

New 'hybrid' growth plan option for Chico demands further discussion

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CHICO — A "hybrid" version of a plan for how Chico should grow began developing Thursday night, with the city's Planning Commission fine-tuning a "middle-of-the-road" option for growth.

Four of the seven commissioners voted to support "Alternative B," the option that includes all of the city's growth areas except for Nance Canyon, as the starting point to begin the discussion about growth.

The commission then went one-by-one through all but 11 of 33 possible sites, including growth areas outside the city, "opportunity sites," for change or redevelopment within the city limits.

At just after 11 p.m., with seven special planning areas and four landowner proposals remaining, the commission voted to continue the topic to its next meeting on Sept. 18 at 6 p.m.

Picking an option for how to grow is part of the city's process of updating its General Plan, which serves as a blueprint for developing the community. The Planning Commission's recommendation is scheduled to go before the City Council in October.

The commission picked a preference for two of the nine areas proposed for growth outside of the city, just barely entering a conversation of whether the city should cross the imaginary zoning boundary protecting agriculture on the west side of the city known as the "green line."

Growth options propose to cross the green line in five areas. The commission split one growth area

known as the "MacIntosh/Estes" area bordered by Macintosh Avenue and Estes Road into two votes, unanimously voting not to support any growth in the Macintosh portion of the planning area located on the west side of the railroad tracks.

But Commissioners Jon Luvaas, Dave Kelley, and Kathy Barrett supported Commissioner Tom Hayes' idea to identify the Estes portion, located on the east side of the railroad track, as "urban reserve."

Pam Johns with PMC, the city's General Plan consultant, said designating the area as urban reserve puts it in a "holding designation" where it could be considered for development if and when the need arises for the land in the future.

The commission picked the Alternative B option for the 150-acre former Diamond Match property in southwest Chico, recommending a zoning of medium- and high-density residential with mixed-office use.

The commission picked zoning concepts for the opportunity sites within the city. Members of the commission did not feel the maps for the opportunity sites had an adequate level of detail, so those opportunity sites will go back before the commission for approval of exact locations for zoning.

City planner Brendan Vieg said the majority of the zoning changes for the opportunities take the existing zoning and add a "mixed-use" component, which could mean residential above commercial or office buildings in order to encourage flexibility.

North Esplanade, North Valley Plaza, Mangrove Avenue, the Chico Nut property, Vanella Orchard, the train depot in the south campus vicinity, downtown, Park Avenue south, East 20th Street, and the Skyway are all opportunity sites. The

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commission also added Nord Avenue, West East Avenue, East Park Avenue between Highway 99 and Park Avenue, East Lassen Avenue, Eaton Road as additional opportunity sites.

The growth area of Doe Mill/Honey Run on the east and the green line-crossing areas of Midway, South Entler, Bell/Muir, and Mud Creek have yet to be discussed.

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