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## Lake Forest land use plan takes 'historic' step

### Sports park and community center designs could start by fall.

By **ERIKA I. RITCHIE**

The Orange County Register

**LAKE FOREST** - In what city officials deemed a historic step, the city moved one step closer to completing its own master plan.

After five years of study, including two environmental reports, almost 30 public input sessions, hundreds of resident comments and seven possible alternatives the City Council late Tuesday night put in a motion a long-awaited proposal – known as the Opportunities Study – to rezone more than 800 acres of land currently classified as commercial industrial.

"This is a historic day for Lake Forest," said

Mayor Mark Tetterer. "It's a culmination of years of hard work and a patient community that has been waiting for a sports park. Today we've taken a great stride to making that a reality."

Tetterer credited the partnership and the community for the success.

The general plan amendment change also brought with it a plan to address and improve the community's number one concern – traffic – at 35 of the city's intersections through the Lake Forest Transportation Mitigation Program. Funds for this program will come from developer fees.

With the planned general plan and zone change - and at the urging of Mayor Pro Tem Peter Herzog - the council also stipulated that the developer of parcel Shea Baker Ranch put a phasing plan in place that to finance and build the Alton Parkway extension.

"The entire intention was not to approve a general plan and zone change without assuring that within 90 days of the approval we know what's happening with Alton Parkway," he said.

The land – once under the flight path of the El Toro MCAS – will become sites for public facilities, residential housing and commercial

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spaces. City officials say this zone change and general plan amendment will provide the missing link and unite the 78,310 resident community.

City leaders approved development agreements for two of the plan's five parcels. The remaining three have until Sept. 15 to get their development agreements approved otherwise the land retains its existing zoning and general plan designation.

If all are approved, the developments will provide funding for a sports park, civic center and traffic improvements throughout the city. El Toro High School, Serrano Intermediate and Lake Forest elementary schools will also get funding – including an estimated \$2.9 million in repairs for Portola Elementary damaged by unstable soil.

Approximately 40 acres of land will be dedicated for the sports park and civic center and 25 acres will be set aside for new neighborhood parks. Developers will also be asked to advance \$2.5 million to begin design plans for the sports park and the community center by late summer or early fall. The plan will also include affordable housing.

Two developers – Portola Center and Pacific Heritage – have made development agreements with the city.

Portola Center will have 930 homes, including single family, townhomes, condos and multi-family apartments. It guarantees approximately 12 acres for a sports park and several neighborhood parks.

Commercial development dropped almost 99 percent from 2.8 million square-feet to 40,000 square-feet with local oriented serving businesses like dry cleaners, a deli and coffee shop.

"It will be similar in character, density and scale to Portola Hills," said Kim Kilkenny, the project's manager.

He described the community as upscale Santa Barbara/Mission in architecture. It will be designed around the concept of neighborhood parks where community members can gather, Scout troops can hold meetings and kids can throw Frisbees.

This model, Kilkenny said, is one of the most sought-after in previous developments in San Diego County.

The developer, Baldwin Companies, will give \$2.9 million to Saddleback Valley Unified School District to repair Portola Hills Elementary. It will also provide \$2.9 million in traffic mitigation fees.

"This is going in the right direction," said Elizabeth Wallace, a Portola Hills activist. "We support the reduced density and to have the

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repair of the school resolved is a relief. We're trying to work out the project details regarding building height, lots sizes and traffic mitigation."

Pacific Heritage, an 18-acre parcel in central Lake Forest, will feature 85 single family homes. The project also provides funds towards the construction of the sports park, gives \$10,000 per housing unit to the school district and provides \$280,415 in traffic mitigation fees.

For many in the sports community the idea of a sports park and multiple fields can come none to soon. More than 3,500 kids in the city now play organized sports.

About 30 people spoke in public comments all in support of the rezoning proposal and adamant about increased sports fields and public facilities.

"There is a gross shortage of fields," said Debbie Kayoda, president of Saddleback Valley Pony. "For girls softball there have been no facilities at all, there's limited space for baseball and soccer. Adults and youth both have to travel outside of the city to be active. Please move forward quickly on this. Five to seven years of planning is an entire youth to others."

Residents of Portola Hills commended council members for meeting with the

community and expressed satisfaction with the general plan for Portola Center. But they asked the council to continue to include the public in the details as the plans moved forward. They also asked that the developer pay in lieu fees rather than place affordable housing in their community and expressed concerns about continued congestion at Saddleback Ranch Road and Glenn Ranch Road.

"I put my trust in you that the impacts will be identified and adequately mitigated," said Amanda Morrel, of Portola Hills.

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