

LO General Plan Draft Is Completed

LIVE OAK
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The long-awaited draft of the Live Oak General Plan has been completed by county planning department staff, and encompasses four alternatives that range from a continuation of present policies, to a scheme for multistory high rise apartment buildings throughout the area.

Working under a stiff self-imposed deadline, the planners completed the report by May 1. It is expected to be released Wednesday, and will be sold for a fee, in addition to being available for public review at area libraries.

The bulky document includes 150 pages along with a plethora of charts, tables and maps that exhaustively delineate the past problems and future expectations for Live Oak. The period covered for the plan is the next 20 years, although the report indicates it could be extended to the year 2000.

The heart of the report is the four suggested alternatives, compiled from 10 original concepts. "Live Oak is urban today and requires urban planning and an urban governmental structure," the draft plan notes, and with that in mind, the members of planning department staff opted for the four urban-type alternatives.

Although staff's actual recommendation does not appear until the draft is nearly two-thirds over, the one preferred alternative is clearly Plan A, termed "commercial and residential." This scheme would greatly ex-

pand the potential for single-family dwellings, maintain current proportions of medium density housing, and reduce by two-thirds the potential for high density residential development.

In other words, the emphasis would be on more residential development and more parks and open space, instead of expanded commercial or industrial uses. In many respects, this alternative does not differ significantly from the philosophic attitudes behind recently-adopted general plans for such areas as Aptos and La Selva Beach.

Still, the plan notes, "This is a future for Live Oak which differs from existing conditions in many fundamental ways."

Offering a far more radical assumption of Live Oak's future is Plan D, which calls for "high density residential corridors" along the length of Rodeo Gulch, and occupying the Twin-Lakes Harbor region, in addition to the foothills behind Dominican Hospital.

The large apartment complexes envisioned here would be "highly visible" from Highway 1, Dominican Hospital and throughout Live Oak, the plan states, and because of its highly urbanized character, would represent a "distant future" for the area.

The key to this plan, certainly the most unusual of the four alternatives, would be "sensitive and innovative design" to be exercised in the construction of the residential complexes. Planning Director Kay Bowden indicated that the buildings could well rise

above just two or three stories.

Plan D raises "important issues and questions" according to the report. "Is Live Oak to absorb a large portion of the county's growth?"

That question also is posed for the other two alternatives espoused in the draft general plan. Plan B is a continuation of current policies, or as the report terms it, "maintaining the status quo." It calls for minimal capital improvements (a marked contrast to Plan D) and a "suburban atmosphere" to be achieved through low-density residential housing.

Plan B, the draft report observes, "can be considered as serving local residents rather than the county as a whole."

The alternative given least credence in the body of the report is an amalgam of the report by the Live Oak General Plan Advisory Committee (LOGPAC), which was turned into the planning department last month. This may be due, in part, due an observation that "the basic philosophic attitude of LOGPAC changed to one of protecting private property rights."

The LOGPAC plan, or Plan C as the report terms it, opts for suburban ranchstyle housing, an increase in industrial land, and "transformation of the Live Oak area into a highly developed urbanized area with relatively few remaining open and undeveloped areas." This would take substantial capital improvements, staff noted.

Implementing any of the four alternatives

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would call for "substantial public costs," the draft plan states, especially in the areas of transportation and access.

But the writers of the draft, planners Linda Niebanck, David Laughlin, Eldon Sherwood, Dan Lauritzen, Ron Marquez, Joe Harte and former planner Dennis Pisila, opted for Plan A, which they felt was "the best vehicle to clarify the problems, point to tentative solutions and develop an implementable General Plan."

Making clear that a general plan is just a starting point, the report calls for further analysis of Live Oak as a coastal community, and for design studies on roads, buildings and land use and development. The draft also calls for a detailed timeline on managing growth according to the general plan finally adopted, with priority areas for development and a schedule for capital improvements.

Another thorny issue will be to establish the limits of annexation and spheres of influence for both the Cities of Capitola and Santa Cruz.

Neighborhood public hearings on the plan will be held May 21 and June 2 at 7:30 p.m. in the Live Oak Elementary School cafeteria. Then it will go to the County Planning Commission for what is expected to be lengthy hearings, finally ending up at the board of supervisors by the end of the year. Bowden said today she hopes to see adoption of the plan by December of this year.