

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: John Stufflebean

SUBJECT: ECOPARK MASTER PLAN -
1608 LAS PLUMAS AVENUE

DATE: 05-29-07

Approved

Kay Winer

Date

6/4/07

RECOMMENDATION

1. Accept this report on the proposed Urban EcoPark Master Plan for the site of the former Las Plumas warehouse;
2. Authorize staff to issue a Request for Proposals in June 2007 to identify potential tenants for facility programming; and
3. Direct staff to report to the Transportation & Environment Committee in Fall 2007 with recommendations for facility tenants and a plan for facility programming and development, including cost estimates, timeline, and financing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Working with San José State University and the Center for Training and Careers, staff has developed a Master Plan for an Urban EcoPark that would accommodate several permanent tenants that promote the re-use of construction materials, space for rotating displays and other temporary uses, and space for after-hours use by community groups. Based on release of a Request for Proposals by June and Council approval of recommended tenants in fall 2007, it is projected that site construction could begin in early spring 2008. Two potential funding sources for site renovations have been identified and are described below.

BACKGROUND

In June 2006, ESD purchased the site of the former Las Plumas warehouse from the Housing Department with the intent of developing a LEED Certified Urban EcoPark. This enabled Housing to fund the construction of transitional housing for the San José Family Shelter on Dobbin Drive. The size and appropriate zoning of the site presents the City with numerous opportunities for implementing and augmenting various environmental initiatives in tandem with other organizations. All of these would be developed with the intent of modeling sustainability, both from a design and programmatic perspective.

In November 2006, ESD contracted with the San José State University Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning to create a master plan that would describe in some detail the numerous potential uses for the site. ESD also contracted with the Center for Training and Careers, Inc., to assist with community outreach during the master planning process, both to inform nearby neighborhoods of the potential development and to engage them in generating ideas and suggestions for beneficial uses.

The goals set by the City and its partners in this project are as follows:

- Co-locate a mix of entities that model sustainability through the diversion of construction and demolition materials from the waste stream and their successful re-use by others.
- Facilitate the City's ability to meet the objectives of several of the Urban Environmental Accords co-signed with other jurisdictions in the international community in 2006.
- Provide services, facilities, and information useful to surrounding neighborhoods, community organizations, and residents citywide.
- Offer a centralized location for environmental education opportunities, both to learn about nature and the community's place within it as well as to learn about easy ways to prevent pollution, re-use materials, and conserve natural resources.
- Provide a showcase of sustainable operations and practices, tools and resources including the benefits of LEED certification.

ANALYSIS

As proposed, the City would contract with three or four organizations that would be permanent occupants of the facility, but space would be available for rotating demonstrations and other uses by a variety of organizations. The community would have access to classroom and meeting facilities after regular hours. Several outdoor amenities also are envisioned. Each of these potential uses is described in more detail below.

PERMANENT FACILITY OCCUPANTS

The master plan identifies six types of potential permanent occupants of the facility:

1. Warehouse for Donated Reusable Building Supplies

Green building practices encourage the reuse of construction materials. Reusable construction materials donated largely by the construction industry could be stored for free

use by organizations to renovate and improve homes for low-income residents. Up to 5,500 square feet is available for this purpose plus 600 square feet for tenant office space.

2. Warehouse for Sales of Reusable Building Supplies

Residents and businesses now must travel to East Palo Alto to purchase reusable building supplies for use in remodeling projects. The master plan proposes to set aside from 12,000 to 18,000 square feet of internal and external space for this operation. Vocational training opportunities also could be provided for the local community. Customer parking would be available on the west side of the site, where the operation would have access to an existing loading dock.

3. Green Enterprise Education Center

One goal for the EcoPark is to provide educational programs and demonstration projects on the benefits and application of green building practices for both the business community and the public. The master plan would set aside approximately 1,325 square feet of interior space to showcase green building construction practices and provide space for classroom activities and administrative space.

4. Lending Library for Tools

A proposal worthy of additional study is a lending library for tools and equipment to assist in minor building renovations and improvements. No dedicated space has currently been identified for this use, but this function will be explored further as potential tenants are identified. Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco already operate such facilities, using a public library model.

5. Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Facility

If approved by the City, a residential drop-off program operated by Santa Clara County would be established on this site as a replacement for the former facility operated at the City's Central Service Yard. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the facility's relocation was circulated for public review from April 10 through May 24 and the Planning Commission is scheduled to conduct a hearing on EIR certification on June 11. The master plan would set aside approximately 10,000 square feet for this potential use at the south end of the warehouse, which has an existing loading dock.

6. Facility Manager's Office

An on-site facility manager would operate out of a 400 square foot office.

ROTATING FACILITY USES

Existing office space could be renovated to provide additional flexible space for various demonstrations, training, and educational projects on a temporary, rotating basis. During the community meetings, ideas were generated by CTC and other groups including the American Indian Education Resource Center, San José Search and Rescue, and Heart of Chaos, a non-profit organization that promotes the use of recycled materials to create art.

Among the ideas proposed: Exhibits of art made from recycled material, areas for construction trades training, demonstration gardens, exhibits of green kitchens and bathrooms, demonstration areas for pilot projects from existing environmental start-ups, exhibits of new green technologies, showcases for green building techniques, and storage of vehicles, and rescue equipment. Housing an “Electronic Transportation Development Center” to research and apply clean energy and technologies to passenger vehicles also was suggested.

The master plan proposes to make available the following types of spaces, which could also be used by community organizations after-hours:

- A multi-purpose room that could be divided into two or three smaller rooms using flexible dividers (4,000 square feet).
- An open reception area on the second floor (1,300 square feet).
- A second shared conference room south of the reception area that also could be divided into smaller conference areas using dividers (1,200 square feet total).
- A 400 square foot conference room with four individual breakout spaces (each approximately 125 square feet) surrounding it.
- An open area that could be transformed into various configurations (520 square feet).

Potential users would coordinate with the ESD facility manager for reservations.

OTHER MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

Augmenting the space for permanent and rotating tenants described above would be:

1. Living Green Roof

A rooftop garden is envisioned for the warehouse and, if proven feasible, would be constructed using drought-tolerant and native plants. This specialized roof will help reduce heat build-up in the facility, thus reducing the need for conditioned air and conserving energy. Public tours could increase educational opportunities.

2. EcoPlayground

To improve the aesthetic appeal of the facility, the master plan proposes that a large landscaped area be developed along the northern edge of the site to provide an EcoPlayground and picnic area. Environmentally-friendly materials such as recycled tires and plastic would be used in its

construction, and landscaping would focus on drought-tolerant and native plants. Any irrigation system would incorporate water-efficient design and use recycled water.

3. Native American Plant Garden

A Native American plant garden would provide an opportunity to educate local residents and support the American Indian Education Resource Center located across the street. The garden will showcase herbs, vegetables, and other plants used by Native Americans with a special section dedicated to the Ohlone tribe. Recycled materials will be used in the construction of the garden. Signage throughout the garden and other areas of the facility will highlight the environmental and cultural significance of the plants and materials.

4. Composting Education Site

A composting area and master composter classes could be located next to a greenhouse that will provide plantings for the Native American plant garden and other site landscaping.

LEED CERTIFICATION

While the proposed services at the Urban EcoPark support the overall goal of sustainability, the site itself should provide a model for how to develop and operate a facility in an environmentally responsible manner. In pursuing that model, the intent is to seek the highest possible LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification rating. Although only 11 buildings in California have achieved the Platinum rating under this program, staff proposes to explore the feasibility of designing to this level.

ECOPARK TENANT SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Staff is recommending that a Request for Proposals (RFP) be released in late June to identify potential tenants for the EcoPark facility. Based on the tentative timeline below, contract award could be made by March 2008.

Tentative Timeline

June 27, 2007	Site tours and release of RFP
July 11	Deadline for receipt of questions from proposers
August 3	Proposals due
August 6-24	Community and technical panels review proposals
Fall 2007	Staff recommendations to Council for tenants and site development
Early Spring 2008	Construction begins

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The criteria below do not apply to this recommendation.

In coordination with the Center for Training and Careers and San José State University, Environmental Services facilitated two public meetings in March 2007 regarding the proposed elements of the EcoPark master plan project. Input from the community meetings are reflected throughout the master plan.

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater.
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City.
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach.

COST IMPLICATIONS

There are two potential revenue sources for this project:

- Funds that are not claimed from the City's Construction and Demolition Debris Deposit program. The City collects a deposit from every remodeler/contractor submitting an application for a building permit, which is returned if the applicant recycles their construction and demolition debris and submits the appropriate documentation. Deposits that are not claimed can be used to construct facilities described in the EcoPark Master Plan.
- Funds from the County's Household Hazardous Waste Program, if the City approves location of a residential drop-off facility for these materials at the Las Plumas site. The City pays a landfill fee for all solid waste disposed at Newby Island Landfill from municipal facilities and the residential Recycle Plus program under the Disposal Agreement with the International Disposal Corporation. To prepare for potential Council approval of a new HHW site, the fee is scheduled for an increase this year and was included in the new rate proposals.

COORDINATION

This report had been coordinated with the Departments of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, Public Works, the Office of Economic Development, the Redevelopment Agency, the City Attorney's Office and the Budget Office.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

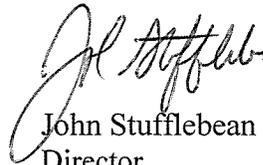
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CEQA

An Environmental Impact Report addressing the temporary HHW collection facility, File # PP# 06-100, was circulated for public review from April 10, 2007 through May 24, 2007. The Committee's acceptance of the status report for the remaining items described in this memo related to the development of the EcoPark Master Plan is not a project for purposes of CEQA. Once the EcoPark Master Plan has been drafted, it will be subject to CEQA review, including required public outreach and inter-agency coordination prior to a decision by the City Council to approve and implement the Master Plan.



John Stuffelebean
Director

Environmental Services Department

For questions, please contact Jo Zientek, Deputy Director, Integrated Waste Management Division, at 408-535-8557.