

Opinion

NTC Reuse Plan Unacceptable

With great anticipation we've all awaited the unveiling of the Naval Training Center (NTC) Master Reuse Plan. Last month the consultants, Rick Engineering and the Mart Steele Group, presented their year-long work for the committee's review. I personally was ready to see excellence in land planning driven by a strong ethic toward public benefit. I could foresee a model plan of consensus and stewardship, a plan of vision that would be a source of regional pride for all San Diegans.

Now that we are no longer in denial or suffering our base closure blues the conversion of NTC in San Diego's first major post cold war 'Peace Dividend' that would fill the gap of deficit parkland, provide water-based recreational activity, add much needed passive beauty, maintain wide open views (no more walling-off the Bay) and in grand respect, a careful embrace around the original historic 1920s compound that firmly laid our relationship with the navy.

This "bonus" property that is being gifted back to us some 70-odd years later is fine bayside property, prime real estate, finally real access to the San Diego Bay one of our most significant character defining features of this City.

I watched as the consultant walked through the plan scenario by scenario, justification by justification, cliché by cliché. I looked at it and then I looked at it again and sighed, what a lacklustre, uninspired piece of ... minimum standard. Another great thunder clap of mediocrity in San Diego's future history.

It all started with the committee deciding early on to disallow the excessing of the most prime quadrant of the site reverting it back to the Navy for housing that could have occurred elsewhere. This move displaced other uses from occurring as well as throwing off a comprehensive approach to the whole site. Subsequently, because the high density Navy housing will effect a need for schools, we, the public, must then pay for those services either on-site and off.

But wait, we'll pay for that by creating more housing on-site! We'll throw in a sizable block of

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"market rate housing" requiring the sale of public property into private developer hands and since the city has been MIA in the "transitional housing" or homeless arena we're going to make up for that too-hmm, so far the plan is a wall of housing. But heh, we get a green belt in the shape of a golf course. Pretty to look at but what percentage of the public plays golf? One can't use green space if golf balls are flying now, can one?

Then the star piece, the historic core, it is to be limply maintained, however, the consultant has to blow out a few buildings for parking!

Why, can anyone answer this, can we not create a land from other than a sea of rooves? Are we just too Southern Californian? Why are we proposing to sell off public land? Why do we have to cure all the city's ills on one chunk of land? Where is the overall public benefit?

Didn't Rick Engineering win an Onion for the land manipulating project Carmel Mountain Ranch? Didn't the Mark Steele Group do the onionesque AMC

Theatre project in Mission Valley? What happened to the first consultant, the Peter Calthorpe Group, who initially showed promise?

And then the corker; with the passage of the 1985 Prop "A" Initiative future urbanizing designators (FUA: future urbanizing areas) were placed on military islands including NTC requiring a vote of the people for any major land use change. We are now told by the city, who wants to imple-

ment this plan post haste, that the designator was a "mapping error" and the committee doesn't want to "bother the people" with this issue. Nice try!

Please Mayor Golding, advance an interim plan of measured planning and don't make "forever" decisions yet. This plan is profoundly unacceptable.

Vonn Marie May
Loma Portal