

## memorandum

To: City of Benicia  
From: Ben Noble  
Subject: Eastern Gateway Study Stakeholder Meeting #2

On November 18, 2020 the City of Benicia will hold its second stakeholder group meeting for the Eastern Gateway Study. This memorandum provides background information for this meeting.

### MEETING PURPOSE

The purpose of the November 18, 2020 meeting is to:

- Review public input received to date;
- Introduce infill prototypes being studied; and
- Receive feedback on issues and options being prepared for a public workshop planned for January 2021.

### MEETING MATERIALS

In addition to this memorandum, the following materials are provided for the stakeholder group meeting:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation
- First stakeholder group meeting summary notes
- Walking tour feedback summary

### PRIOR INPUT

#### Stakeholder Meeting

A stakeholder group for the Eastern Gateway Study previously met on August 19, 2020. At this meeting the project consultants presented background information, existing conditions maps, and a preliminary list of key issues pertaining to the study. Stakeholder comments from the meeting are described in the attached meeting summary notes.

#### Walking Tour

On September 23, 2020 the City hosted a self-guided walking tour for the Eastern Gateway Study. Residents shared a wide range of opinions in their walking tour comments, as described in the attached walking tour feedback summary. Common themes in the feedback received include the following:

- Near-universal (but not unanimous) support for additional housing in the study area.
- Varying opinions on the appropriate intensity of new development (e.g., density and height). Many commenters supported 3-4 story development.
- Interest in mixed-use development, particularly along Military East and Fifth (this concept was not unanimously supported). Desire for more neighborhood-serving commercial uses in study area.
- Preference for more traditional architectural styles.
- Desire for outdoor seating and dining with landscaping; outdoor amenities (e.g., pocket park).
- Some interest in increasing allowable densities in secondary study area while keeping the area residential only. Many participants supported small-scale infill housing examples (e.g., sidecourt).
- Parking is a topic of considerable interest. Concerns were expressed about existing parking shortages, the amount of on-site parking for new development, and design of new on-site parking facilities.
- Desire for bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements.

## **INFILL PROTOTYPES**

Project consultants are preparing infill prototypes to illustrate potential development in the study area. Prototypes will show mixed-use and multifamily development concepts on typical lot configurations in the study area. The prototypes will help to evaluate how development standards such as parking, height, and floor-area-ratio affect development feasibility and unit yield. Draft prototypes will be shown at the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **ISSUES AND OPTIONS**

City staff and consultants are in the process of preparing an Issues and Options Workbook for the Eastern Gateway Study. This workbook will be used by the public to provide input on policy options to address key project issues. A public workshop and study sessions with the Planning Commission and City Council are planned for early 2021.

Attached to this memorandum is the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting presentation, which includes information on some of these issues and options. At the stakeholder meeting, we will ask for feedback on the following questions:

- Do any of the presented options have a “fatal flaw” that we are overlooking?
- Are there options to add, remove, or revise?
- Are we overlooking any critical issues?
- How can we best present these options to general public?

Stakeholder input will help us further develop and refine contents for the Issues and Options Workbook.

Below is information about the identified issues and options included in the attached presentation. For each issue, the presentation shows existing rules that apply in the study area and options to address this issue.

### **1. Residential Uses in Primary Study Area (Slides 10 to 14)**

In most of the primary study area, multifamily residential uses are allowed only as group residential and work live. Group residential means shared living quarters without separate kitchen or bathroom facilities for each room or unit, including boardinghouses, dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and private residential clubs. Work/live means one or more rooms or floors in a building originally designed for industrial or commercial occupancy that includes cooking space and sanitary facilities and working space for artists, artisans and similarly situated individuals.

Public input from the walking tour indicated near universal support for allowing more housing in the primary study area. Given this, an important question is whether ground floor multifamily residential uses (single-use multifamily development) should be allowed in the primary study area, and if so, where. A related question is if there are places where a consistent frontage of first floor commercial space should be maintained.

One option is to allow ground floor residential only on parcels that do not front Military East or East Fifth Street. With this option, housing is allowed only above ground floor commercial on Military East and East Fifth Street. Another option is to require ground floor commercial only on Military East from East Fourth Street to the East Fifth Street intersection. With this option, ground floor residential is allowed on all other parcels in the primary study area.

## **2. Allowed Uses in Secondary Study Area (Slides 15 to 19)**

Currently, allowed residential uses in the secondary study are limited to single-family homes on most parcels, with multifamily allowed on a few. To promote additional housing production, one option is to allow new lower-density multifamily housing within the secondary study area. Another option is to allow multifamily housing in the secondary study area as part of new smaller-scale mixed use development.

## **3. Building Height (Slides 20 to 23)**

The existing maximum allowed building height in most of the primary study area is 40 feet, which allows up to a three-story building. The City may wish to allow four story buildings along Military East and Fifth Street, either for all residential projects or only for mixed-use. Increasing the maximum building height to 45 feet would allow for four-story residential mixed-use development.

## **4. Parking (Slides 24 to 34)**

The City is preparing prototypes of multifamily and mixed-use residential development in the study area. Draft prototypes show that achievable unit yields are dictated to a large extent by the number of required on-site parking spaces. An important question is whether existing on-site parking requirements may be reduced or otherwise modified to accommodate housing. Also, what other measures could the City take to expand available public parking, reduce parking demand, and more efficiently utilize the area's existing supply of parking?

## **5. Required Permits (Slides 35 to 38)**

To accelerate housing production, the City may wish to streamline the approval process for certain types of residential development in the study area. Streamlining could include allowing the project to be built entirely by-right without any discretionary approval process (i.e., no Use Permit or Design Review required).

One option is to streamline approvals for all multifamily and mixed-use residential projects that comply with new objective standards. Another option is to streamline approvals only for certain types of projects. For example, the City could choose to only streamline projects with one or more of the following features:

- Mixed-use project with neighborhood-serving commercial uses (e.g., retail, restaurant, office)
- Transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements beyond minimum requirements
- Any multifamily residential project
- Publicly-accessible outdoor space
- Development with green building features that exceed minimum requirements
- Market-rate senior housing
- Affordable senior housing
- Affordable housing for all age groups