

RESOLUTION No. 39/14

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LARKSPUR DIRECTING STAFF TO TERMINATE THE LARKSPUR SONOMA –MARIN AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT (SMART) STATION AREA PLANNING PROCESS

WHEREAS, on October 20, 2010, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 35/10 directing staff to submit a Station Area Planning Grant application to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC);

WHEREAS, the Station Area Grant application stated any awarded monies were to be used to prepare a Local Area Plan to promote transit ridership and reduce vehicle usage, increase housing supply (particularly affordable housing) near station areas, increase jobs near transit corridors and locate key services and retail in areas surrounding the Larkspur SMART Train Station;

WHEREAS, in November of 2010, ABAG and MTC informed the City that the application needed to address both land use and housing and that certain other components or enhancements (e.g., preparation of a market demand analysis) were needed in order for the application to be successful;

WHEREAS, on January 19, 2011, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 02/11 endorsing a revised grant application with a broader area and project scope to address the land use and other components requested by ABAG and MTC, for a Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan that would lead to the adoption of a General Plan Amendment and/or become a component of the City's updated General Plan;

WHEREAS, on March 21, 2012, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 12/12 authorizing the City Manager to enter into a grant funding agreement with MTC for the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan;

WHEREAS, on April 26, 2012, the City Manager signed said agreement, which committed the City to submitting eight work products ("deliverables") to MTC/ABAG within an established timeframe, consisting of:

- Deliverable 1: Existing Conditions Report, appointment of Project Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Citizen Advisory Committee, and a meeting summary of Public Workshop #1;
- Deliverable 2: Market Demand Analysis
- Deliverable 3: Land Use Alternatives Analysis Report, Parking Demand Analysis Report, and a meeting summary of Public Workshop #2;
- Deliverable 4: Urban Design Standards, and a meeting summary of Public Workshop #3;
- Deliverable 5: Infrastructure Needs Analysis Technical Report;
- Deliverable 6: Draft Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan and summary of public workshop #4;

- Deliverable 7: Draft Environmental Impact Report and Mitigation Monitoring Plan;
- Deliverable 8: Final Environmental Impact Report adopted and certified by City Council and Final Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan; General Plan, zoning, and design guideline amendments.

WHEREAS, the City initiated the SMART Station Area Plan process in May 2012 with the first meeting of a Council-appointed Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC);

WHEREAS, following public outreach, seven meetings of the CAC, three meetings of the technical advisory committee (TAC), and four public workshops, the City released the Draft Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan (Draft Plan) and Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) in March of 2014;

WHEREAS, the Draft Plan includes a Land Use Chapter that promotes increased residential densities and additional office and retail uses primarily on seven 'opportunity' sites, envisioning mixed-use development based upon a range of 20-30/35 dwelling units per acre and a range of commercial and office intensities;

WHEREAS, the Draft Plan includes recommended policies and programs to improve bicycle circulation, shared parking opportunities, maintain and improve affordable housing, and enhance the public enjoyment and vitality of the area;

WHEREAS, the City released the Draft Plan and issued a Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIR on March 26, 2014, with a comment period from March 31, 2014 through June 2, 2014, and the Planning City Council held a public hearing on May 22, 2014 to hear verbal comments on the DEIR;

WHEREAS, with completion of the Draft Plan and the DEIR, the City has completed Deliverables 1 through 7 consistent with the scope of work mutually agreed to in the grant funding agreement and has received reimbursement from MTC for said deliverables;

WHEREAS, the City Council attended the May 22, 2014 public hearing to hear verbal comments on the Draft EIR;

WHEREAS, the May 22, 2014 public hearing was attended by well over 500 people and by the conclusion of the comment period on June 2, 2014, the City received nearly 1,000 letters, emails, and phone calls from Larkspur residents, members of surrounding communities, various non-profit public interest groups, and other interested agencies commenting on the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Impact Report;

WHEREAS, the vast majority of comments from community members and general public, as well as the majority of comments from interest groups, expressed objection to the land use proposals presented in the Draft Plan, particularly regarding potential impacts to vehicular congestion on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and the Highway 101 / Greenbrae interchange, parking in the area, long-term water supply, school capacity, biological impacts on the marsh habitat, and potential impacts of sea level rise upon new development;

WHEREAS, the Plan requires amendments to the Land Use Element of the General Plan to allow higher densities and commercial intensities on the opportunity sites and to amend Policy C of the Circulation Element to permit additions and changes in use that increase peak hour trip generation in the area;

WHEREAS, the DEIR identified that ferry commuters and thru-traffic on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard are the largest contributor to peak hour traffic in peak directions and that the Sir Francis Drakes roadway currently operates at near capacity during peak hours, and

WHEREAS, while traffic from local uses in Larkspur Landing area has remained fairly constant since 1980, regional traffic using Sir Francis Drake through Larkspur Landing has grown incrementally and is projected to increase by nearly one-third by 2030;

WHEREAS, while the higher-density development and mixed uses identified under the Land Use Chapter of the Draft Plan are anticipated to result in less vehicle-mile traveled per capita (per person), the potential build-out projected would, nonetheless, increase overall vehicles trips in the AM and PM peak hours;

WHEREAS, the Draft EIR identifies a variety of mitigation measures and significant and unavoidable impacts to traffic that can only be addressed by either amending current General Plan policy and/or implementing improvements which are outside the jurisdiction of Larkspur and will otherwise require future study, funding, and coordination with outside agencies;

WHEREAS, the City Council held a workshop on June 18, 2014 to consider next steps in the Station Area Plan process; and

WHEREAS, at the June 18, 2014 workshop, the City Council was unanimous in its expressed opinion that traffic congestion on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and in and around the Highway 101 / Greenbrae interchange is currently intolerable for the community during morning and afternoon commute hours, and that congestion is often compounded by traffic accidents, vehicles breakdowns, and other anomalies which strain the local circulation network and result in severe back-ups along the Highway 101 and 580 Corridors, and such severe traffic congestion and freeway back-up results in delays for emergency services for persons residing and working in and around Larkspur Landing.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Larkspur determines that:

- 1) while the Larkspur SMART Station Area Planning process was an extensive public process with many opportunities for input, it ultimately produced a Draft Plan that the Council and the community could not reconcile with the policies and vision of the City's General Plan;
- 2) while the DEIR produced by the Larkspur SMART Station Area Planning process contains significant data and analysis of the subject area and the concepts in the Draft Plan, the volume of detailed comments challenging the DEIR was substantial and would require an investment of time and resources beyond the scope of available grant funding and of questionable public value in light of the Council's determination that the Draft Plan is too inconsistent with the policies and vision of the City's General Plan; and

- 3) regional traffic congestion on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is the primary constraint to allowing any level of increased density or development in the Larkspur Landing area and is a very real and growing threat to the economic vitality of Larkspur Landing, the public health and safety of persons residing and working in Larkspur Landing, as well as the success of SMART.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Larkspur determines that:

- 4) there are many concepts and ideas within the Draft Plan that are not associated with land use designations or traffic impacts (such as bicycle/pedestrian improvements, circulation improvements, parking improvements, and recreational amenities) that may merit further consideration for inclusion in the City's General Plan update.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Larkspur directs staff to:

- 5) terminate the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan process and inform ABAG and MTC, as well as other partner agencies for the project, that the City of Larkspur will not complete the final task in the work program;
- 6) resume the General Plan Update process and assist the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) for that process with a review of the Draft Plan to determine whether and to what extent ideas and concepts not associated with changes to land use designations and/or traffic limits are consistent with, and should be incorporated within, the General Plan Update; and
- 7) assist the Mayor to convey in the form of a letter to ABAG, MTC, and all partner agencies that it is of paramount concern to the City Council that relief be found for the regional traffic congestion caused by the use of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard as the connection between Highway 101 and Interstate 580 (the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge)

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that the City Council of the City of Larkspur duly introduced and regularly adopted the foregoing resolution at a special meeting held on the 16th day of July, 2014, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES COUNCILMEMBER: Chu, Hillmer, Morrison, Way

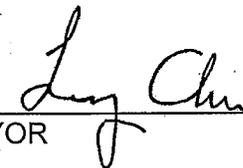
NOES: COUNCILMEMBER: None

ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBER: None

ABSTAIN: COUNCILMEMBER: Haroff

ATTEST:


CITY CLERK


VICE MAYOR