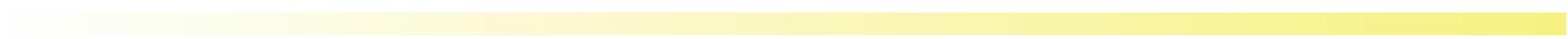


Central Coast Multimedia Center Alternative Design Proposal



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CRP 463: Scott Bruce, Senior Project, Spring 2010

California Polytechnic State University - City & Regional Planning Department



Approval Page

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Figure 1: Sketch-Up model of Multimedia Center



Figure 2: 1st Land Use Map

Executive Summary

This site on Tank Farm and Orcutt Roads is an area within San Luis Obispo that will most likely see a lot of new development and expansion in the coming years. Considering San Luis Obispo recently approved the Orcutt Area Specific Plan (OASP), a site of approximately 231 acres just south and east of the city limits of San Luis Obispo, it is obvious that projects similar to that described in this report will be prevalent in this part of the city,

Currently, the site is mostly vacant, however there are some single-family homes present—some of which have been standing for quite a long time. In addition, the Urban Reserve Line (URL) runs right through the eastern section of open space on the property. With the OASP approved, this area is encouraged to allow a mix of residential densities and neighborhood scale commercial/office uses. This site is one of, if not the largest, contiguous piece of developable property within the city limits or available for annexation; therefore, the project proposed for this site has the opportunity to be the first and largest of its kind anywhere in the Central Coast.

This report focuses on the creation of a Central Coast Multimedia Center. It will include 350,000 square feet of broadcasting and recording studios, and administrative offices, meeting and conference facilities, and classrooms, 150,000 square feet of retail commercial uses, 48-seat restaurant, 36 units of staff housing, parking and support facilities. There is currently no multimedia center of this size and complexity currently existing anywhere on the Central Coast, or anywhere not within the areas in and around large metropolitan areas like Los Angeles.

The Orcutt site has been a long time interest to The City of San Luis Obispo due to the development potential it contains. Many alternatives have been suggested and studied, one of which is a multimedia center development. The multimedia center will be a three-part center including audio studios and rooms; theater halls; as well as film studios and rooms. The idea behind the multimedia center is to give young artists a place to come and hone their skills in San Luis Obispo.

The site contains a wide variety of uses, ranging from a multimedia center to single-family homes, neighborhood parks, and office buildings. The mix of housing types and offices will provide the users of the Orcutt site a place to work near their residence. Convenience stores, restaurants, and coffee shops all within walking distances of the residences will provide a walkable community. Alternative modes of travel are advocated by wide bike lanes and a separate bike path, making the site a pedestrian and bicycle friendly area.

Introduction

The Central Coast Multimedia Center will be compliant with the Orcutt Area Specific Plan. Currently, the site entails the following land uses: R-1 low-density residential, R-2 medium-density residential, neighborhood park, and a large open space area on the corner included a large hill. Currently, this land is underutilized, does not have good access using the existing roads, and lacks any cohesive character that unites all uses on the property. In conjunction with the OASP, the City and citizens hope to incorporate this area into the larger part of the City focused on creating this area as a principal expansion area in the Land Use Element. Annexation of these areas is a growth management tool used to enable appropriate development and protect open space.

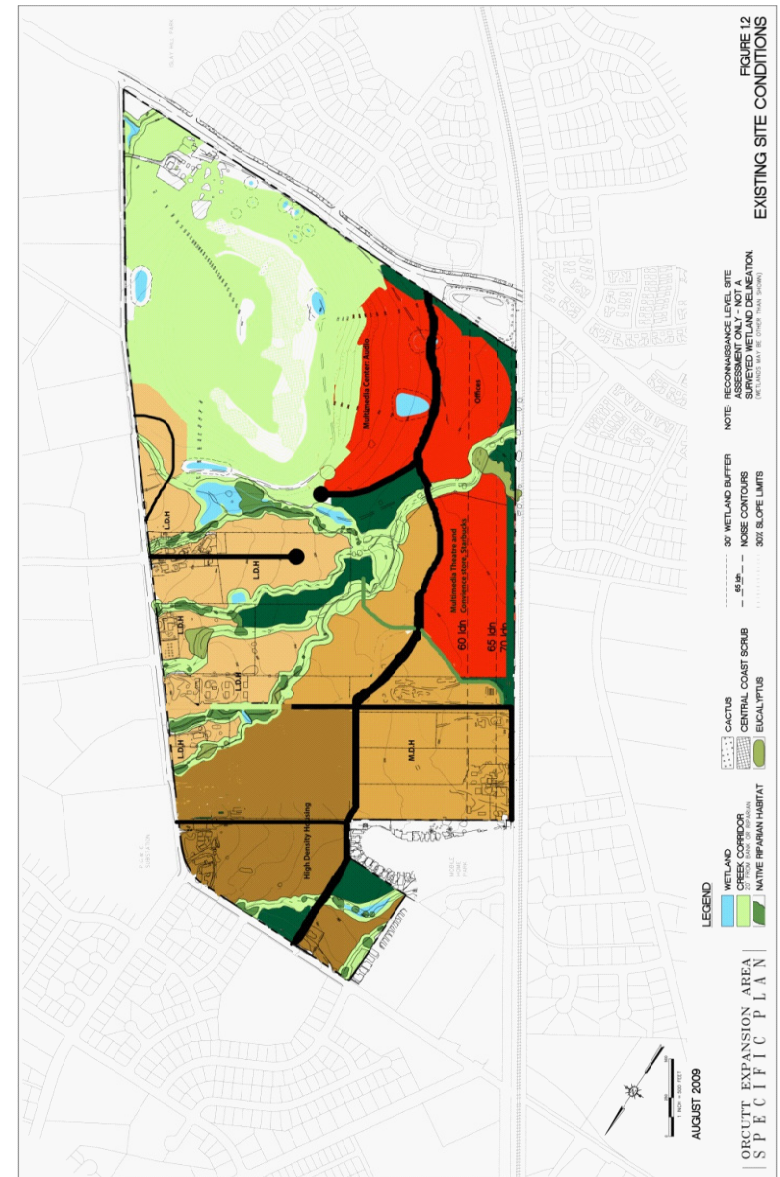


Figure 3: 2nd Land Use Map

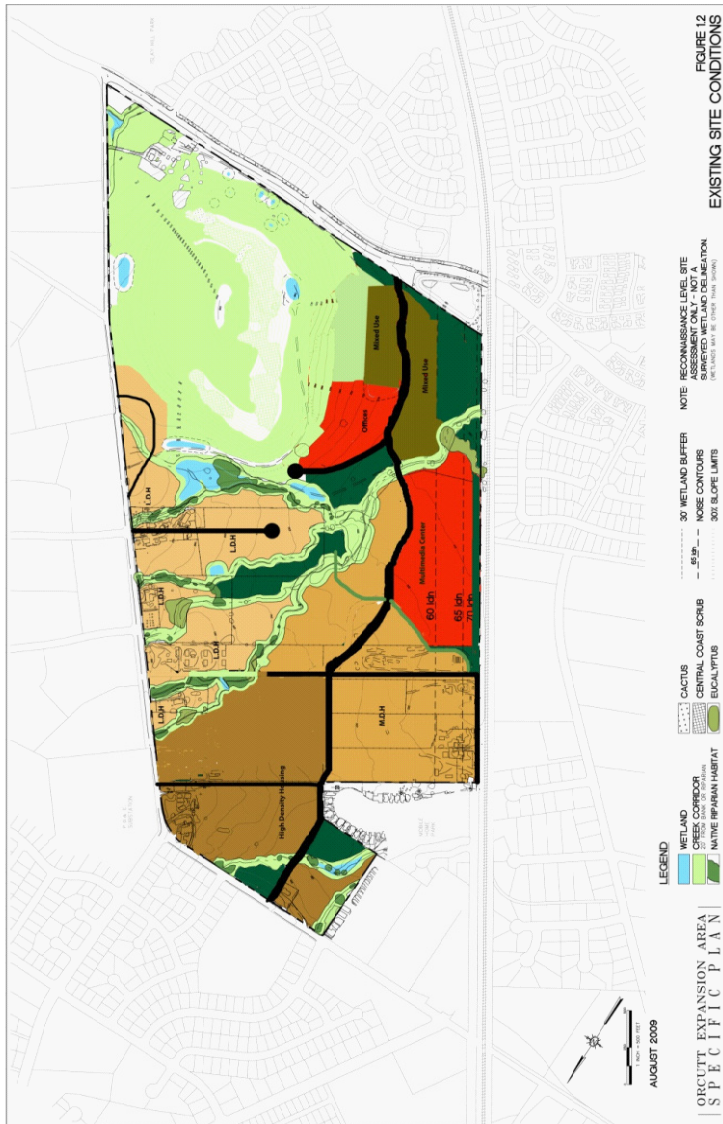


Figure 4: Final Land Use Map

The Central Coast Multimedia Center would provide broadcasting and recording studios that are available nowhere else in the area. It would allow professionals in the field to have a place to live within walking distance of residential facilities suited to their needs. Having this type of development in the area would also lend itself to increasing the economic base of San Luis Obispo because it will include a mixed use development with commercial uses that would attract residents of San Luis Obispo from other parts of the city or even other parts of the county. By developing in a compact, strategic way, it will be possible to decrease automobile dependency and lower vehicle miles traveled—especially for those who will live and work on site.

Project Preparation

There were several steps involved in creating this proposal. They included the following:

- 1) Data Collection – Field surveys were conducted at the site to determine the constraints, opportunities, and existing conditions of the planning area in question. This involved walking along the site and nearby roads to document its current conditions, natural features, and other important aspects. This was done by taking notes and photographs.
- 2) Case studies—The hardest part of collecting data for this project was finding case studies that were similar examples of a recording and broadcasting studio. However, two examples that are closest to what we are attempting to achieve with the Central Coast Multimedia Center. After reviewing these case studies, we had more of an idea of what to include in the following proposal for the Central Coast Multimedia Center. These two case studies are Universal Studios in Los Angeles, and Walter Cronkite

3) Concept Mapping—Next, we took large pieces of tracing paper and laid them over a large-scale map of the site on Orcutt and Tank Farm. Next, we took markers and brainstormed ideas for development of a multimedia center, residential units, a restaurant, other mixed use developments, and a park with pedestrian path throughout the property. In addition, we came up with a new way to access the future developments with changes to and improvements on the existing roadway system surrounding the site.

Existing Conditions and the Initial Environmental Study

While information collected from field studies was used to analyze the existing conditions of the site in question, information already collected in the “Environmental Impact Report for the Orcutt Area Specific Plan” were used to summarize these issues and concerns for future development. The following information is from the EIR summarizes the most significant impacts that we will consider while developing a plan for the Central Coast Multimedia Center on this site. These are Class I impacts considered significant and unavoidable.

Aesthetics

AES-1 The proposed development would affect the aesthetic character of the site vicinity through alteration of viewsheds from Orcutt and Tank Farm Roads. This is considered a Class I, significant and unavoidable impact.

AES-2 The proposed development would affect the aesthetic character of the Specific Plan Area and impede views of Righetti Hill. This is considered a Class I, significant and unavoidable impact.

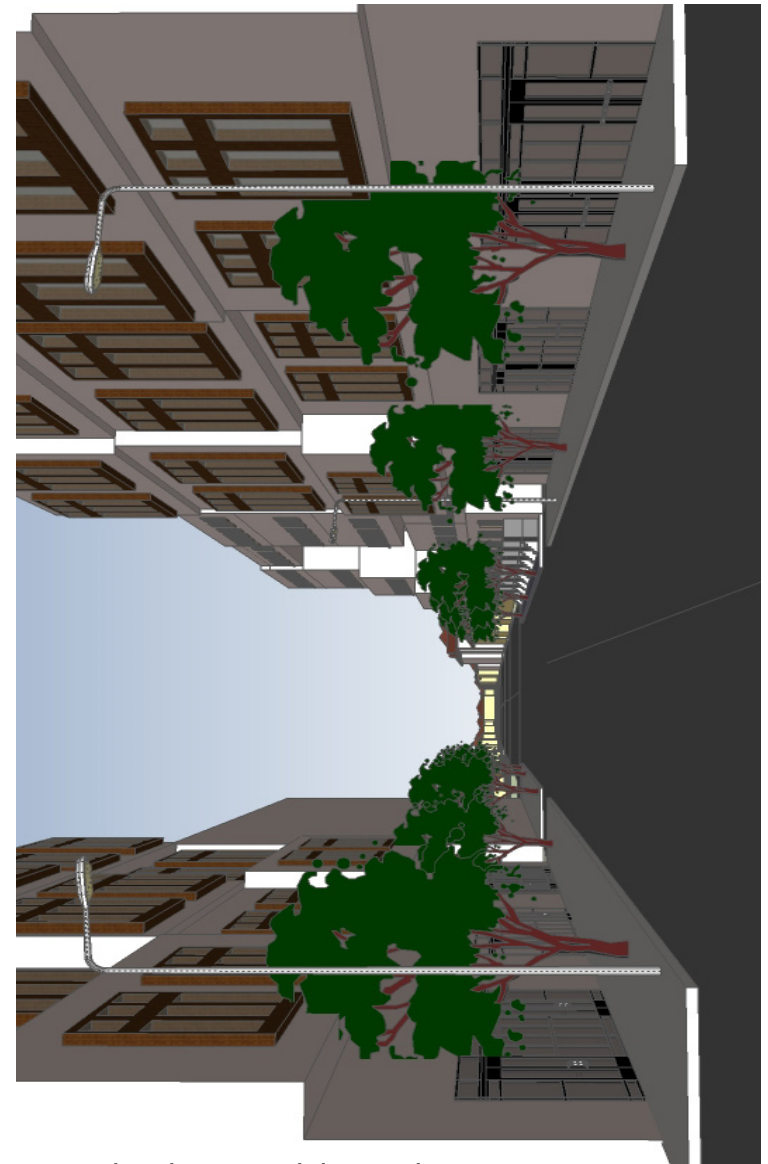


Figure 5: Sketch-Up model, Mixed-Use



Figure 6: Sketch-Up model, R2 residential

Air Quality

AQ-4 The proposed Specific Plan is consistent with population assumptions of the General Plan and San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan (CAP). However, the Specific Plan proposes low density residential development outside of the current Urban Reserve Line (URL) which will require an adjustment of the URL to be consistent with the General Plan. The 2001 CAP encourages development to occur within the URL of cities, therefore, the Specific Plan is inconsistent with the 2001 Clean Air Plan (CAP). This is considered to be a Class I, significant and unavoidable impact.

Noise

N-5 The proposed Specific Plan, in combination with cumulative development at General Plan buildout would add to roadway corridor noise levels already above the 60 dBA Ldn City threshold. This is considered a Class I, significant and unavoidable impact.

All of these impacts are either not in need of immediate attention or can be mitigated. However, the largest issue that would potentially cause a significant impact from that which would be constructed for the Central Coast Multimedia Center would be the large multimedia center itself. Since the building would be in excess of 350,000, and is the largest—and only one—of its kind anywhere within the Central Coast or within 200 miles from it, there are no good examples of possible impacts it may have.

All impacts will be dealt with according to regulation and that which is stipulated within the General Plan. Specifically, the multimedia center could infringe on what the General Plan calls for in terms of land use. The EIR states that for land use,

“Cumulative development throughout the greater San Luis Obispo County and City of San Luis Obispo area gradually alters the area’s rural character. The proposed project would incrementally contribute to this substantial change. Individual development projects in the region would have the potential to create compatibility conflicts relating to the interface of existing urban and rural uses and new urban development. Such conflicts are expected to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, and assuming that conflicts can be resolved through the proper use of buffers and appropriate design, significant cumulative land use conflicts are not anticipated ” (Environmental Impact Report for the Orcutt Area Specific Plan).

Although each project is addressed on a case-by-case basis, it is important that this development not infringe on the character of San Luis Obispo. Certain design techniques, building organization, and the integration of a park and pedestrian path will play a large part in keeping this innovative, big-city type of development in touch with the interface and existing urban and rural uses and new urban development that residents (and visitors) of San Luis Obispo expect.

In addition, to analyze the existing uses, regulations, and physical character of this site, the following documents were used:

- Airport Land Use Plan (ALUP)
- San Luis Obispo General Plan
- Orcutt Area Specific Plan (OASP)
- Environmental Impact Report for the Orcutt Area Specific Plan



Figure 7: Sketch-Up model, Multimedia Center

Program

USE	SQUARE FEET	DENSITY	ACRES	UNITS	PARKING REQUIREMENTS	SPACES
R1 Single Family, Low Density	719,000	6 units/acre	16.5	99.0	2 spaces/unit, 1 covered	198
R2 Town Homes, Medium Density	962,100	10 units/acre	22.1	220.9	1 per studio apt.; 1.5 for 1st bdrm plus .5 for each add'l bdrm; plus 1 for each 5 units for projects with more than 5 units	442
R3 Medium-High Density	703,000	15 units/acre	16.1	242.1	1 per studio apt.; 1.5 for 1st bdrm plus .5 for each add'l bdrm; plus 1 for each 5 units for projects with more than 5 units	242
Mixed Use	90,000		2.1		1 per studio apt.; 1.5 for 1st bdrm plus .5 for each add'l bdrm; plus 1 for each 5 units for projects with more than 5 units	
Multimedia Center	127,500		2.9		1 space/300 sq. ft.	425
Office Building	116,692		2.7		1 space/300 sq. ft.	389
Park	267,500		6.1		1 space/500 sq. ft.	335
Open Space	3,718,204		85.4		0	0

Recommendation

To give a complete recommendation, it is first important to understand the process by which we did this project. First, without considering the context or size of the property and parameters of the Multimedia Center, we put a large piece of tracing paper over a large map of the site and drew a conceptual design based solely on what we thought made sense for the area itself. This included a large multimedia center and mixed use community.

However, after doing a lot of research, we realized that there is no multimedia center of the size the we were supposed to create located in any area like San Luis Obispo. Not only was this site too far away from the central core of the city, it is not located in a larger metropolitan area like San Francisco or L.A. where there are more instances of communities containing large numbers of musicians, broadcasters, and other people who would need such a space.

One case study that showed exactly why a multimedia center of this original size would not work is Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Media, Downtown Campus ASU Pheonix, AZ. It is described to include the following:

- The school is closer to major metropolitan news operations – newspaper, TV, radio and online
- Our new location provides students extraordinary opportunities to cover major events, people and issues. City Hall, federal, state and local courthouses and government agencies, the Phoenix Bioscience Center, cultural venues such as the Herberger, Orpheum and Dodge theaters, and sports arenas such as Chase Field (home of the Arizona Diamondbacks) and U.S. Airways Center (home of the Phoenix Suns) are all within walking distance.



Figure 8: Google image of Walter Cronkite School, <http://nerdvana.freedomblogging.com/>



Figure 9: Sketch-Up model, Multimedia Center

- A light rail station sits directly across from the Cronkite School and gets students to and from the Tempe campus in about half an hour. ASU students ride free.

Tank Farm and Orcutt Roads are anything but near a large metropolitan area located near a light rail system. In fact, the area is rather rural and wouldn't be appropriate for a development that revolves around the business of people who work in large cities and need to be around the public at large.

In addition, further research was done which involved talking to a Cal Poly theatre professor, Josh Machamer, who suggested making the project smaller scale with areas that could be rented out for local activities as well as theatre, film, and audio uses. The diagram on the next page gives a representation of a multipurpose set-up where every room is able to do anything that involves video, sound, and theatre. These rooms would be useable for anything from filmmaking to jazzercise. Also, he did not think a large multimedia center would be profitable in an area like Orcutt due to its distance from the core of San Luis Obispo. In addition, Chris Hite, an instructor at Allan Hancock College—in the film/video program—said that the location was not appropriate, although it would be nice to have an area for young filmmakers to use a studio and shoot films. Both professors expressed a need for their students to have a professional venue for these types of activities, but they could not envision that type of development in San Luis Obispo.

As a result, a new concept was created to possibly accommodate the smaller amount of activities that would exist here on the Central Coast. The concept of smaller multi-purpose rooms that could be rented out for use by schools for special events or for jazzercise, or other such local events seemed like a more fitting alternative. As a result, the final site plan is a representation of this idea. The Central Coast Multimedia Center attracts smaller organizations by using smaller structures for local

Ultimately, it seemed like if we could not create a multimedia center that fully embraced the concepts of broadcasting, performing, etc., using the original parameters of the project, then it was not feasible to create this type of development on the given site. To sum up, the impacts on the property on Orcutt and Tank Farm were not environmental; actually, they were more of a financial and contextual issue. There is no realistic way that this Central Coast Multimedia Center would attract enough people from other areas (like L.A. or San Francisco) because there would definitely not be enough people within the Central Coast area alone to sustain such a facility.

Final Recommendation

Ultimately, we would not recommend this plan over that of the Orcutt Area Specific Plan. Based on the somewhat large distance this property is from SLO's core, we do not feel it would incorporate well into the surrounding environment as well as the fact that this is not a large metropolitan area—like LA—that could support enough people involved in the broadcasting industry.



Figure 10: Basic concept for a multipurpose media center



Appendix

