



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

DATE: May 28, 2003

BOARD MEETING DATE: June 10, 2003

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: County Manager *Paul Scannell*
SUBJECT: CEQA Certification of Environmental Assessment/Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the San Mateo County Youth Services Center and Direction to Move Forward with the Process for the Project

Recommendation

1. Certify the Environmental Assessment/Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the San Mateo County Youth Services Center by making the following findings that:

- a. The Negative Declaration is complete, correct and adequate and prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and applicable State and County guidelines.
- b. On the basis of the Initial Study, comments received hereto, and testimony presented and considered at the public hearing, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment.
- c. The Negative Declaration reflects the independent judgment of the Board of Supervisors.
- d. The mitigation measures identified in the Negative Declaration and incorporated into the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan in conformance with California Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 are adopted and agreed to by the County.

2. Direct the County Manager to move forward with the process to develop plans and specifications for the project, subject to the requirements of federal and state laws.

Background

The County is proposing to replace the existing Hillcrest Juvenile Hall facility and associated support buildings with a new Youth Services Center. The new center will consist of a 180 bed facility, a 100 bed facility, a 100 bed facility, a 100 bed facility, Girls Camp and Group Home facility for a total of 234 beds. The proposed site for the new center is adjacent to the location of the existing juvenile hall facilities, within a 90-acre complex of other County government facilities. The new facility is needed because the existing Hall is overcrowded, undersized, and outdated. Because of its existing layout, the current facility requires extensive staff effort to maintain a level of security needed for the minors housed at the site.

The Board of Supervisors directed staff to proceed with investigation and design development of the new center, including environmental review. Because the project is partially funded by a federal grant, environmental review consists of (1) an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, §§ 21000 et seq. ("CEQA") and (2) an Environmental Assessment/Finding of No Significant Impact in compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, et seq. ("NEPA").) The County contracted with Thomas Reid Associates, Inc. (TRA) to develop a combined CEQA/NEPA document. A copy of the draft San Mateo County Youth Services Center Environmental Assessment/Initial Study ("EA/IS") is provided with this report.

The County Planning Department conducted the required notice and public comment period under CEQA. Only two (2) comments were received, which are described further below. The CEQA portion of the document is now ready for consideration and certification. The County also submitted the draft EA/IS for review under NEPA to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) through the California Board of Corrections. When DOJ approves the draft, there will be a NEPA review period. The County will prepare responses to any comments and return the document to the DOJ for final action. The Board of Supervisors is not required to take action to approve the NEPA document.

Discussion

The County Planning Division reviewed the EA/IS and, based upon substantial evidence in the record, found that the environmental impact of the project, as mitigated, is less than significant. (See attached findings and summary.) The EA/IS identified areas of potential significant impacts, but concluded that the impacts could be mitigated to less than significant. As mitigated, the project will be designed to withstand seismic safety. The project will also include procedures to address the potential of asbestos in the existing structures identified for removal and the serpentine soils on the site. Construction will be subject to a waste management plan, air quality controls through BAAQMD's Best Management Practices, noise controls, and a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. Mitigation also requires a vegetation management plan to address issues such as weed control/fire safety, pesticide use, irrigation and hydroseeding. To mitigate the loss of Significant and Heritage trees (live oak, California bay and Monterey pine) that will need to be removed, the County will be required to replace these trees in ratios set forth in the EA/IS

or, in the case of the Monterey pine, incorporate replacement trees native to the area within a landscape plan. Additionally, to mitigate potential impacts to breeding raptors in the area, the County will be required to conduct pre-construction surveys and implement avoidance measures if necessary.

Finally, the EA/IS identifies mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts to any sensitive plant species associated with the serpentine soils located at the project site. Under the mitigation plan, plant surveys of the site will be conducted during blooming periods, and if rare plants are found, the County would, in order of preference, (1) avoid affected areas by moving a portion of the parking lot and the fire access road and creating a conservation easement; (2) move the identified plants to the conservation easement area or a buffer zone in the northwest side of the project site buffer area; or (3) create an off-site mitigation program. A biological monitor would be on site daily during initial construction. After the construction phase, monitoring will continue to review effectiveness of transplanting. Since the draft EA/IS was published, County staff had further discussions with TRA, and based on the consultant's advice, agreed to modify the project to provide further environmental protections. The project and a fire access road have been moved to avoid areas where it was anticipated that protected plants may be located. If protected plants have been moved provided, however, if no protected plants appear in this area during plant surveys, the parking area may be restored to original plans.

At this point, one federally protected plant (Marin Dwarf Flax (*Hesperolinon congestum*)) and one CEQA protected plant (Fragrant Fritillary (*Fritillaria liliacea*)) have been sighted. The Marin Dwarf Flax is located outside of the building site and will be avoided by the project. Impacts to the Fragrant Fritillary will be mitigated through a combination of avoidance and transplanting. We are recommending action on the CEQA review now because it would be beneficial to transplant the Fragrant Fritillary this summer. In order to begin that, the Board of Supervisors needs to approve the EA/IS and certify the Negative Declaration. The Fragrant Fritillary is not a federally listed plant, and as a result, is protected only under CEQA.

Only two comments were received during the CEQA review period, both from state agencies. Caltrans inquired whether the initial site assessment determined the potential presence of hazardous waste on the site. The Department of Toxic Substances Control provided comments and an offer of assistance on the potential for lead-based paint in the buildings to be demolished. We have responded to each state agency appropriately.

We therefore recommend that the Board approve the EA/IS and certify the Negative Declaration with the findings indicated above. Any further action on the project will have to wait until the NEPA process is completed.

Vision Alignment

This project keeps the commitment to "preserve and provide people access to our natural environment" and goal number 14 - Important natural resources are preserved and enhanced through environmental stewardship.

Fiscal Impact

The project is estimated to cost \$125 million. Long Range Bonds will be sold at the appropriate time to fund the project.

Cc: John L. Maltbie, County Manager
Thomas F. Casey III, County Counsel
Jim Sowerbrower, Project Manager

RECOMMENDED
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John L. Maltbie
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COUNTY MANAGER