

NEWS

Woodland council supportive of Research and Tech Park

Futuristic development would weave together businesses and housing



An overview of what the proposed Woodland Research & Technology Park being planned off Hwy. 113 near CR25A could look like. COURTESY

By **JIM SMITH** | jsmith@dailydemocrat.com | Woodland Daily Democrat
November 21, 2020 at 4:33 a.m.

An envisioned 351-acre Research and Technology Park on what is now farmland southeast of Woodland received nothing but praise and well wishes as it develops over the coming years.



In what was the first of many public presentations, the Woodland City Council heard from developer John Hodgson of the Woodland Research and Technology Group, about some of the businesses interested in the center as well as the amenities it can bring to the community.

Meeting via Zoom due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the council also heard from city planners on future outreach sessions scheduled as the project moves toward final hearings in May 2021.

Tuesday's hearing required no action and was meant to provide a broader perspective of how the development is expected to grow, the number of people and businesses anticipated, and how it will draw agricultural entrepreneurs from UC Davis and the world at large. A full environmental document on the project is expected in December, which will then be open to public comment for review.

In general, the proposed, mixed-use development would feature nearly 2.2 million square feet of office and research buildings in a "campus-style" setting and 1,600 homes with a 10-acre central park and 22 acres of parks in all separating the neighborhoods from the offices and a small commercial area on 351 acres. It would be located south of Woodland, east of Hwy. 113, and west of Harry Lorenzo Drive in the Spring Lake area, and south of Farmers Central Road to just south of County Road 25A on property now owned by five different landowners.

The development has been discussed for at least five years and has been incorporated into the city's General Plan as the next major phase of growth for the city. Buildout isn't anticipated for at least 20 years and could be phased to provide a complex of office buildings at the southern end of the property, followed by residential, said Hodgson, who didn't anticipate any retail offerings until later.

"It's about as mixed-used as I've ever dealt with," Hodgson told the council in his description. "But this plan is exactly, in my humble opinion, exactly what you folks asked for in your General Plan and addresses the needs of many potential users and those who want to be close to UC Davis as well as those in the Woodland area — you know better me that you have a very significant ag and agtech component in Woodland."

While offering no specific business names, Hodgson did say he's seeing "considerable interest" and that it wasn't necessarily he or his firm reaching out to prospects, but those people calling him. Some of the interest is coming from a "major state agency" who's interested in the high tech and sustainability features of this project, "a number of ag tech operations" planning to grow or expand and some professional offices looking to expand.



Hodgson also said interest has been expressed from a South Korean company, which is staff by a number of “PhDs who are all graduates of UC Davis,” a COVID-19 testing firm, and companies from Sweden and Holland.

As for the design, Hodgson said the “residential villages district” would consist of 135 acres with 1,600 residential housing adjacent to the Spring Lake area with higher and lower-density development as well as a village center that includes a town center to serve as a gathering space offering “informal networking” a mobility hub, leading to 11 acres of linear park.

Questions from councilmembers were largely positive with few direct inquiries, except for Xochitl Rodriguez who wondered if the development would be in competition with similar tech parks planned or being sought in Davis? She also wanted to make sure that residents in the Spring Lake area were able to participate in public discussions.

City Manager Ken Hiatt as well as Hodgson indicated that there is an “under maturity” of advanced tech services throughout the Sacramento area and that all will be needed in the future. Davis has had problems getting voter approval for similar projects. Indeed, the Woodland development was originally rejected by Davis years ago and another tech facility was also defeated at the Nov. 3 general election.

“I don’t view a Davis project or a Sacramento, West Sacramento project as competing,” Hiatt added. “They are all necessary. It’s incumbent on us to not throttle the ability of private industry to provide business opportunities. ... Businesses that want to locate in Davis will do so, and businesses that don’t want to locate in Davis will look to Woodland.”

The only caveat, noted city Senior Planner Erika Bumgardner, was that in the “age of COVID” it’s possible we’ll see a drop in demand for office space but there is a pent-up demand for business parks like this centered around business food and ag.

Woodland Vice Mayor Tom Stallard said the project has been a long time coming and cautioned that it will still take years to achieve build-out. He also noted the job opportunities, coupled with the housing, would be a good way of keeping UC Davis grads as well as graduates from Woodland High School and Woodland Community College in Woodland.

“Aggie Square will be 125 acres,” Stallard noted of the Sacramento and UC Davis development project, “but this will have 351 acres and the location couldn’t be better to create a synergy with UC Davis.”



He did have some concerns about achieving a balance between the building of housing and businesses but said that was something to be looked at another day.

“I have said consistently in the past this is not a residential project,” Hodgson replied to Stallard. “This is research and tech park. Businesses would come first, but our intent from the beginning has always been to develop the office portion ... But, yeah, we get it. We got it four years ago and we agree that we need” to maintain a balance.

Councilman Angel Barajas, who will be become a Yolo County supervisor for the 5th District in early January, said “there was no way of stopping this project from moving forward and I will do anything within my will to support this project as a county supervisor ... to build white collar jobs in this community.”

Get your breaking news as it hits

Sign up for Breaking News Email Alerts for updates on the most important crime, public safety and local stories.

SIGN UP

Tags: [Community](#), [Newsletter](#)

Jim Smith | Editor

Jim Smith is an award winning news and editorial writer and photographer who has been editor of The Daily Democrat since 1994. He has more than 37 years of professional newspaper experience as a reporter and editor for weekly and small daily newspapers. He has won numerous writing awards over his career as well as awards for photography and newspaper pagination as well as public service.

jsmith@dailydemocrat.com

