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# Dec. 10, 2007: Platinum Triangle expansion proposed

## City panels next week will consider a plan to allow more than double the amount of building in the area around Angel Stadium.

By SARAH TULLY

The Orange County Register

ANAHEIM – An area touted as Orange County's future downtown could cram in more than double the buildings originally envisioned, even as the housing market slows and traffic concerns mount.

Today, the city is set to increase the maximum amount of homes and businesses allowed in the Platinum Triangle, an area around Angel Stadium that the city is trying to turn into an urban village that could serve as a central gathering place. On Monday, the Planning Commission is scheduled to consider the plan and if approved, the City Council will vote on the matter Tuesday.

Five times the amount of office space could go in, while twice the number of homes and commercial buildings could be allowed in the 820-acre region where high-rise condo and office towers, shops and cafes are planned. Land also is designated as "industrial" for a transportation hub.

Even though construction and sales are lagging now, the city is pushing for the plan to carve a path for future growth over the next quarter century. But some residents, including at least two council members, worry that such a dense project could jam traffic and stunt other services.

### Developers' request

Other Orange County cities, including Irvine, also are creating dense urban settings with lofts and condos amid shops. But some cities have run into slowdowns, including Placentia, during the sluggish housing market.

Despite lethargic home sales, Anaheim now is pitching the triangle's expansion because developers kept bringing in new proposals that exceed caps and boundaries approved in 2004.

The expansion is expected to fit new proposals, including Archstone Smith's vision to build a hotel, office and retail complex north of the stadium on city-owned land once considered for a National Football League stadium.

"We've basically tried to accommodate everything people were throwing at us," said Sheri Vander Dussen, the city's planning director.

More than 9,000 homes already are in the pipeline, but the number could increase to more than 18,000. Even though some developments have stalled in the slower housing market, including the largest project by Lennar, smaller

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condo and apartment complexes continue to rise up.

Traffic and infrastructure

A city-commissioned document, meant to show the impacts of the development, shows that the village could strain roads and other services. Of 32 issues, the study found that a "significant and unavoidable" impact would be made on 14 areas, including air quality, noise and traffic. Developers would have to build sewers if facilities are lacking.

Some, including the California Department of Transportation and the city of Orange, complained that more cars would cram the freeways and jam the neighboring city's streets without adjustments. Anaheim's plan added intersections in Orange, which hopes to build up its corridors leading into Anaheim's triangle, to the plan and agreed to fund parts of nearby freeway improvements required because of future projects there.

To get cars off the roads, the city is counting on residents, employees and visitors taking advantage of an expanded shuttle service and trains coming into the transportation hub. The city plans to ask new businesses to set up commuting programs, including financial incentives to use public transit, ride sharing and staggered work shifts.

"It can't all be for people driving in on Katella (Avenue)," Mayor Curt Pringle said. "This is an area where all the transportation modes merge and we want to make sure we capitalize on that."

Housing need

Some respondents said the plan fails to address

the need for low-cost housing, parks and schools. No affordable homes are planned in the Platinum Triangle, despite a regionwide shortage.

"We can't continue to just segregate parts of the city and say it's not going to happen in these areas," said Cesar Covarrubias, senior project manager of the Kennedy Commission that advocates for low-cost housing.

Even though the city hopes to lure high-paying jobs to the triangle, lower-paid office clerks and retail employees will be unable to afford to live there, putting more cars on the road, some advocates wrote.

"It's kind of astounding how they have glossed over some issues that are really crucial as far as the quality of life of the whole city," said Eric Altman, Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development executive director.

Council members Lorri Galloway and Lucille Kring said they are concerned about the impact of the concentration of buildings, while Pringle believes the city should explore expansion as much as feasible.

"I just think that's horrendous. I think it's so dense," Kring said. "There comes a point where you have to say, come on, how much is too much?"

Market conditions

So far, just one condo development, Stadium Lofts, has opened, and sales have been slow since move-ins began almost a year ago. Just 166 of 390 condos have sold. But about eight have sold in the last six weeks – a sign that the market may be picking up, said Eric Heffner, a principal at Windstar Communities.

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Even if the city paves the way for more structures, it's unclear if any developers will soon break ground on new condo or office projects, said Louis Tomaselli, a broker with Voit Commercial Brokerage.

"It's just too cloudy," Tomaselli said. "Right now, I don't think it's going to mean anything for builders and buyers. They can build whatever they want, but they have no buyers for the project."

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