CITY OF AUBURN

Planning Commission – Staff Report
Meeting Date: July 13, 2010

Prepared by: Adrienne Graham, Consulting Planner

ITEM NO. V-A

ITEM V-A: **BALTIMORE RAVINE SPECIFIC PLAN AND STUDY AREAS PROJECT DRAFT EIR HEARING**

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Auburn is processing the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan (BRSP) and Study Area Project (proposed project), which is proposed for the 406-acre Urban Reserve area situated in southwest Auburn. A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the proposed project has been prepared by the City, and is currently being circulated to the public and government agencies. The comment period on the Draft EIR ends at 5 p.m., July 23, 2010.

PURPOSE OF HEARING:

The purpose of this item is to accept comments from the public on the adequacy of the environmental analysis contained in the Draft EIR for the BRSP and Study Area Project. Staff will provide a brief overview of the proposed project and Draft EIR. Oral testimony on the adequacy of the Draft EIR will be accepted. No other action is requested at this time and no action will be taken by the Commission at this hearing. Additional review of the proposed project, including the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan, associated approvals (e.g., rezoning, development agreement), and the Final Environmental Impact Report will occur at a future Planning Commission hearing.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Applicant: Stephen Des Jardins; Baltimore Ravine LLC; 130 Diamond Creek Place, Suite 1; Roseville, CA 95747; Phone: 916-786-8158; Fax: 916-786-5750; sld@dcpltd.com

Location: The plan area is generally bounded by Auburn-Folsom Road to the east, Interstate 80 to the north and northwest, the westbound Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) track to the south, and the City/County boundary to the west (see Exhibit A, Project Location Map).

Project Size: 406 acres

Zoning: Agricultural Residential (AR), Agricultural Residential/Mineral Extraction (AR-ME), Single-Family Residential (R1-10), Single-Family Residential/Mineral Extraction (R1-10/ME)

General Plan: Urban Reserve (UR)

Existing Land Uses: 14 residences

Surrounding Land Uses:	North:	Interstate 80, industrial uses, rural residences
	South:	Residential subdivisions, Union Pacific rail line
	East:	Residences, Auburn Recreation District
	West:	County rural residences

BACKGROUND

The project site is located in an area of the City designated by the Auburn General Plan as Urban Reserve. The Urban Reserve designation requires a Specific Plan prior to any development beyond the existing zoning. The City received an application in mid-2007 to develop the Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan on approximately 277 acres of the 406-acre Urban Reserve area. The remaining 129 acres are not included within the BRSP area, but are designated Study Areas. The Study Areas are proposed to be redesignated Rural Density Residential (RDR) with a minimum 2 acres per dwelling unit.

PROPOSED PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed project would ultimately result in the replacement of the Urban Reserve designation with a mix of land uses. The proposed land uses are shown in Exhibit B, Proposed Land Use Plan, and Exhibit C, Land Use Summary.

The Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan provides for 725 dwelling units at densities ranging from 1 to 20 units per acre, up to 90,000 square feet of commercial/retail development, a 2-acre park, and 141 acres of open space. The BRSP includes Design Guidelines and Development Standards, which would direct the type and quality of development and facilities within the BRSP. The BRSP has been divided into two plan areas, and it is anticipated that development of Plan Area 1 would precede Future Plan Area 2. The BRSP and off-site infrastructure required to serve the plan area are evaluated at a project-specific level in the Draft EIR.

Concurrent with approval of the BRSP, the City proposes to amend the General Plan to re-designate the four Study Areas (129 acres in total) from Urban Reserve to Rural Density Residential (RDR), with a minimum 2-acre lot size. This designation would provide a limited holding capacity for infrastructure and public services. The redesignation of the Study Areas is analyzed in the Draft EIR at a programmatic level, because site-specific studies have not been conducted, and specific proposals for the Study Areas have not yet been made.

The proposed project also includes a General Plan Amendment (GPA) to create an Urban High Density Residential (UHDR) land use category that allows up to 20 dwelling units per acre (du/ac). The current General Plan has a HDR designation that allows up to 15 du/ac. This new designation would be applied only within Future Plan Area 2 of the BRSP at this time.

The proposed project would require the extension of roads and water and sewer lines. Access would be provided by the extension of Herdal Drive, which would connect to an extension of Werner Road. Two bridges would be constructed across the UPRR tracks, including a bridge across Bloomer Cut. Initially, a connection would be provided to Rogers Lane to provide secondary access to Plan Area 1. After completion of the Herdal Drive-Werner Road Connector, BRSP traffic would no longer use Rogers Lane. Werner Road, Rogers Lane and the Werner

Road/Ophir Road intersection would be improved as part of the project. A connection from Plan Area 1 to Perry Ranch Road would provide emergency access, but no improvements would be made to Perry Ranch Road. Off-site water and sewer line extensions would occur within road rights-of-way.

CEQA PROCESS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines charge public agencies with the duty to substantially lessen or avoid significant environmental effects where feasible [see PRC section 21002; CEQA Guidelines, section 15002, subd. (a)(3), 15021, subd. (a)(2)]. In discharging this duty the public agency has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, taking into account economic, environmental, and social issues. An EIR is an informational document that informs public agency decision-makers and the general public of the significant environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR must identify possible means to minimize the significant effects and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The lead agency, in this case the City of Auburn, is required to consider the information in the EIR along with any other available information in making its decision. The basic informational requirements for an EIR include discussions of the environmental setting, environmental impacts, mitigation measures, alternatives, significant irreversible changes, growth-inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts.

The Baltimore Ravine Specific Plan and Study Areas Project Draft EIR was prepared as required by CEQA to evaluate and disclose the environmental effects of the proposed project, and to identify mitigation measures and alternatives that could avoid or lessen those impacts. As discussed above, a project-specific analysis is provided for the BRSP, and the Study Areas are analyzed at a less detailed, programmatic level.

The Draft EIR is being circulated for a 45-day review period from June 8 through July 23, 2010, as required by CEQA. After the close of the review period, the City will prepare written responses to all substantive comments (received in writing through July 23 or orally at the July 13 hearing) on the adequacy of the Draft EIR. The written responses to comments, along with any revisions to the Draft EIR, will become the Final EIR. The Draft and Final EIR together compose the EIR for the proposed project.

A Mitigation Monitoring Program will also be prepared, which, as required by CEQA, will identify all mitigation measures contained in the EIR, the parties responsible for implementing and monitoring the measures, and the timing of the measures.

Prior to taking action on the project approvals, the City must certify that the EIR's evaluation of the environmental effects of the proposed project is adequate and complete. Findings of Fact will be prepared to document the CEQA process for the proposed project, identify significant impacts and mitigation measures, and to explain why alternatives to the project are or are not rejected. The Findings of Fact prepared by the City must be based on substantial evidence in the administrative record for the EIR, and must include an explanation that bridges the gap between evidence in the record and the conclusions required by CEQA. The City must also prepare and adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations if the City chooses to proceed with the proposed project, and the project is found to have significant impacts that cannot be mitigated to a less-

than-significant level. The Statement would explain the agency's decision to balance the benefits of the project against unavoidable environmental impacts.

Agency and Public Review Process

To date, the City has undertaken the following actions as part of the CEQA process for the proposed project:

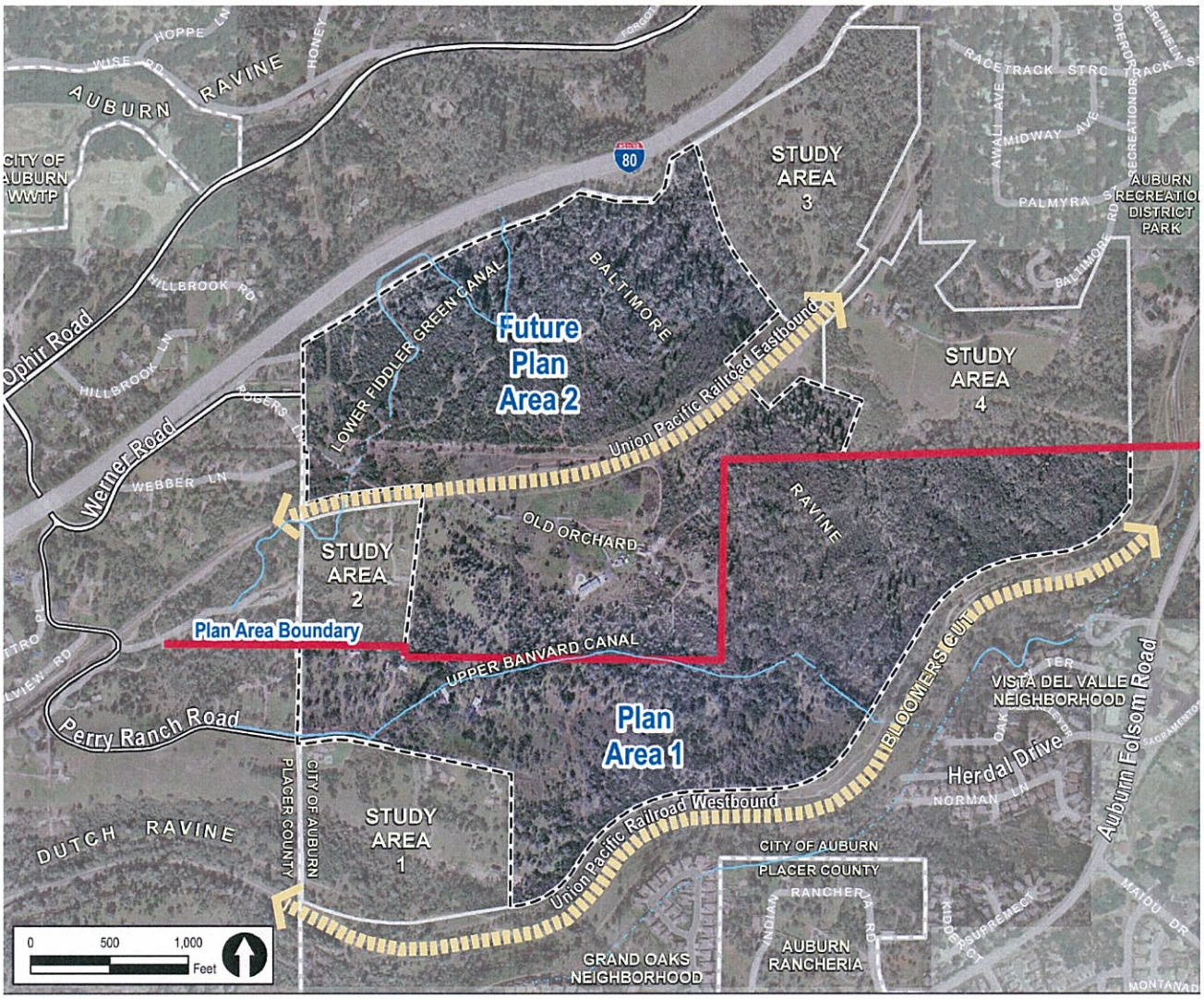
- Notice of Preparation (NOP): From December 27, 2007, through February 8, 2008, an NOP was circulated to public agencies, interested individuals and agencies, and nearby property owners. The NOP described the proposed project, and requested input on the scope of the environmental analysis.
- Scoping Meeting: On January 24, 2008, the City held a scoping meeting to solicit public input on the scope of the EIR.
- Revised NOP: The City circulated a revised NOP from April 9 to May 11, 2009, to address changes to the proposed BRSP, including the reduction in the number of dwelling units from 1,300 to 725.
- Addendum to the April 2009 NOP: An addendum to the April 2009 NOP was circulated from March 19 to April 9, 2010, to address changes to the proposed secondary access for Plan Area 1.
- Notices of availability for the NOP, revised NOP, addendum to the NOP, Draft EIR and MRZ Draft Statement of Reasons were placed in the Auburn Journal and on the City's website.

Other City activities related to the proposed project include:

- Public Review Draft BRSP: The draft BRSP prepared by the applicant was released for public review in October 2009.
- Planning Commission hearing, December 15, 2009: A public hearing was held to overview the contents of the draft BRSP and accept public comments on the proposed plan.
- Site Tours: Several tours of the BRSP area were held during March through May 2010 for Council members, Planning Commissioners and the public.
- Mineral Resource Zone Draft Statement of Reasons: A portion of the project site is designated MRZ-2b, recognizing the potential for gold deposits to be present. Public Resources Code Section 2762 requires that the City adopt a Statement of Reasons prior to permitting development in MRZ-2b areas. A notice of intent to permit development within a MRZ-2b area was sent to property owners within ½ mile of the project site, pursuant to PRC 2762.
- City website: All of the above documents are available through the City's website, along with pertinent staff reports and notices (www.auburn.ca.gov).

EXHIBITS

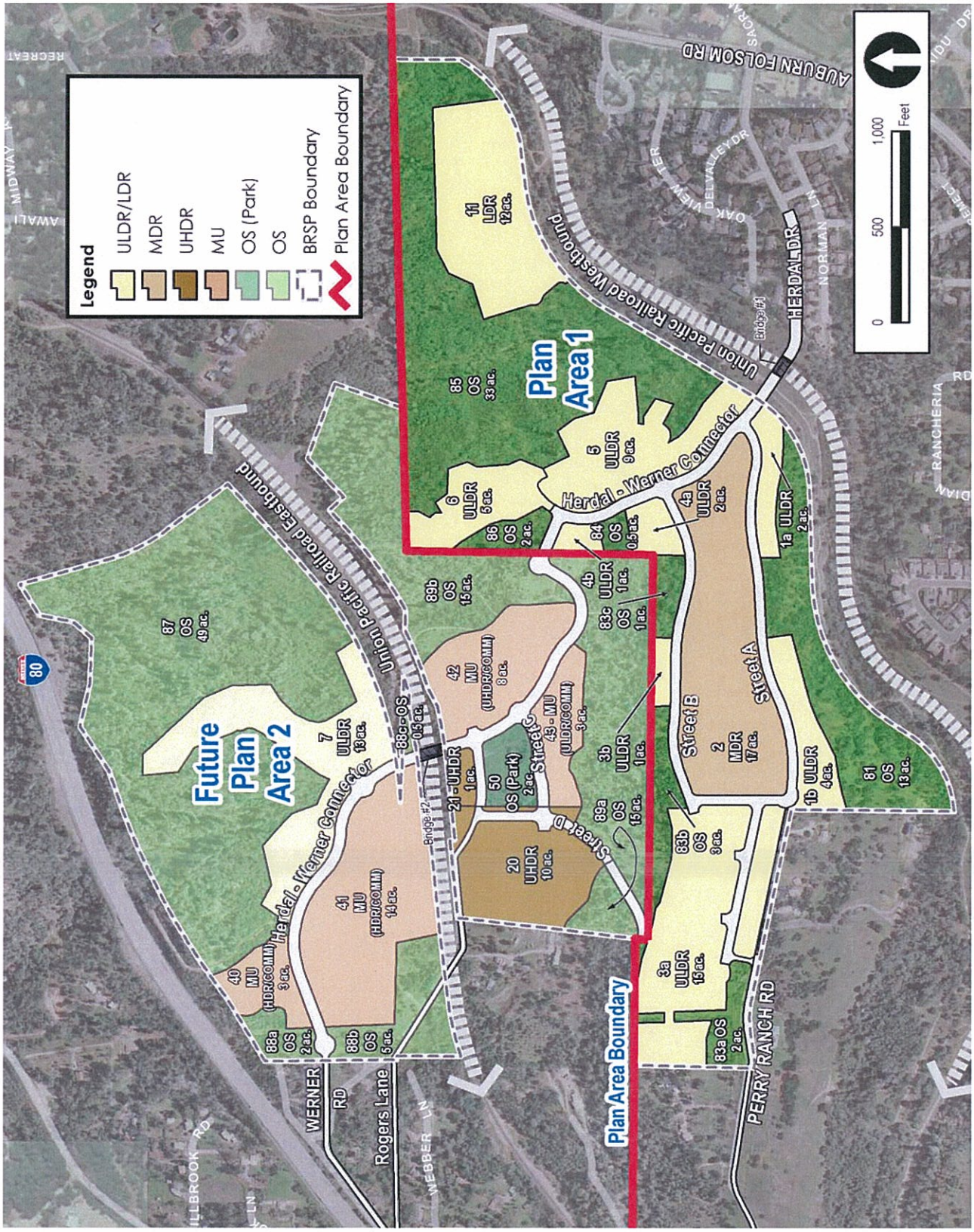
A. Project Location Map
B. Proposed Land Use Plan
C. Land Use Summary



Legend

- Study Area Boundary
- City Limits
- BRSP Boundary
- Plan Area Boundary

Figure 1-2: Aerial Image of BRSP and Existing Features



Revised Figure 3-1: Land Use Plan

EXHIBIT C

LAND USE SUMMARY

Land Use Designation	Applied Zoning District	Acres	Density Range	Dwelling Units
BALTIMORE RAVINE SPECIFIC PLAN				
Residential				
Low Density Residential (LDR)	R-1 (Single-Family Residential District)	12 acres	Up to 1 du/ac	11 du
Urban Low Density Residential (ULDR)	R-1 (Single-Family Residential District)	52 acres	1-4 du/ac	155 du
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	R-2 (Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential)	17 acres	1-10 du/ac	150 du
Urban High Density Residential (UHDR)[1]	R-4 (High Density Multiple-Family Residential)	11 acres	5-20 du/ac	180 du
Non Residential				
Mixed Use – High Density Residential/Commercial (HDR/COMM)	C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) R-3 (Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential)	17 acres	floor area ratio up to 3 5-15 du/ac	50,000 sf 130 du
Mixed Use – Urban High Density Residential/Commercial (UHDR/COMM)	C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) R-4 (High Density Multiple-Family Residential)	8 acres	floor area ratio up to 3 10-20 du/ac	30,000 sf 120 du
Mixed Use - Urban Low Density Residential/Commercial (ULDR/COMM)	C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) R-1 (Single-Family Residential)	3 acres	floor area ratio up to 3 1-4 du/ac	10,000 sf 2 du
Park & Open Space				
Park	OS-C	2 acres		
Open Space	OS-C	141 acres		
Right of way (ROW)		14 acres		
	Total	**277 acres**		**725 du**
Study Areas				
Study Area 1		32 acres	1du/2ac	16 du
Study Area 2		14 acres	1du/2ac	7 du
Study Area 3		36.5 acres	1du/2ac	19 du
Study Area 4		46.5 acres	1du/2ac	23 du
Total		129 acres		65 du
	BRSP AND STUDY AREAS TOTAL	**406 acres**		**790 du 90,000 sf**