



Status of State Plans for Affordable Housing Affecting Skyline Park

August 28, 2019

The California Dept of General Services yesterday released a map of what it considers excess state land that could be developed for housing. It includes 20 acres of Skyline Park.

This document summarizes what the District knows about the proposal:

--the area proposed for housing includes all of the flat portion of Skyline Park west of the native plant garden.

--that area is where most of the equestrian activity at the park takes place (horse arena, horse skill training facilities, equestrian camping area). Skyline Park is the only public park in Napa to offer such facilities.

--without that area Skyline Park would no longer be able to host large events.

--the large events are key to the park's finances, and make the difference between self-sufficiency and the need to be taxpayer subsidized.

--if the state were to sell the 20 acres for housing, the legislature would first need to pass, and then the governor sign, new legislation to authorize the sale. SB 20, which the legislature just passed yesterday, only authorizes sale of the land that comprises Skyline Park solely for the purpose of sale to the District or the County, and solely for public park purposes.

--if the state were to sell the 20 acres to a developer the land would be subject to County General Plan and Zoning regulations. All of Skyline Park (including the above 20 acres) is designated in the County General Plan as Agricultural Watershed Open Space and in the Zoning Ordinance as Agricultural Watershed: Skyline Wilderness Park Combination District. The General Plan designation is locked in through voter approved ballots (first Measure J, then Measure P), and cannot be changed to allow housing without a countywide vote. Neither the General Plan nor the Zoning allow housing development at Skyline Park.

--if the state were to try and do a long-term ground lease to allow development, a lease long enough to make development financially feasible would probably require authorizing legislation, but I'm not sure of the law on this issue.

--if leased, the land would still be owned by the state, and thus exempt from County General Plan and Zoning.

--whether it is sold or leased, any housing development would require an extension of services (principally water and sewer).

--The land in question is outside of the City of Napa's city boundary, it's sphere of influence and the voter approved Rural Urban Line. To extend water service, the City of Napa would need to first go through the Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO's) Municipal Service Review process. That process would have to identify that the expansion is contrary to the adopted County General Plan and Zoning, and the Commission would need to consider that fact, though the Commission could end up approving if they were to find other compelling reasons to do so. Assuming LAFCO did approve, the Rural Urban Line would still need to be adjusted, and that adjustment would I believe need to be approved by the voters of the City of Napa, or approved by a 4/5 vote of the City Council, before the City could extend water.

--the land in question is outside of Napa Sanitation District's sewer service area. To extend sewer service to the site, Napa San would also need to get approval from LAFCO, raising the same issues of General Plan compliance addressed above.

--there is a considerable amount of vacant land and many vacant or underutilized buildings within the Napa State Hospital grounds. The State has been saying for several years that they are going to do a master facilities plan for Napa State Hospital, but to my knowledge hasn't even begun the process. It's not clear why the state is not looking at the vacant land within the state hospital grounds, for which they haven't identified any future use, yet they are proposing to develop land that has been used as a public park for 39 years as excess and appropriate for development.

--Measure K identifies the purchase of Skyline Park, for public park uses only, as a top priority, and directs the District to seek to purchase and permanently protect ALL of the park. Under no circumstance could Measure K funds be used to support the State's housing proposal.

--the land in question may be owned by the state, but it's not "free" for housing development. SB 20 authorizes the District to purchase Skyline Park at fair market value. If the State chooses not to sell to the District for use as a park, the State would lose that source of revenue. If the State does allow the District to purchase the park, the State could take that revenue to subsidize housing development at Napa State Hospital, or anywhere else of their choosing.

--to summarize, if the state tries to sell any of Skyline Park for housing, they will need to get countywide voter approval and City of Napa voter approval, and if the state tries to lease any part of skyline park for housing, they will need City of Napa voter approval.

--the controversy highlights the importance of Measure K, and Napa Open Space District efforts to acquire Skyline Park from the State. While Measure K cannot compel the State to sell, once they realize the difficulties of trying to develop housing in Skyline, including obtaining local voter approvals, it's essential that the Napa Open Space District has the funding in place to purchase it.