



Fremont calls Union Pacific land purchase "terrible"

By Matthew Artz
Oakland Tribune

Posted: 01/15/2011 12:00:00 AM PST

Updated: 01/15/2011 04:55:23 AM PST

FREMONT -- If there was a silver lining when the NUMMI auto plant closed last year, it was the potential in the hundreds of acres surrounding the plant.

With an abundance of flat, vacant land between two freeways and adjacent to a future BART station, Fremont leaders -- with the help of a federal planning grant -- were envisioning a green technology jobs corridor, with homes and maybe even an entertainment venue.

But now it appears their silver lining was fool's gold, and their showplace seems destined to become a freight rail yard.

"It's terrible," Mayor Bob Wasserman said. "Man, that really destroys a lot of plans or potential plans."

Fremont leaders still are reeling from learning this week that Union Pacific purchased two key parcels, about 160 acres, north and south of the former NUMMI plant, now the Tesla auto plant.

The much larger northern parcel includes part of the auto plant's parking lot and stretches across the street from the planned Warm Springs BART station and all the way to South Grimmer Boulevard, where the city had proposed a baseball stadium for the Oakland A's.

Union Pacific plans to use both parcels to address ongoing space issues and provide more service to its freight rail customers, spokesman Aaron Hunt said.

While the railroad doesn't know exactly what type of facility it will build, Hunt acknowledged that most facilities "fall under the umbrella of a rail yard."

City Manager Fred Diaz

said he would be meeting with railroad officials Friday to discuss their plans.

"We are deeply concerned about the purchase by Union Pacific, moreover that they're interested to develop a rail yard there," he said.

Union Pacific's purchase appears to eliminate the city's ability to dictate the future of the site. Railroads are federally exempt from local land use authority, although the city still is researching the issue, City Attorney Harvey Levine said.

Fremont is in the middle of a federally funded planning effort to determine how best to redevelop 500 acres surrounding the plant, including the 160 acres purchased by Union Pacific.

One concept, dubbed the "Innovation Campus," envisioned rail-car manufacturing plants as well as up to 2,530 homes clustered around the BART station, in the area that is now slated for a rail yard.

Union Pacific's purchase will delay the city planning process, Councilwoman Anu Natarajan said. "I don't think they're going to want to move quickly."

A single freight rail track runs through the NUMMI property, but there is space to build a second line, city officials said.

Advertisement

Get a **FREE ADT-Monitored Home Security System.***

(With \$99 customer installation and purchase of ADT alarm monitoring services. See important terms and conditions below.)

*\$99.00 Customer Installation Charge. 36-Month Monitoring Agreement required at \$35.99 per month (ST, 295, 6-6). Form of payment must be by credit card or electronic charge to your checking or savings account. Offer applies to homeowners only. Local permit fees may be required. Satisfactory credit history required. Certain restrictions apply. Offer valid for new Security Choice -- An ADT Authorized Dealer customers only and not on purchases from ADT Security Services, Inc. Other rate plans available. Cannot be combined with any other offer. **\$100 VISA® Gift Card Offer: \$100 VISA Gift Card is provided by Security Choice and is not sponsored by ADT Security Services. Requires mail-in redemption. Call 1-888-457-2338 for complete restrictions and redemption requirements.

Call Now!
1-877-835-8373



Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



Rail yards typically are home to thousands of rail cars -- some of which contain hazardous materials -- that are being put together into freight trains heading throughout the state, Hunt said.

Intermodal yards involve more truck activity, and Hunt said it was too early to know if there will be an increase in truck traffic in the area since the railroad still is unsure exactly what type of facility will be built.

Former Fremont City Council candidate Kathy McDonald, who lives across Interstate 680 from the proposed rail facility and fought a baseball stadium from going on adjacent land, said she wasn't necessarily opposed to Union Pacific taking over the site.

"I knew that the railroads were here before I moved here," she said. "I don't know that a railroad yard will be such a tremendous impact to us as residents."

Advertisement



Send flowers for any occasion
Bouquets \$19.99
from **\$19.99**^{+s/h}
ProFlowers®

Order ONLY at
proflowers.com/happy
or call 1-877-888-0688

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™