the energy requirements and efficiencies related to different choices in standards and design;
- More information about the significance of block length, and why a plan would prefer shorter block lengths;
- A better explanation of the drawbacks of gated communities for the character of Lemoore;
- A policy prohibiting temporary car covers/semi-permanent carports in front and corner side setback areas;
- Allowance for curvilinear solutions within the grid framework where appropriate;
- More description of the appropriate application of planted median strips;
- A specific policy for design standards for medium density residential infill development;
- A policy limiting the duplication of specific house designs in neighborhoods;
- Information in the Safety Element pertaining to adequate review of cul-de-sacs for fire and life safety service and access;
- A policy pertaining to design standards for the sides of commercial buildings that face the highways; and
- The consideration of more measurable outcomes (such as percentages) for some of the policies.

Downtown Revitalization Committee Memos Discussion

The consultant presented responses to two memos from the community: a proposed historic preservation ordinance and proposed zoning recommendations. The Steering Committee approved his proposed responses and there were no additional comments, questions or suggestions.

Meeting Wrap Up

The meeting concluded with the preliminary decision that the final Steering Committee Meeting should be held on Monday the 18th of June at 6:00pm at the regular City Council chambers. That meeting will cover all remaining policies for the General Plan Update.