The Annex
Visioning Strategy

(A review of Council options, and a request for authorization to issue a Request for Proposals for a consultant to conduct a public input process concerning the commercial area at Del Rio and El Camino Real.)

RECOMMENDATION:

Council direct staff to issue a request for proposals (RFP) for a consultant to conduct a public visioning and consensus building process for the commercial areas located in the vicinity of El Camino Real and Del Rio Road.

DISCUSSION:

Background: During 2006, the Rottman Group presented the idea of a master planned, commercial project to be located at the El Camino Real and Del Rio Road intersection, called the Annex. The Rottman Group had assembled over 40 acres of land and developed a preliminary site concept plan for the Annex. In May 2006, the Rottman Group presented the project at a public workshop with the City Council and Planning Commission. One of the key elements of the project was a large “big box” anchor proposed on the southeast corner of El Camino Real and Del Rio Road. In July, 2006, Walmart purchased 26 acres at this site for the apparent purposes of developing a Walmart Supercenter in Atascadero. The issue of a Walmart Supercenter in Atascadero, has generated significant, on-going public debate and controversy.

Analysis: The City Council is now considering zoning code amendments that may prevent this type of big box commercial development from being built. However, new commercial development remains an important part of improving the City’s financial revenue picture. Consequently, the City remains very interested in seeing the Annex project built, but in a different configuration.

In order to explore alternatives to the Annex project, staff is recommending that a consultant be used to lead the process. A professional with experience dealing with controversial projects and multiple stakeholders, will aid in developing an inclusive process. A consultant will provide additional ideas and analysis of the various project
issues. This consultant would also have experience in large scale commercial development and be able to provide guidance on developing real world alternatives that could feasibly be built.

Annex project vicinity at El Camino Real and Del Rio Road
May 2006 Annex Concept Plan

Once a consultant has been selected, the City would hold a series of community meetings and workshops to discuss the scope of the project issues and options. The consultant would be tasked with developing a format and process for the meetings that would enable all stakeholders to be involved. Determining the boundaries of the study area will be a significant part of the process. Many neighboring property owners have expressed interest in being included in the Annex project. The consultant will need to take this into account during the process and develop a recommended project area.

The first phase of the process will likely involve a series and listening and confidence building workshops where the consultant will meet with the various stakeholders and interested residents. The second phase will likely involve a series of community workshops utilizing visualization techniques and exercises to enable the public to "see" the different possible options for the site. One of the primary challenges to the consultant will be to provide a feasible commercial project that generates community support. The process would likely conclude with the City Council selecting a preferred alternative design and entitlement process for the area.
Overview of potential process

- Issue RFP
- Select Consultant
- Conduct Listening and Scoping Workshops
- Prepare Range of Possible Alternatives
- Conduct Consensus Building Workshops
- Selection of Preferred Alternatives by City Council

Conclusion: Developing a new “vision” for the Annex project area is very important to the City of Atascadero's fiscal well being. The first step in this process will be to select a highly skilled and experienced consultant to assist the City in this effort.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The RFP process is the proper way to determine the range of cost to conduct this effort. It appears the cost, time and staff resources for this process will be significant.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The Council could request additional information and analysis of the issue and refer the item back to staff.

2. The Council could decide not to move forward with a visioning process at the site at this time by taking no action.