

New gate opens door for major development in heart of Dublin

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DUBLIN --Nearly 180 acres on the south side of the Camp Parks military training base lies weedy and vacant, except for a smattering of temporary modular buildings, rotting World War II-era wooden structures, and decrepit hangers belonging to NASA.

But over the next few years, the old will make way for the new, as Camp Parks and developer SunCal prepare for a hand-off of prime real estate just a stone's throw from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station.

With the recent completion of a new main gate to Camp Parks off Dougherty Road, SunCal can soon begin laying the groundwork for Dublin Crossing, a massive residential and commercial development of up to 1,995 new homes, 35 acres of parks, 75,000 to 200,000 square feet of retail, office, hotel and industrial space, and a new elementary school, essentially linking east and west Dublin.

"This creates that concept of what Dublin envisions as a central core," said Camp Parks spokesman Dan Gannod. "The city gets a good tax base, SunCal is able to develop that land, and Camp Parks gets new facilities in a time of downsizing. It moves us forward rather than keep us at status quo."

The land swap stems from a 2011 agreement between the Army Reserve and SunCal, in which the developer agreed to build six facilities and infrastructure at Camp Parks -- at a cost the Army estimates at \$66 million -- in exchange for 172 acres the military considers excess and expendable.

The first of these projects, a state-of-the-art main gate on the base's east side, is complete and will be opened following a facility review by the Army Corps of Engineers, according to SunCal. Also expected to be finished this year are a 4,300 square-foot administration building and a 1,200-square-foot visitor center.

Transfer of the first parcel of land, at Camp Parks' current entrance off Dublin Boulevard, is expected by November. SunCal anticipates grading the parcel later this year in preparation for constructing the first phase of about 400 homes in the second quarter of 2015.

"It's going to be a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented new neighborhood in town," said Joe Guerra, who heads SunCal's acquisitions and entitlements in Northern California. "It's not just walking distance to BART, it's literally a quarter-mile walk to a step on a BART train. There's not a lot of options in the Bay Area where you could just walk to a station with that kind of housing."

Future building projects for Camp Parks include a vehicle maintenance yard, a medical training facility, an Army Reserve Center and a warehouse. Guerra estimates the full buildout will take at least six years to complete.

As part of the plan, the city of Dublin will design and construct a 30-acre park in the heart of the Dublin Crossing development. The city has opened an online public survey and is seeking resident input. The planning process is expected to be completed in summer 2015.

Once finished, city officials say the park and overall development will close the gap between east and west Dublin.

"It's a great opportunity," said Dublin principal planner Kristy Bascom. "It's a big part of the community that's been closed off. It will be a nice amenity in the center of town."

The land's imminent transfer follows a settlement agreement signed in August by the city of Dublin, Dublin Crossing Venture, and the Alameda Creek Alliance, which had filed a lawsuit in March challenging the project's environmental impact report for ignoring impacts to Western burrowing owl habitats.

As a result of the settlement, the environmental group will dismiss the lawsuit. In exchange, Dublin Crossing Venture will protect 313 acres for the burrowing owl population either on the Camp Parks property or elsewhere in the East Bay.

"Burrowing owl colonies are increasingly scarce in the Livermore-Amador Valley, so this agreement will be important for helping to maintain the large breeding owl colony at Camp Parks or to protect additional burrowing owl habitat in the East Bay," said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. "We believe this is suitable mitigation for the impacts of the Dublin Crossing Project on burrowing owls."