

EPA criticizes Dumbarton center

By Phyllis Brown

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EAST PALO ALTO — Lorrin C. "Tig" Tarlton, developer of the Dumbarton Distribution Center, encountered strong criticism Monday night when he presented his plans for the center at a meeting of the Municipal Council.

The Dumbarton Distribution Center is a 52-acre warehouse and light industrial development proposed by the Lewis and Tarlton Company of Los Altos for vacant Menlo Park land bounded on two sides by East Palo Alto.

The property is bounded by University Avenue on the east and the single-family residences of Kavanaugh Drive on the south. It is bounded on the north by the San Francisco Bay and on the west by the Menlo Industrial Park.

The developer has proposed building four warehouses, 14 light manufacturing buildings and a six-and-a-half acre planned unit development office park on the site.

A total of 20 acres would have buildings and 23 would have roadways and parking. Seven acres are allotted for landscaping and two are for the Southern Pacific Railroad spur that runs through the property.

If built today, the project would cost between \$25 and \$30 million to construct, Tarlton said.

Tarlton said the Dumbarton Distribution Center probably would be used for purposes similar to those of the Menlo Industrial Park. The proposed development is a "mirror image," designed almost exactly like the industrial park.

The Menlo Park Planning Commission has held hearings on the matter and is now preparing a final environmental impact report on its merits. The project must meet with the approval of the Planning Com-

mission and the Menlo Park City Council before it can be built.

Neither the East Palo Alto Municipal Council nor the county of San Mateo have any say in the matter.

But, because the project borders East Palo Alto, the Municipal Council asked Tarlton to appear and answer citizens' questions about the project.

Tarlton described the project and explained how landowner Thomas Kavanaugh has been prevented by governmental mix-ups from developing the property before. An attempt to build both industry and housing on the site failed during the 1960s.

Kavanaugh is now suing CalTrans for having inundated the property, making it undevelopable in the past.

"People say, I don't want industry behind my house. But you have to be fair to both parties, to Tom Kavanaugh," Tarlton said.

Tarlton hadn't gotten very far when the barely audible grumbles of the audience of about 30 turned into very audible complaints.

The project's traffic, noise and visual effects would be staggering, they agreed.

Many asked why they should support a development that would enrich Menlo Park's tax coffers while shunting unwanted traffic down East Palo Alto streets.

Others complained about a 12-foot, factory-cast concrete wall proposed to shield Kavanaugh Drive residents from the operation's noise and the project from intruders.

Tarlton explained that the wall proposed would be much like ones around Valco Fashion Park in Cupertino. He said the wall would be inconspicuous. But Menlo Park resident Mamie Ruth Sampson was not

impressed.

"What benefit will people get from living behind an iron curtain?" she asked.

Some residents were angered when Tarlton began discussing how the project would bring East Palo Alto jobs.

"One of the main reasons we wanted to put warehousing and light industry in was to be consistent with the skill levels in East Palo Alto," Tarlton said. He said the project could potentially create 1,200 jobs, at least some of them going to East Palo Alto.

But Municipal Councilman Bradford Stamper asked if East Palo Altans couldn't have management jobs, too.

"Our people don't want \$3 an hour jobs," said Onyango Bashir.

Tarlton said that he could not specify how many jobs could go to East Palo Altans. He said there would be a commitment to work with the community to employ its residents.

East Palo Alto Mayor Barbara Mouton said she was concerned that the increased traffic at the site would produce pollutants that would harm the children who attend Costano Elementary School directly across the street.

She also asked if the noise levels that the project is to produce, at 66 decibels, wouldn't be higher than what she said was an acceptable 50 decibels.

Some East Palo Altans also said that a large part of the site is wetlands habitat and should not be built upon, but kept for open space. They say the wetlands area is larger than the Army Corps of Engineers has said it is.

"There is more than the Kavanaugh family concerned here," Eva Zurker said. "This is a community of 20,000 people."