



AGENDA SUBMITTAL TO SOLANO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ITEM TITLE Consider approval of the Initial Project Description for the Solano360 Project located at the Solano Fairgrounds property in Vallejo and possible alternatives in the Environmental Impact Report to coincide with the Solano360 Vision Report		BOARD MEETING DATE August 9, 2011	AGENDA NUMBER 11
Dept.: Contact: Phone:	County Administrator's Office Ron Grassi (707) 784 - 6933	Supervisorial District Number ALL	
Published Notice Required?		Yes _____	No <u> X </u>
Public Hearing Required?		Yes _____	No <u> X </u>

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The County Administrator's office recommends that the Board consider approval of the Initial Project Description for the Solano360 project located at the Solano County Fairgrounds property in the City of Vallejo and consider alternatives in the Environmental Impact Report which coincide with the Solano360 Vision Report.

SUMMARY:

On June 28, 2011, the Board received a report on the market study regarding the Solano360 Vision Report. The market study determined that it would be challenging for the amount and type of retail, office and hotel uses previously proposed at the Solano 360 Project site to be feasibly supported in the foreseeable future, but that an opportunity exists to create an agglomeration of regional-serving entertainment and amusement attractions (along with complimentary restaurant, retail and hospitality uses) that build on the existing Six Flags Discovery Kingdom amusement park facility and Solano County Fairgrounds. The next step in the Solano360 Phase 2 project (entitlement phase) is the approval of the Initial Project Description which will serve as the framework for the preparation of both the Specific Plan and the requisite environmental documents for the Solano360 Project.

FINANCING:

On February 9, 2010, the Board approved the Solano360 Phase 2 project budget of \$3.1 million. The entitlement phase budget anticipated a variety of professional services, studies and reports associated with completing a master plan, including project management services, communication and public information, land use planning services, civil engineering services, architectural design services, transportation and circulation analyses, preparation of required environmental documents, legal support, permit and application fees, and financial analysis. The Solano360 Project is funded by a loan from the General Fund and accounted for and tracked separately. The Board has established a requirement that the loan be repaid by future revenue streams resulting from the ultimate redevelopment of the fairground site.

DISCUSSION:

The Solano360 Vision Report prepared by Solano County, the City of Vallejo and the Solano County Fair Association in May 2009 initiated a process to establish and realize the long-term revitalization goals for the County-owned Solano Fairgrounds property in Vallejo. The Project Vision offers flexible, sustainable principles for a diverse and future-oriented program of uses to be developed over time. Based on these principles, a preliminary mix of land uses was proposed, including entertainment, mixed use commercial, hospitality, office, open space, exhibition hall, flex special event facilities, outdoor multi-purpose area, demonstration farm, transit, parking and other fair uses. The Solano360 Vision Report stated that there was a need to assure flexibility and the ability to adapt to market conditions over time. The Solano360 Vision Report also included an Implementation strategy that indicated that the property would likely be developed in phases and "within each phase, development will occur in orderly increments, based on market demand and staging of on-site infrastructure."

With the information received in the market study prepared by Gruen Gruen +Associates (GG+A), the Project Team made presentations to each of the respective governing bodies, including this Board on June 28, 2011. Using that information and the direction from the City Council, the Fair Board and this Board, a proposed project description was presented to the Solano360 Committee at its July 28, 2011 meeting. The Committee reviewed and, with minor edits, unanimously approved a Project Description (Attachment A) for adoption by the Board of Supervisors, as the designated lead agency for the environmental review of the Project. Similar presentations will not be made to the Vallejo City Council or the Solano County Fair Association Board upon recommendation by the members of the Solano360 Committee from the City Council and Fair Board respectively that the Project Description reflects the previous direction from each governing body.

The proposed Initial Project Description will serve as the initial starting point for the preparation of the Specific Plan. Physical and economic constraints of the site and the proposed uses still need to be further identified. A subcommittee of the Solano360 Committee consisting of a representative from each of the Vallejo City Council, the Fair Board, and the Board of Supervisors will be meeting with the land planning consultant to further refine a land use diagram based on the identified constraints, which will then be presented first to the Solano360 Committee and then to this Board.

As alternatives to be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report ("EIR"), staff is recommending that the land uses initially identified in the Solano360 Vision Report be considered. A comparison of those land uses is shown in the attached table. (Attachment B).

Next Steps

Upon approval of the Initial Project Description, Michael Brandman & Associates ("MBA"), the Project's environmental consultant will prepare and distribute a "Notice of Preparation" ("NOP") to solicit input from other agencies on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. The NOP will be posted for 30 days and a public scoping meeting will be scheduled for the middle of September.

The next steps will also include the preparation of Fiscal Impact Analysis and a Public Facilities Financing Plan based on the mix of uses identified in the project description. The preparation of the Specific Plan will occur in coordination with the preparation of the EIR in order to develop a self-mitigating project to the greatest extent feasible in accordance with the attached timeline (Attachment C).

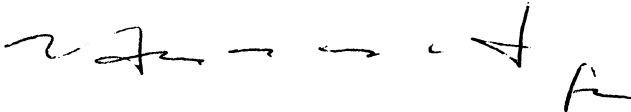
ALTERNATIVES:

The Board could choose not approve the Initial Project Description; however this is not recommended because it would delay the preparation of the Specific Plan and the NOP in accordance with the previously adopted schedule.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Solano County, the City of Vallejo and the Solano County Fair Association continue to work cooperatively on this project.

DEPARTMENT HEAD SIGNATURE:



Birgitta E. Corsello, County Administrator

Attachment(s):

Attachment A – Proposed Initial Project Description

Attachment B – Comparison of land uses from the Project Vision and the Project Description

Attachment C – Timeline for Concurrent Specific Plan & EIR Process, prepared by the SWA Group

SOLANO360 PROJECT
INITIAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION
RECOMMENDED BY THE SOLANO360 COMMITTEE FOR ADOPTION BY
THE SOLANO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
JULY 28, 2011

1.0 Project Site Location and Description

The 149-acre Solano County Fairgrounds site is located immediately southwest of the Interstate 80 and State Route 37 interchange in the City of Vallejo, adjacent to the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom theme park and Lake Chabot.

With excellent freeway visibility, approximately 200,000 cars passing by each day, and easy access to both the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento Valley region, the Solano County Fairgrounds enjoys a central accessible location within the region. The presence of Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, the Solano County Fair and hotel uses have already established this site as a venue for entertainment and special events.

2.0 Project Background

The Solano County Fairgrounds is owned by the County of Solano and is used as a Fairgrounds and events site by the Solano County Fair Association, and as overflow parking for the adjacent Six Flags Discovery Kingdom.

The County of Solano, the City of Vallejo, and the Vallejo Redevelopment Agency completed a comprehensive visioning process for redevelopment of the Fairgrounds, a summary of which is contained in the Solano360 Vision Report.

The County of Solano ("County") and the City of Vallejo ("City") both serve as project proponents under a Memorandum of Understanding adopted by the agencies. The County and the City now wish to proceed with more detailed planning and environmental analysis. Accordingly, the County has commissioned the preparation of a Specific Plan and EIR, which will provide detailed planning for portions of the project site and conceptual planning for the balance of the site.

Through the visioning process, and as articulated in the approved Solano360 Vision Report, the County and City have determined that Solano360 will be a "super-regional" project. That is, it will be unique to Solano County and outlying areas, and is intended to be a regional destination for entertainment, with supporting retail, hotel and other uses. The proposed land uses are intended to be compatible with, and complement, surrounding land uses, such as the adjacent Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. The Specific Plan will be formulated in accordance with the conceptual plan that grew from the visioning process and the various environmental and infrastructure studies that were prepared to guide the plan. In addition, the Specific Plan will be formulated in accordance with environmental constraints that may be identified through the environmental analysis process.

The Solano360 Vision Report set forth a conceptual program of entertainment, commercial and mixed-use development. This conceptual program established a starting

point for planning, in accordance with the Guiding Principles for the project. As part of the Specific Plan and EIR process, a recent market study indicated that it would be challenging for the amount and type of retail, office and hotel uses previously proposed in the Solano360 Vision Report to be feasibly supported in the foreseeable future, and that an opportunity may exist to create an agglomeration of regional-serving entertainment and amusement attractions, along with complementary restaurant, retail and hospitality uses, that build on the existing Six Flags Discovery Kingdom facility and Solano County Fairgrounds. Themed entertainment uses are particularly well-suited to this particular site, given its excellent freeway visibility and access, relatively limited local and neighborhood access, large single ownership pattern, and adjacency to Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. In the mid-term and long-term, themed entertainment uses will likely generate demand for support uses such as restaurants, retail stores, and hotels.

The Solano360 project team met with Solano County Fair representatives regarding near-term and mid-term plans to upgrade the Fairgrounds in its current location, and long-term efforts to expand the Fairgrounds southward as an integral part of the overall site development. Also, to better understand the issues associated with themed entertainment uses, the Solano360 project team researched industry standards and evaluated a wide range of comparable projects, including Family Entertainment Centers (FECs) and major theme parks. This research includes analysis of parcel sizes, site configurations, amount and relationships to parking, and relationships to commercial facilities. This Initial Project Description is responsive to that research.

3.0 Project Overview

The Specific Plan will provide a flexible land plan that accommodates a range of themed entertainment options and support uses, in a way that supports the heritage of the Fair and creates synergy with the adjacent Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. The goal is to create an entertainment site with multiple attractions, resulting in a varied set of destinations for family activities, a robust year-round program of activities and facilities for the Fair of the Future, and a pedestrian-oriented core that encourages social gathering and fosters a strong sense of place.

The Specific Plan will also include a land use diagram and land use policies; design and development standards; infrastructure plan and policies; a program of implementation measures for capital improvements; public facility financing; phasing and subsequent entitlements; economic and financial criteria for commercial recreation uses; and analysis of consistency with the City of Vallejo General Plan and other relevant policy documents.

The intent of the proposed Specific Plan is to establish an adaptable framework for long-term, incremental phased build out, and also provide adequate detail and information for the environmental review process.

4.0 Project Components

The Land Use Summary Table (below) embodies the input the Solano360 project team received from discussions with the Solano County Fair General Manager regarding the future development of the Fairgrounds, and from representatives of various entertainment venues and industry experts regarding physical site and business operation requirements for entertainment uses. The land use concept is intended to

facilitate upgrading and expansion of the Fairgrounds, development of “Entertainment Park” venues and facilities that may be feasible in the near term, and creation of a larger parcel for a future “Major Entertainment” use as a new, major anchor or entertainment “gate”. The land use concept envisions a flexible framework for parcelization, so that the project can accommodate a variety of end users with various needs for parcel size and configurations. It will include adequate parking to maintain a successful entertainment district.

The land use concept envisions a central water feature as a focal gathering point to help create a strong sense of place, and a thematic “Main Street” spine anchored on both ends with open space, including an appealing entry landscape at the western end and a new “Festival Park” at the eastern end. Main Street focuses on a proposed Exhibition Hall building within the Fairgrounds and offers a pedestrian-friendly frontage for restaurants, shops and gathering areas, with parking. There is also an opportunity for spillover uses with the Fair as a year-round activity zone.

The proposed preliminary major use zones and acreages are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Conceptual Land Use Summary Table

Land Use	Total Parcel (Acres)
Fairgrounds	40
Entertainment Park	20
Major Entertainment	31
Open Space - Parks	3
Open Space – wetlands/waterways	25
Parking	20
Roads and Infrastructure	10
Total	149

Notes:

1. Entertainment Park areas will allow for retail and hospitality uses.
2. Land Use acreages assume surface parking lots for each parcel and an additional 20-acre parking area.
3. Parking is assumed at 125 cars/acre.

Issues to be further developed include:

- Maximizing beneficial locations and relationships of parcels, open space and water features, access points and connections, visibility for key entertainment uses, and relationships to parking.
- Evaluation of traffic flow, ingress/egress, and congestion during peak periods.
- Incorporation of a transit center providing parking for commuters, with possible shared use of the parking structure for Fairgrounds and entertainment weekend events.
- Infrastructure and surface hydrology studies to address storm drainage, grading, service provisions, alignment of Rindler Creek, and size, function and permitting for any internal waterways.
- Sustainable measures for site development and on-site energy production, including opportunities for solar energy, water recycling and conservation.
- Other issues identified by the site's constraints.

4.1 Land Use

To preserve maximum flexibility, the entire site may be designated for a single land use such as Commercial Recreation or Planned Development (PD). The Specific Plan will provide standards and policies for development types, building coverage and placement, parking, economic and financial criteria for considering specific commercial recreation development proposals and other issues.

Examples of acceptable uses may include:

- Fairgrounds and related/support facilities.
- Expansion of Six Flags Discovery Kingdom.
- Other theme park and entertainment uses, including enclosed and open space venues.
- Commercial recreation and sports facilities.
- Restaurants, retail shops (including themed outlet retail).
- Hotels and hospitality uses.
- Recreational vehicle park.
- Open space such as onsite waterbodies, trails, and gathering areas.
- Wetlands, drainageways, and open space buffer areas.
- Roadways and other infrastructure to serve development areas.

The Specific Plan will include a land use plan to define best relationships, sizes and configurations for the following sub-areas and proposed uses.

4.1.1 Fairgrounds

The Solano County Fair will initially remain in its existing location, allowing for cost-effective, incremental and phased improvements over time. These include a new, up to 50,000 square foot Exhibition Hall that would replace the existing building; improvements to the grounds including reconfiguration of carnival space and other outdoor venues adjacent to the Exhibition Hall; dedicated parking with a new main gate; relocation of some buildings such as a satellite wagering building; phased upgrading and modification of certain buildings; and replacement of buildings that are no longer usable in their current physical condition.

4.1.2 Entertainment Park

This land use consists of “Family Entertainment Centers”, or FECs, that offer near-term development potential. Such uses may require parcels of one to five acres, including surface parking provided within each parcel; some parking lots could be designed for joint use.

The proposed land use concept clusters the Entertainment Park parcels in the northern portion of the site along an onsite water feature and a thematic “Main Street” that connects to the entry/main gate and Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. A “festival park” could anchor the east end of the street with access and connectivity to the Fair of the Future and the new Exhibition Hall. Parcelization and configuration will be flexible in order to respond to requirements of future users.

This land use will allow for support retail and hospitality uses including restaurants, retail activities, indoor and outdoor music venues, hotels and other supporting facilities.

4.1.3 Major Theme Entertainment

The Major Theme Entertainment land use provides for a major entertainment anchor that requires a site of approximately 30 acres in size, including area for surface parking. Surface parking may, in the build-out phase, be replaced by structured parking to allow for expansion. The proposed land use concept locates this parcel near the main gate. This provides the opportunity for Six Flags Discovery Kingdom or another entity to create a future entertainment venue with a common entry or identity, with expanded and coordinated parking. The concept provides sufficient acreage for one large venue or multiple smaller venues to develop facilities over time.

4.1.4 Open Space - Parks

In addition to open recreational areas within the Fairgrounds and entertainment venues, the land use concept allocates three acres for park open space; this is anticipated to consist of a “Festival Park” that forms the eastern terminus of “Main Street”.

4.1.5 Open Space – Wetlands/Waterways/Water Feature

The Specific Plan will explore options for an on-site water feature as a visual and recreational amenity for the project. In addition to providing a focus and gathering areas,

this water feature may also serve to receive and treat on-site storm drainage and, if feasible, divert peak storm flows through the site and into Lake Chabot (see discussion of issues, below). Improvements to Rindler Creek and other surface hydrology issues are being studied and will be addressed further in the Specific Plan.

Along the eastern, southern, and western boundaries of the site, the land use plan will set aside acreage for the Rindler Creek drainage and adjacent buffer zone. The extent of this area will depend on the overall storm drainage strategy to be determined as part of Specific Plan studies.

4.1.6 Parking

The land use program initially allocates 20 acres for parking for approximately 2,500 cars to support the functioning and viability of the larger entertainment district. The Specific Plan process will determine optimal location and configuration of this use.

4.1.7 Roads and Infrastructure

The proposed land use concept includes roadways for access to all parcels and parking areas, including service to the Fairgrounds per the existing condition.

4.2 Transportation

4.2.1 Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

The Specific Plan will formulate a comprehensive vehicular and pedestrian circulation system including vehicular entries, backbone roadways, minor roadways, and pedestrian connections.

4.2.2 Parking

All proposed use areas include surface parking within the boundaries of each parcel. As described above, the plan also provides a designated 20-acre parcel in the southern portion of the site, with the intent of maintaining adequate parking and viable entertainment uses for both Six Flags Discovery Kingdom and the proposed new development. In the final build-out phase, this parcel may be developed with a parking structure to allow more extensive development of the Fairgrounds property. In addition, there may be the possibility of a structured parking facility at a commuter transit center; this parking could be shared for weekend events at the Fairgrounds or other event centers.

Based on discussions with entertainment company representatives, the proposed plan does not anticipate extensive amounts of common or shared parking between uses; in some cases this has been an obstacle to successful operation of entertainment venues. However, a parking management plan for the overall site could provide a mechanism for coordinating events, facilitate some joint-use or shared parking, and address offset of scheduling to make full and efficient use of the planned on-site parking facilities.

4.2.3 Public Transit

The Solano360 Vision Report included a 2.5-acre transit/multi-modal station that incorporated a structured parking facility. The possibility of this use will be evaluated as part of the Specific Plan.

4.3 Public Infrastructure

4.3.1 Water

Potable water will be obtained from the City of Vallejo, and recycled water from Lake Chabot will be used for irrigation and filling and replenishment of the on-site water feature.

The Specific Plan will contain information describing water demand for both potable and irrigation needs, as well as a comprehensive plan for water supply.

4.3.2 Wastewater

Wastewater will be conveyed to Vallejo Sanitary and Flood Control District facilities for treatment and disposal. The Specific Plan will contain information describing wastewater generation associated with proposed land uses, as well as a comprehensive plan for wastewater disposal.

4.3.3 Utilities

AT&T will provide telecommunications services to the project site from existing facilities in Fairgrounds Drive. Opportunities for renewable and alternative energy solutions will be explored and coordinated with the existing PG& E infrastructure also located in Fairgrounds Drive.

4.4 Storm Drainage and Surface Hydrology

Vallejo Sanitary and Flood Control District will provide stormwater drainage services to the project site.

The Specific Plan will maintain the Rindler Creek peripheral drainage and will contain a comprehensive plan for conveyance of stormwater drainage. Issues to be further studied include:

- Site areas currently subject to flooding and possibilities for 1) removing them from the floodplain by increasing capacity within existing drainageways and/or diverting peak flows, and 2) using flood-prone areas for parking and/or open space uses.
- Configuration and capacities of onsite drainages including Rindler Creek.
- Existing flooding problems of off-site areas to the south.
- Opportunities for improvement to onsite water quality.

The Solano360 Vision Report included a concept for diverting peak flows into a waterway that crosses the site and drains into Lake Chabot. This will be evaluated in relationship to the Specific Plan land use approach. Issues include:

- Resource agency jurisdiction of the "high flow bypass" through the proposed waterway.
- Agency-required setback restrictions on development.
- Determination of specific storm event that could trigger the need for agency-required development setbacks

5.0 Phasing

The Specific Plan will establish a preliminary project phasing plan to allow for prioritization of Fairgrounds facilities, logical construction and extension of infrastructure, and flexibility to respond to market conditions and development opportunities that may arise over the build-out of the site as well as compatible short-term interim uses. Preliminary general phasing is contemplated as follows.

Phase 1 will include:

- Improvements to the Fairgrounds, including replacement of the existing Exhibition Hall with a new facility of approximately 50,000 square feet, and improvement of adjacent open space venues for turf and hard surfaces.
- Development of areas adjacent to the Fairgrounds including Entertainment Park parcels, water feature, Main Street, and associated infrastructure.
- Flex surface parking within the Major Entertainment Zone.
- Dedicated parking in the southern portion of the site.

Phase 2 will include:

- Development of the Major Entertainment Zone's north area.
- Flex surface parking in the southern portion of the Major Entertainment Zone.

Phase 3 will include:

- Construction of structured parking to replace or supplement dedicated surface parking.
- Expansion of the Major Entertainment Zone into the flex parking area.

Comparison of Solano360 Vision Plan and Project Description (Buildout Condition)
Solano360 Project August 9, 2011

USE	VISION PLAN		PROJECT DESCRIPTION ⁶	
	ACRES	Subtotals	ACRES	Subtotals
PRIVATE PURPOSES-Vision Plan				
Entertainment Commercial	14.2			
Entertainment/Mixed Use	4.8			
Mixed Use Commercial/Hospitality	25.4			
Office/Flex Parking	16.0			
Hotel (250 room)	10.9			
Open Space/Drainage/Wetlands	19.7			
Subtotal		91.0		
PRIVATE PURPOSES-Project Description				
Entertainment Park ^{1,2}			20.0	
Major Entertainment ^{2,3}			31.0	
Urban "Festival Park"			3.0	
Parking ^{3,4}			20.0	
Open Space/Drainage/Wetlands			20.0	
Subtotal				94.0
PUBLIC PURPOSES				
Fairgrounds	44.9		40.0	
Open Space/Drainage/Wetlands			5.0	
Transit/Multi-modal Center ⁵	2.5		0.0	
Roads	10.7		10.0	
		58.1		55.0
Totals		149.1		149.0

NOTES (for Project Description)

1. Entertainment Park areas will allow for retail and hospitality uses.
2. Land Use acreages assume surface parking lots in the early phases; later phases could include a consolidated parking approach involving structured parking
3. Surface parking assumed at 125 cars/acre.
4. Later phases could include structured parking.
5. Project description may be modified to include transit center
6. Acreages subject to change based on development of land plan

TIMELINE FOR CONCURRENT SPECIFIC PLAN & EIR PROCESS

Solano

