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Summary of Tower Road Property Planning and Maintenance

Tower Road Property Needs Master Planning and Maintenance Plans

Issue

Does San Mateo County have comprehensive plans for the future planning and clear accountability for current maintenance of its Tower Road property?

Summary

San Mateo County (County) owns an 89 acre property in central San Mateo County at the intersection of Routes 92 and I-280 (Tower Road Property or Property). Several different County and other governmental agencies have buildings within the Property. The County recently built and occupied a \$120 million juvenile facility (Youth Services Center) operated by the Probation Department and a six-room school facility (Gateway School) operated by the County Office of Education. The 2006-2007 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted an investigation to determine if the County has a comprehensive plan for the future use and development and clear accountability for current maintenance of the Property. The Grand Jury made numerous visits to the Property, and interviewed several government officials.

The Grand Jury found that, although the County has a valuable asset in the Tower Road property, there is no general overall plan for the site; rather, construction has taken place on the Property as County needs arose. Some sites, particularly the Sheriff's Forensic Laboratory and the Youth Services Center, reflect thoughtful site planning, while others, particularly the new Gateway School and the Hazardous Waste Facility, do not. The Grand Jury also found that maintenance of much of the Property is indifferent.

The Grand Jury recommends that the County Manager and the Board of Supervisors initiate a Master Planning process to establish a long-term strategy for the property as a whole, as well as for individual parcels. The Grand Jury also recommends that the County adopt standards for the regular maintenance of the Tower Road Property and should require all users of the Property to contribute adequate funding toward such maintenance. Lastly, the Grand Jury recommends that

the County dispose of unused vehicles and other items stored at the Property, remove weeds and other debris, and execute a contract to demolish the old Hillcrest youth facility.

Tower Road Property Planning and Maintenance

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Issue

Does San Mateo County have comprehensive plans for the future planning and clear accountability for current maintenance of its Tower Road property?

Background

San Mateo County (County) owns an 89 acre property in central San Mateo County at the intersection of Routes 92 and I-280 (Tower Road Property or Property). Several different County and other governmental agencies occupy buildings on the Property. The County recently completed construction of and occupied a \$120 million juvenile facility (Youth Services Center) operated by the Probation Department and a six-room school (Gateway School) operated by the County Office of Education.

Investigation

The 2006-2007 San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) conducted an investigation to determine if the County has a comprehensive plan for the future use and development and clear accountability for current maintenance of the Property. The Grand Jury made numerous visits to the Property, interviewed the County Manager, the Sheriff, and representatives of the County Manager's office, Public Works Department, Sheriff's Department and County Office of Education. The Grand Jury also reviewed records of the various departments and entities connected with the Property. The Grand Jury determined that information about individual sites within the Property is not centralized, but rather is held in scattered locations and jurisdictions. It took persistent investigation to extract information about individual sites. Documents related to land-use planning for the Property were few and incomplete, causing the Jury to conclude that further inquiry would not likely produce a set of comprehensive planning documents.

Findings

The County has a very valuable asset in the Tower Road Property. The Property is not fully built out and additional facilities are likely to be added in the future. A number of existing facilities may not represent the highest or most efficient use of their sites, and are logical candidates for future redevelopment or upgrading. Limited availability of County-owned sites and local opposition to County development of public use facilities, will make the Tower Road Property increasingly desirable for future County facilities.

Although the Property houses buildings used by more than 20 County and other governmental facilities, there has been no general overall planning of the site, but rather, construction has taken place on the Property as County needs arose. Some sites, particularly the Sheriff's Forensic

Laboratory and the Youth Services Center, reflect thoughtful site planning, while others, particularly the new Gateway School and the Hazardous Waste Facility, do not. For example, the new Gateway School, a facility involving four modular classrooms and two administration buildings, was built immediately adjacent to Tower Road with no apparent consideration of site setback or landscaping. In contrast, the County, with the leadership of the Sheriff, developed and constructed a well-planned, attractive Forensic Laboratory directly across the street and of which County residents can be proud.

Much of the Property is indifferently maintained. While the areas around the Forensic Laboratory and the Youth Facility are well maintained, the remainder of the Property lacks uniform maintenance standards. Construction debris remains from the construction of the Youth Facility and Gateway School and there appears to be little concern about weeds and the related fire hazard. Numerous abandoned vehicles are parked in the corporation yard and other vehicles, apparently privately-owned, are also stored on the Property. An abandoned shipping container and casually stored paint and hazardous chemicals are other examples of conditions which exist at the Property.

No single County department is responsible for either site planning or for overall maintenance of the Property, although the County does have maintenance agreements with some tenants.

Planning for the future use and development of the Property is affected by important environmental constraints and infrastructure considerations embedded in the documentation of the individual sites. Another factor that could affect the preparation of a quality plan for future use and development is the pending "institutional memory" crisis that may develop when a substantial number of senior administrators retire in the near future.

Conclusions

The County has a valuable asset in its Tower Road Property. Some recent developments such as the Forensic Lab and Juvenile Services Center are impressive buildings and, more importantly, well-sited to optimize the use of the land. Other older facilities such as the Library Offices, Elections Building and Household Hazardous Waste Facility represent suboptimal use of land and may, at some point be considered for replacement. New facilities being built such as the Gateway School (a modular building) and the proposed Receiving Home represent low-intensity land use.

A Master Plan as described in Appendix A would benefit future decision makers, as well as benefit individual site occupants and the Property's residential neighbors. Such a plan would allow the County to make decisions about parcel usage that enhance the long-term value of this asset.

Maintenance throughout the Property is uncoordinated and in some instances inadequate.

Recommendations

The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors should direct the County Manager to:

1. Initiate a Master Planning process to establish a long-term strategy for the Tower Road property as a whole as well as for individual parcels. The Master Plan should include the elements described in Appendix A. The Grand Jury acknowledges that budget considerations and the timing of future property development could affect the pace or phasing of the implementation of a Master Plan.
2. Prepare a Property Strategic Plan (see Appendix B) in conjunction with the above Master Plan, to guide decisions as facility needs arise and to ensure optimal use of San Mateo County's entire real estate portfolio.
3. Undertake efforts immediately to ensure the proposed Receiving Home is developed and constructed in accordance with sound planning principles.
4. Adopt standards for the regular maintenance of the Tower Road property and require all users of such property to contribute adequate funding toward maintenance. The Public Works Department should be made responsible for overall property maintenance and a senior official of that department should be tasked with maintenance responsibility. The County Manager should make periodic visits to the Tower Road property to ensure it is properly maintained.
5. Improve the appearance of the Tower Road property by:
 - disposing of, or justifying the presence of, all unused vehicles and other items stored at the property
 - removing weeds and other plant matter that constitute a fire hazard
 - removing all debris from the property including that related to the recent construction of the Youth Services Center and Gateway School
 - completing construction of the Gateway School infrastructure
 - executing a contract for demolition of the old Hillcrest youth facility.

Appendix A

Recommended Elements for the Property Master Plan

The Property Master Plan should include:

A Site inventory of

- Existing land uses including building data, conditions and lease disposition (if applicable)
- Utilities and infrastructure including roads, site lighting, landscape, power, gas, water, waste, storm systems and other elements serving the site
- Geologic and seismic conditions
- Topographic survey
- Archaeological, paleontological, and biotic conditions and issues

A Site plan and recommendations for

- Master strategy for land capacity and site development
- Parcel by parcel opportunities indicating site coverage, height limits, setbacks showing illustrative examples
- Traffic and parking strategy, policy and restrictions – onsite as well as impact on peripheral access roads
- Site utilities and infrastructure – capacity and strategy to accommodate optimized uses
- Landscape strategy for the Property as well as by parcel
- Archaeological, paleontological, and biotic conditions, restrictions and mitigations

Appendix B

Recommended Elements for the Property Strategic Plan

The Property Strategic Plan would allow the County to look at opportunities within its entire portfolio when Tower Road sites are being considered to determine if the Property is the optimum location for the requirement. Such a Plan would include:

- Land and building inventory
- Disposition (lease vs. owned)
- Physical condition
- Adequacy for purpose
- Financial model of the County's real estate costs
- Current and projected occupancy and site utilization data
- Parking strategy and analysis
- Highest and best use assessment
- Model for decision making and financial implications as new or altered facility requirements arise
- Operating cost and maintenance analysis and model
- Recommendations to optimize the value of the County's real estate portfolio, identifying inefficient, overcrowded, physically or functionally deficient or other suboptimal conditions



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

County Manager's Office

DATE: July 30, 2007

BOARD MEETING DATE: August 14, 2007

SPECIAL NOTICE: None

VOTE REQUIRED: None

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: John L. Maltbie, County Manager

SUBJECT: 2006-07 Grand Jury Response

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept this report containing the County's responses to the following 2006-07 Grand Jury reports: Summary of Coyote Point Marina: A Valuable Asset Deserving Effective Management; Health and Human Services Survey on Compliance with Recent Grand Jury Recommendations; and Tower Road Property and Maintenance.

VISION ALIGNMENT:

Commitment: Responsive, effective and collaborative government.

Goal 20: Government decisions are based on careful consideration of future impact, rather than temporary relief or immediate gain.

This activity contributes to the goal by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process improvements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

DISCUSSION:

The County is mandated to respond to the Grand Jury within 90 days from the date that reports are filed with the County Clerk and Elected Officials are mandated to respond within 60 days. To that end, attached are the County's responses to the following Grand Jury reports: Coyote Point Marina: A Valuable

Asset Deserving Effective Management issued May 17, 2007; Health and Human Services Survey on Compliance with Recent Grand Jury Recommendations issued May 22, 2007; and Tower Road Property and Maintenance issued May 24, 2007.

Tower Road Property and Maintenance

Findings:

Staff is in general agreement with the Grand Jury's findings.

Recommendations:

The Board of Supervisors should direct the County Manager to:

- 1. Initiate a Master Planning process to establish a long-term strategy for the Tower Road property as a whole as well as for individual parcels. The Master Plan should include the elements described in Appendix A. The Grand Jury acknowledges that budget considerations and the timing of future property development could affect the pace or phasing of the implementation of a Master Plan.**

Response: Concur. The Department of Public Works, in conjunction with the Office of Economic Development/Real Property Services, is in the process of developing a strategy for addressing the County's short- and long-term space needs through a comprehensive space needs analysis accompanied by updated or master plans for all County properties, including the Tower Road property. This strategy includes performing an inventory of all County-owned and leased space, determining current and projected future space needs, evaluating current master plans for County campuses, updating the master plans where appropriate, and developing new master plans where necessary. Tower Road will be one of many County campuses to be evaluated and master-planned. The intent is to develop a long-range plan for addressing facilities needs through future capital improvement projects. The Grand Jury guidance provided in its Appendices A and B provide a framework for the accomplishment of this plan.

As part of its FY 2008-09 budget request, the Department of Public Works will develop a capital project request that includes beginning the space needs analysis by December 31, 2007.

- 2. Prepare a Property Strategic Plan (see Appendix B) in conjunction with the above Master Plan, to guide decisions as facility needs arise and to ensure optimal use of San Mateo County's entire real estate portfolio.**

Response: Concur. As explained in the response to Recommendation 1, a comprehensive plan and review process is being developed to address all of the County's capital projects, infrastructure, real estate assets, and

future needs. The guidelines provided by the Grand Jury for both Master and Strategic Plan development will be incorporated into this process.

3. Undertake efforts immediately to ensure the proposed Receiving Home is developed and constructed in accordance with sound planning principles.

Response: Concur. This recommendation has been implemented in accordance with sound construction planning principles. The Receiving Home design has been fully completed. The architect retained for this purpose was selected through a Request for Proposals process and has significant experience designing this type of facility. A construction contractor will be selected through a competitive bidding process to be conducted in strict compliance with the Public Contract Code. Oversight of the project and construction inspection will be done directly by the construction management staff in the Department of the Public Works' Capital Projects Section.

4. Adopt standards for the regular maintenance of the Tower Road property and require all users of such property to contribute adequate funding toward maintenance. The Public Works Department should be made responsible for overall property maintenance and a senior official of that department should be tasked with maintenance responsibility. The County Manager should make periodic visits to the property to ensure it is properly maintained.

Response: Concur. The current County-owned rent schedule for the facilities located at the Tower Road campus includes funding for property maintenance immediately external to the individual buildings, including parking lots. As noted in response to Recommendation 5, an assessment will be made by the end of August 2007 regarding the cost and staffing needed to expand these services to the entire Tower Road property. This assessment, including options for service expansion and impact on facility rental charges, will be submitted to the County Manager's Office for consideration.

The Public Works Facility Maintenance section is responsible for ensuring the Tower Road property is properly maintained.

5. Improve the appearance of the Tower Road property by:

- **disposing of, or justifying the presence of, all unused vehicles and other items stored at the property**
- **removing weeds and other plant matter that constitute a fire hazard**
- **removing all debris from the property including that related to the recent construction of the Youth Services Center and Gateway School**

- **completing construction of the Gateway School infrastructure**
- **executing a contract for demolition of the old Hillcrest youth facility.**

Response: Concur. The County Manager's Office and the Department of Public Works agree that the Tower Road property needs to be improved and properly maintained. Planned activities are as follows: (1) disposal and/or relocation of all unused vehicles and other large equipment currently stored at the property will begin with a current site assessment to be conducted by August 31, 2007; (2) expand and/or extend landscaping services to Tower Road property not covered by current rental agreements; (3) first-time implementation of the demolition and deconstruction policy recently adopted by the Board of Supervisors at the Hillcrest facility, including maximum feasible recycling of construction materials.

The Gateway School is now completed and occupied. There are materials left over from construction that have been reserved for the garden, which have been temporarily moved and stacked so not immediately visible to the public.