

Housing Decisions At NTC



Guest Editorial
By City Councilman
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As the decision process moves forward on the best uses for the soon to

close Naval Training Center (NTC), housing has been the most recent difficult decision. The NTC Reuse Planning committee has wrestled with competing proposals for use of a 35-acre parcel along Rosecrans Street. The parcel of land has been designated for residential purposes.

One proposal by Marilac Homes, Inc., a non-profit development company, would undertake the conversion of 15 buildings on NTC for transitional and affordable housing and 11 buildings for education, training, and social service offices. The housing would be used by homeless providers to provide transitional housing for seniors, families, and single individuals.

An alternative proposal, which has been recommended for adoption by the Reuse Committee staff, called for the parcel to be redeveloped for market rate housing units that would blend into the current Loma Portal neighborhood. This private development alternative would generate revenue to redevelop the remainder of

the NTC property. From an economic standpoint, this alternative far outweighs the economic value of locating publicly subsidized transitional housing on NTC.

The City is mandated by federal regulations to include within its NTC Reuse Plan an element that addresses homeless assistance. At the request of the Reuse Committee and City, San Diego was included under the new Base Closure Community Redevelopment and Homeless Assistance Act of 1994. The act created a more locally controlled reuse process and requires balance between community redevelopment needs, other needs, and homeless assistance needs.

To meet the requirements of the mandate, the NTC staff recommended that homeless assistance be provided off-site with the city providing \$5 million to fund the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing housing by non-profit entities. These funds would be provided from proceeds of the sale of portions of NTC for redevelopment of from other revenue generated for redevelopment of NTC. The \$5 million figure was based on the estimated value of the 35-acre site once cleared for redevelopment.

I believe the staff proposal is the best means to meet the federal mandate and to meet the City's obligations to its less fortunate citi-

zens. The Marilac proposal does not provide the required revenue generation that is necessary for the redevelopment of the whole of NTC. When the Base Realignment and Closure Committee announced the closure of NTC, many people and organizations felt the City was receiving a tremendous windfall.

Upon closer inspection, however, it turns out the "gift" of the base to the City comes with a very expensive price tag. Many of the buildings are old and need to be retrofitted to modern standards. The infrastructure has been developed over a period of 70 years and was based on standard Navy systems, which are not compatible with civilian commercial or residential systems. Upgrading and retrofitting will cost millions of dollars. Many of the original proponents for various uses of buildings at NTC withdrew their applications upon learning the price tag attached to fixing up the buildings.

Part of the reuse process, the Navy will retain title to 59 acres near Rosecrans Street and Nimitz Boulevard for up to 500 residential units for Navy enlisted personnel. Of a proposed 1,700 new Navy housing units in San Diego by the end of 1998, approximately one-third of them will be located in the Peninsula community. Given our long relationship with the Navy, this is a natural event that

the Peninsula can accommodate.

If transitional housing is allowed to be established at NTC, this would be an additional unmitigated burden on the community. It would also place the Peninsula community well above its Fair Share Housing Goals as defined by the City Housing Element. The Regional Task Force on the Homeless developed a profile of the distribution of permanent shelter beds per capita by Council District. Placing transitional housing at NTC would only increase this imbalanced

situation.

I am certainly willing to continue to work with the transitional assistance programs to meet some of their requirements for shelter, however, NTC is not the preferred location from an economic standpoint. The City cannot afford to bear the burden of a non-revenue producing housing element at NTC. Only market rate homes will help meet the redevelopment burden the City faces and provide additional assistance to transitional housing providers.