



# **PLANNING COMMISSION**

## **SUPPLEMENTAL MEMO**

VI.2a.

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 11, 2010

ITEM NUMBER

**SUBJECT:** GP-09-01 GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT FOR ORANGE COUNTY FAIR AND EVENT CENTER PROPERTY AT 88 FAIR DRIVE

**DATE:** JANUARY 5, 2010

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** CLAIRE L. FLYNN, AICP, PLANNING ADMINISTRATOR  
(714) 754-5278

Please note the following additional information and clarifications regarding this item:

- Subsequent to the distribution of the Planning Commission agenda packets for the January 11, 2010 meeting, staff has made additional minor revisions to the proposed General Plan amendment text (see redlined/strikeout, Attachment 1).
- The Fairgrounds Master Plan EIR was certified by the Fair Board in 2003. In addition to the City's 2000 General Plan Program EIR (certified January 2002), the Fairgrounds Master Plan EIR serves as environmental documentation for the proposed General Plan amendment. Specifically, this document considered the transportation/circulation impacts of the fairground and event center uses during Fair and NonFair events. Therefore, no additional environmental analysis is required.
- The trip budget discussion (see page 15 of Planning Commission staff report) was deleted because it is no longer relevant for the Fairgrounds property. While a trip budget was identified in the 1990 General Plan, this discussion should have been eliminated during the adoption of the 2000 General Plan.

**Distribution:** Dev. Svcs. Director  
Asst. Dev. Svcs. Director  
Deputy City Attorney  
City Engineer  
Staff (4)  
File (2)

**Excerpt of Land Use Element of 2000 General Plan:** The existing discussion of the “Fairgrounds land use designation” discussion on Page LU-46 of the 2000 General Plan shall be replaced in its entirety with the following new discussion below.]

## **Fairgrounds**

The Fairgrounds land use designation is applicable to only one property known as the Orange County Fair and Event Center (OCFEC) in the City of Costa Mesa. The Fairgrounds is a 150-acre site located at 88 Fair Drive. This designation is intended to:

- Ensure continued development of the property as an integrated complex that is composed of recreational, agriculture-related educational institutions, open space, farmland, equestrian, and commercial uses, and
- Promote the continued and sustained use of the property for the annual Orange County Fair in recognition of its value as a regionally significant resource in the City of Costa Mesa.

Home to the annual Orange County Fair since 1949, the site is bound by Arlington Drive (north boundary), Fair Drive (south), Fairview Road (west), and Newport Boulevard (east). Regional access is primarily provided to the site by State Route 55 (SR-55) at the interchanges of Fair Drive/Del Mar Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street/Victoria Street. Access from Interstate 405 (I-405), which is approximately one mile north of the Fairgrounds, is provided via interchanges at Bristol Street, Fairview Road, and Harbor Boulevard.

The site was formerly a portion of the Santa Ana Army Air Base, and in 1949 the California 32<sup>nd</sup> District Agricultural Association (DAA) acquired the property from the Federal Government. Since that time, the annual Orange County Fair has occurred at this location. Through the years the 32<sup>nd</sup> DAA has expanded the use of the property into a year-round exhibition, conference, equestrian, activity, and event center; these uses compose collectively the OCFEC.

The 32<sup>nd</sup> DAA Fair Board adopted the current OCFEC Master Plan in 2003. Given that the 32<sup>nd</sup> DAA is a state entity for administration of the Orange County Fair, Costa Mesa has limited land use and permitting authority over the property while it is controlled by the State. Therefore, the City of Costa Mesa did not have the authority to adopt the 2003 OCFEC Master Plan.

If in the future, the State no longer controls the property, any proposed new development or change of use shall be subject to review for consistency with the City's General Plan and zoning regulations. The new property owner/operator may continue to operate the Fairgrounds as it existed at the time of sale as a legal nonconforming use and development. The property's legal nonconforming status will remain in effect until such time the property owner submits and receives approval of a master plan by Costa Mesa.

During the timeframe that General Plan Amendment GP-09-01 for the OC FEC was adopted, Costa Mesa was in the process of preparing a ballot initiative for the June 2010 election. The ballot measure intends to preserve the property for fairground and event center uses by requiring Costa Mesa voter approval of any General Plan amendment in respect to the Fairgrounds designation. Additionally, the City was preparing a Fairgrounds Specific Plan that would further establish land use regulations that reinforce the fairground uses.

As of 2009, the Fairgrounds site contains a total of 400,000 square feet of buildings, including:

- Pacific Amphitheater
- Arlington Theater
- Grandstand Arena
- Equestrian Center
- Exhibit and Administration Buildings
- Concession and Restaurant Buildings
- Memorial Gardens
- Centennial Farms
- Livestock Barns

Orange County Fair (OC Fair) attendance from 1995 to 2006 ranged from 750,000 to 950,000 visitors during the 4-week long period. From 2006 to 2009, OC Fair attendance exceeded a million visitors. Based on peak attendance of approximately 60,000 visitors per day during the OC Fair event, approximately 48,000 vehicle trips per day is expected (based on average vehicle occupancy of 2.5 persons per vehicle).

Although best known for the annual OC Fair, the site hosts many "nonfair" activities and events year round, including the weekly Orange County Marketplace and Farmer's market, equestrian events, trade and consumer shows, special vehicle sales events, agricultural events, and cultural festivals. In 2009, the Fairgrounds were also home to the Centennial Farm, Equestrian Center, 4-H Clubs, and All American Boys Chorus. In addition, Orange Coast College used a portion of the parking lot for off-site parking during the school year.

The Fairgrounds designation recognizes the existing fairground and event center uses associated with this site. The 2000 General Plan traffic model does not take into account the trip generation from the annual OC Fair or weeknight/weekend special event uses (i.e. Orange County Marketplace) because peak vehicle trips to the site occur outside normal business timeframes. However, further development of the Fairgrounds will need to be balanced with the development capacity of the City's transportation system and with the protection of surrounding neighborhoods.

Permitted uses include ancillary office uses, exposition/conference uses, equestrian uses, agricultural/livestock activities, restaurants, temporary specialty retail sales (including vehicle sales), swap meet, emergency operational uses, and concerts/live entertainment uses. Complementary uses to the fairground and event center uses may include botanical gardens, animal exhibits, museum, art/historical artifacts gallery, and

performance art theaters, ~~and restaurants~~ that are supportive of ancillary to the fairground uses.

Uses that are not supportive of fairground and event center uses are expressly prohibited. Prohibited uses include, but are not limited to, casinos/gambling venues, shopping centers, exclusive use or dedicated athletic sports fields, educational uses that are unrelated to the OCFEC, hotel/motels, residential uses, self-storage facilities, hospitals, and medical uses.

As a State-owned property, the Fairgrounds is not normally subject to the City's Noise Ordinance. However, pursuant to a 1990 Court Order (Case Nos. 42 07 28 and 55 65 08), exterior noise standards comparable to the City's noise regulations have been applied to the property. Noise sensitive uses include neighboring residences, Davis Intermediate School, and Costa Mesa High School. The court-ordered noise restrictions apply to the operation of the Pacific Amphitheater.

Development within the Fairgrounds designation is intended for buildings ranging from one- to four-story structures. The maximum allowable floor area ratio for this designation shall be 0.10.

Employment generation for fairground and event center uses vary dependent upon the specific use within this designation. For example, typical employment density standards are 1 employee per 300 square feet of office use, 1 employee per 333 square feet of service uses, and 1 employee per 500 square feet for retail. Because of the limited range of uses and lower building intensity permitted in the Fairgrounds designation compared to other nonresidential land use designations, the standard mix of uses in this designation would generate a population density in the range of 4 to 15 employees per acre. Office development consisting of a maximum buildout of 653,400 square feet at 0.10 FAR would generate up to 14.5 employees per acre, although it is important to note that office uses are ancillary to the primary fair and event center uses.

The compatible zoning district is I&R.