



Orange County/  
Inland Empire

## CHET HOLIFIELD FEDERAL BUILDING: SITE REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES



© 2023 URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

THIS REPORT IS SPONSORED BY:

The City of Laguna Niguel

ON THE COVER: The Chet Holifield Federal  
Building. *Dan Majewski.*



**Find this report and hundreds of others on Knowledge Finder,**

the leading global resource of trends and best practices in real estate development and financing. Explore an ever-expanding library and find recommended content related to your interests, including reading lists, case studies, videos and webinars, books, and more.

**knowledge.uli.org**

## About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 81 countries. ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Drawing on its members' work, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://uli.org). Follow ULI on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

## About ULI Orange County/Inland Empire

ULI Orange County/Inland Empire is a non-profit real estate and land development organization supported by nearly 1000 public and private sector members. Our mission is to promote leadership in the responsible use of land to create sustainable and thriving communities. We provide our members with independent forums for discussion and debate about city building issues and best practices.

The Urban Land Institute stands at the forefront of the land use and real estate industry, a steadfast leader in the best practices for a changing world. For over eight decades, ULI has been a unique and trusted forum where members come together to share and exchange ideas, information and experiences – to shape tomorrow's horizon and improve the way communities grow.

## ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving.

Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services).

---

ULI Advisory Services identify creative, practical solutions for complex land use and development challenges.

## Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a two-day TAP is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit—including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration—participants in ULI's TAP assignments can make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and provide recommendations in a short time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this TAP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.



## Technical Assistance Panel and Project Staff

### Panel Members

#### Panel Chair

##### **Karen Gulley**

Managing Principal  
PlaceWorks

#### Panel Members

##### **Dan Sheridan**

Partner  
Hoffman Strategies Group

##### **Andrew Watkins**

Principal  
JZMK

##### **Tom Ventura**

Associate  
Gensler

##### **Hess Vakili**

Design & Development Director  
Tait & Associates

##### **Hitta Mosesman**

Vice President  
Harris & Associates

### ULI Project Staff

##### **Kendra Chandler**

Executive Director, ULI Orange County/Inland Empire

##### **Dan Majewski**

Technical Writer & Designer



Panelists and staff, from L to R: Dan Sheridan, Hess Vakili, Tom Ventura, Kendra Chandler, Hitta Mosesman, Karen Gulley, Andrew Watkins

## Acknowledgments

ULI Orange County/Inland Empire would like to thank the City of Laguna Niguel for inviting us to do a TAP on this important topic. We would also like to thank the city for graciously hosting the panel at their beautiful community center. Additionally, these panels would not be possible without the hard work of ULI Member volunteers who serve on them.





Aerial view of the site being studied, along with surrounding area. *Google.*

CONTENTS

Background	9
TAP Study Area	10
Report Themes	12
Overview of Recommendations	15
Design Concepts	18
Financial Feasibility and Community Benefits	28
Notable Design Elements from the Ziggurat Building	29
Mobility Recommendations	30
Affordable Housing	31
Summary of Recommendations and Conclusion	32





The Ritz View, Sand Creek Beach, Laguna Niguel, CA. *Wikimedia Commons.*



# BACKGROUND

As the 29th city to be incorporated in Orange County, the City of Laguna Niguel consists of 9,421 acres, or 14.72 square miles, and is in the southwestern area of Orange County. The City is bounded by the City of Dana Point to the south; the City of San Juan Capistrano to the east; the cities of Aliso Viejo and Laguna Beach to the west; and the cities of Laguna Hills and Mission Viejo to the north. The City provides local governance and public services to 67,000 residents.

In 2019, the City of Laguna Niguel adopted a strategic plan: “Laguna Niguel 2050: The Pursuit of Happiness Strategic Plan” to set goals and priorities for its future. Through the strategic planning process, the City has been able to create a blueprint for the future and develop a plan to accomplish its determined direction. This Plan defines current and future needs and sets goals and strategies to meet those needs over the course of the next 30 years.

A collaborative process was used to create this Plan. A variety of stakeholders were involved throughout the process, including City residents, business owners, Council Members, commissioners, committee members, department heads, and staff. In the Plan survey, the response themes regarding key weaknesses/limitations in the city included:

## **Lack of City Center**

- No true common area
- No gathering/meeting place
- Lack of a city/town center like Irvine Spectrum and Aliso Viejo
- Lack of nightlife and entertainment

## **Lack of Restaurants/Businesses**

- Not enough dining options
- Lack of high-end, seafood, and/or family-style restaurants
- Lack of retail options
- Overall lack of businesses
- Having to travel to other cities for dining and shopping.

## **High-Density Housing**

- Too many apartments
- Too many high-rises

One of the goals included in the plan was a “Federal Building Area Land Use Study”, which would support the implementation of the goals of the city as it related to a key site in the middle of the city. In June of 2023, the City of Laguna Niguel commissioned ULI Orange County/Inland Empire (OC/IE) to complete a technical assistance panel (TAP).

The focus of the panel was the Chet Holifield Federal Building site located at 24000 Avila Road. According to the City’s General Plan, the Chet Holifield Building is “one of Laguna Niguel’s earliest landmarks.” Built in the 1960s, the building includes 980,000 sf of government office (Public Institutional Use) and the entire site covers 85 acres.

Representatives from the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Public Buildings Reform Board (PBRB) have contacted City staff and relayed the federal government’s intent to dispose of the property within a two- to five-year period.

The City of Laguna Niguel has asked ULI to investigate opportunities and challenges for utilizing this property to support the City’s future needs.

## TAP STUDY AREA

Built between 1968 and 1971, the Chet Holifield Federal Building was initially designed to house the aerospace firm North American Rockwell Corporation for its corporate offices and as a manufacturing facility. This then-quiet and undeveloped Orange County parcel was chosen by Rockwell because it wanted an area of land that would be private and secure. The Chet Holifield Federal Building is over 1 million gross square feet.

Located on the opposite side of Avila Road lies a detached chiller plant, water cooling tower and above ground thermal energy storage tank capable of holding 1 million gallons.

The building is situated on two parcels totaling approximately 89 acres of land bordered by Avila Road, Alicia Parkway, and El Lazo Road. The property's size and access offer a unique development opportunity within the highly desired South Orange County community of Laguna Niguel, one of California's first master-planned communities. The predominant land use surrounding the property include a mix of retail stores, small offices, and residential homes. Major employers within one mile of the Property include Costco, Walmart, Home Depot, and Kohl's.

Designed by master architect William L. Pereira, the structure is an example of a Brutalist Style of architecture, which is distinguished by weighty, massive forms; rough, exposed concrete surfaces; broad, expansive wall planes, and recessed windows.

Locally known as the "Ziggurat", the building's form takes on a similar appearance to ziggurats found in ancient Mesopotamia. This 7-story building is constructed of angled, painted, precast pebble-textured concrete panels. Due to its relationship to Pereira and the rarity of its architectural style and type, the property has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), as the "landlord to the federal government", has managed the building since the 1970s. Now GSA is working to sell the property in accordance with applicable law. The building has served its purpose, and it is no longer financially viable as a Federal build-ing. GSA is preparing to sell the building and associated property, offering a unique redevelopment opportunity of the largest remaining land parcel available in the local community.

The site is currently owned by the federal government. The building has been semi-vacant for many years. The building has never been fully occupied. While there have been multiple attempts by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) to sell the building, there have never been any successful bids. This is likely because a requirement to preserve the building was a condition of those previous bids. There have been attempts to declare the building historic, further preventing redevelopment of the site. The hope is that future bids will allow for more flexibility as it relates to removing the primary building on the site.

Adjacent to the Chet Holifield site is a social service facility. The provider has a desire to expand these facilities to include more comprehensive and holistic "wrap-around services". A regional model which could be used as a template for this is the Salvation Army in Tustin. It includes a preschool, adult classes, gymnasium, job training, after-school care, counseling and more.



The Chet Holifield building shortly after its completion. *Orange County Archives*

#### Other notable facts about the site:

- Study Area: 128 acres – 89 (Chet site) + 39 (adjacent commercial sites)
- Parking: 4,777 Spaces
- Hole in the donut - surrounded by a mix of high-performing and moderate retail/commercial spaces.
- Uses and amenities have matured around it.
- Adjacent to regional trail network
- **2018 – 2019:** the GSA commissioned a Feasibility Study and Seismic Analysis to evaluate the existing building and assess its condition relative to the life/safety code and GSA standards, as well as provide an analysis of alternatives for the long-term housing of the CHFB occupants.
- **2020 – 2021:** the GSA prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to dispose of the property. The scope of the EIS was for the relocation of existing agencies, not redevelopment.
- **2021:** the GSA hired Griffin Enright Architects (GEA) to facilitate five virtual workshops to solicit, consider and document community input on the property and potential options for its future use. Six development proposals shared with the public by GEA ranged from repurposing the existing building, reducing the existing building and demolishing the building.

#### Chronological history of the site disposal process:

- **1968 – 1970:** the Aerospace and Systems Group of North American Rockwell Corporation (NAR) developed the property and constructed the building. NAR never occupied the building and attempted to sell it but was unsuccessful due to its limited economic viability.
- **1974:** NAR traded the property to the federal government. However, it was initially designed as a light manufacturing facility and was never designed to function as an office building since much of the lower three floors have limited or no windows.
- **1984:** when various federal agencies occupied only 29% of the building, the GSA attempted to sell the property but was unsuccessful.
- **2016:** the GSA decided to sell the property again due to extensive maintenance costs, and the low use of the building due to its design.
- **Dec. 1, 2022:** the GSA issued an Invitation for Bids (IFB) for the purchase of the CHFB. The online auction started on March 7, 2023, and closed on April 12, 2023. No bids were received.
- **May 16, 2023:** the GSA reopened the Section 106 consultation process. At that time, the GSA introduced the possibility of removing the covenant requiring the building to be preserved.

*SOURCES: City of Laguna Niguel; Community Design Charrette of The Chet Holifield Federal Building - U.S. General Services Administration.*



## REPORT THEMES

The City of Laguna reached out to ULI Orange County due to the expertise contained within the organization. ULI Orange County has completed many other similar reports around the region on other difficult-to-develop sites. Therefore, the City of Laguna Niguel determined that ULI Orange County was the most qualified candidate to investigate this site.

The panel was charged by the City of Laguna Niguel to answer the following questions:

1. What land use/development opportunities should be considered for this uniquely large site that provides public benefit? (Public benefit definition: community-serving facilities, public outdoor gatherings and event spaces, non-project infrastructure improvements, and affordable housing.)
2. If redevelopment of the eastern and southern neighboring properties was possible, how would you include those properties in the design of the Chet site?
3. If residential uses are deemed suitable for a portion of the site, how could a mix of residential densities be incorporated into the design to attract young families/first-time buyers to the site (and City)?
4. What public spaces complement other public spaces within the City, including providing missing public space opportunities?
5. How can Chet redevelop in an economically successful manner and provide economic benefits to the City without negatively impacting the economic vitality of other areas of the City?



Panelists touring the site with the city. *Dan Majewski*



## Report Themes

- Identify the Land Use Opportunities
- Consider the Adjacent Properties Along El Lazo
- Consider Housing for Young Families/First Time Homebuyers
- Balance Development Feasibility & Community Benefits
- Create Place & Meet Larger Community Needs
- Don't Compete with Other Retail Centers

## Insights from the Site Tours

The panel began with a tour of the site. This tour included other redevelopment Opportunity Areas in the City of Laguna Niguel so panelists could better understand the broader land use context.

A notable portion of the tour was the Gateway area. This geographically small district, adjacent to Interstate 5 and within walking distance of the City's Metrolink Station, is currently being built out with a variety of high-density mixed-use buildings. The city noted that this development area has received some pushback related to the density of the development.

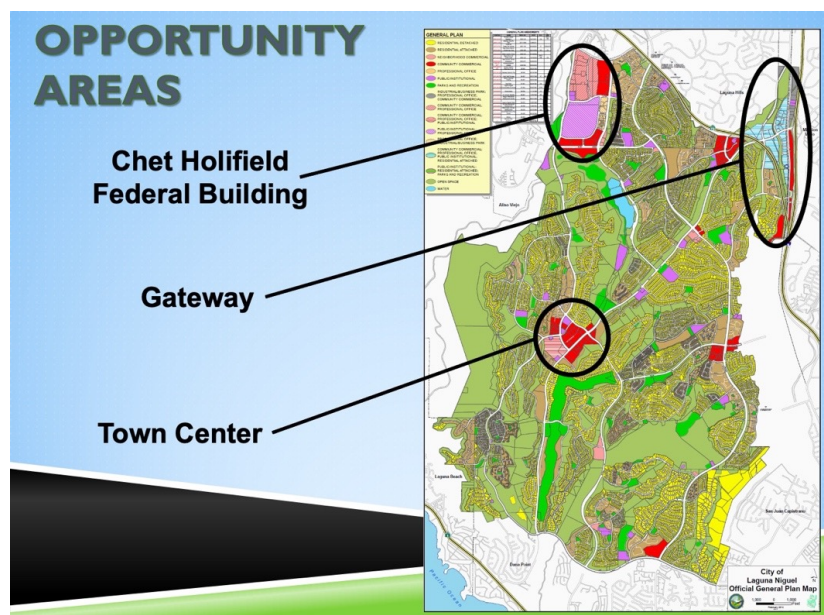
They subsequently noted that the community would prefer lower density development on the Chet Holifield site.

The tour of the Chet Holifield site only included the exterior of the building. The interior is currently only open to employees who are working inside it. The exterior is clearly suffering from neglect, specifically the outer ring of parking lots.

The city acknowledged that El Lazo Road is wider than it needs to be for traffic it carries and expressed an openness towards narrowing it. As it relates to non-motorized mobility, the city expressed a preference for a grade-separated

connection between the trail and park on the west side of Alicia Parkway and the site itself. There was also discussion about how the other roads surrounding the broader site area, Aliso Creek Road & La Paz Road, serve as barriers to connectivity between the site and the community.

During the tour, there was a discussion regarding the large amount of retail per capita which already exists in the City of Laguna Niguel. At the same time it was also noted that most commercial centers in the city are performing well. One notable exception is the commercial center located just north of the site.



Opportunity areas in the City of Laguna Niguel. *City of Laguna Niguel*

### Insights from Stakeholder Interviews

As a part of this process, the panel interviewed a variety of different stakeholders. This included a developer & a property manager who are both familiar with this sub-market.

In their interview, they noted that Laguna Niguel is a mature retail market. There are multiple commercial centers adjacent to the study area with a complete array of neighborhood and community-serving uses. The well-located centers are thriving and charge premium rents. They see this area as sufficiently served and that there is little demand for additional retail.

They noted that any future residential or office development on the site needs bicycle and pedestrian improvement to provide connectivity to the surrounding commercial & recreational amenities.

In terms of the types of housing that should be considered for the Chet Holifield site, the interviewees noted a need in the rental market for larger 2-bedroom units and 3-bedroom units for families. They also envision lower densities on the Chet site than in the Gateway area, which was consistent with comments from City staff. on the Chet Holifield site. As it relates to affordability, they noted that they can build more moderate-income units vs. low or very low-income units because of the difference in subsidy per unit.

As it relates to development or impact fees, one-time fees are better than on-going fees. This allows for a more predictable pro forma and therefore a more seamless development & financing process.



Panelists begin the process of sketching out ideas. *Dan Majewski*

# OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Once the panel had collected all available information about the site, they began creating potential development scenarios. This included an investigation of the local and regional market, as well as basic pro formas and fiscal analyses of various development scenarios.

Based on the collected information, the panel developed three different alternative concepts. The market concepts were all based on a slightly different use mix. The concepts play off each other in a way that would allow a future master developer to plug-n-play by pulling elements from each of the concepts.

## Market Context

The market context of the Chet Holifield site includes the following aspects:

- **Low Projected Population Growth Rate** – this city is almost fully built out.
- **Affluent & Mature Retail Market** – as previously noted, there is already a significant amount of retail located in this area. The population of Laguna Niguel is affluent and higher on the age spectrum which helps explain the amount of existing retail.
- **Not an Office Market** – very little office is in this area, and it is not anticipated to become a significant office market because of its location. There is also limited market demand for office now.
- **Specialty Retail/Food & Beverage, Based on a Master Plan** – limited specialty food and retail designed in a unique environment could be supported on site. It would need to be something that doesn't compete with other thriving commercial centers.

## Preliminary Land Value Rankings, Per Acre

Panelists used comps from the surrounding region to identify what land values on the Chet Holifield site might be. It is important to note that these are estimates and the actual value will depend on public infrastructure investment, the market conditions at the time of sale and many other factors. Below are the estimates:

- **Residential**
  - For Sale: \$4M - \$6.5M
  - For Rent: \$4.5M - \$5.5M
- **Tech / Life Sci / Healthcare**
  - \$6M - \$7M
- **Retail**
  - \$750K - \$1.75M

## Value of Rooftops

Residential development could create additional positive spillover benefits to existing retail uses in the city. Below are some estimates to quantify that potential impact:

- Trade Area Total Retail Spending (2022):
  - \$3.8 billion
- Average Retail Spend per Trade Area Household:
  - \$38,000
- Chet Holifield Site Potential for New Retail Spending (with 2k-4k units):
  - \$70 million - \$150 million



Another benefit to the city would be an increase in property tax revenue. The City has never received any tax revenue from this site. Based on comps from the surrounding area, the 1% property tax rate in the city, as well as the various development scenarios outlined in this report, this revenue potential is estimated to start at around \$500,000 annually. That number would increase as the project grew.

### Examples of Housing Typologies

As noted previously, this site is envisioned as having lower densities than the Gateway area. There is a unique opportunity in this location to add housing types that are in demand but do not currently exist. The term “missing middle” is often used to refer to these housing types, which fall between single family and high-density homes.

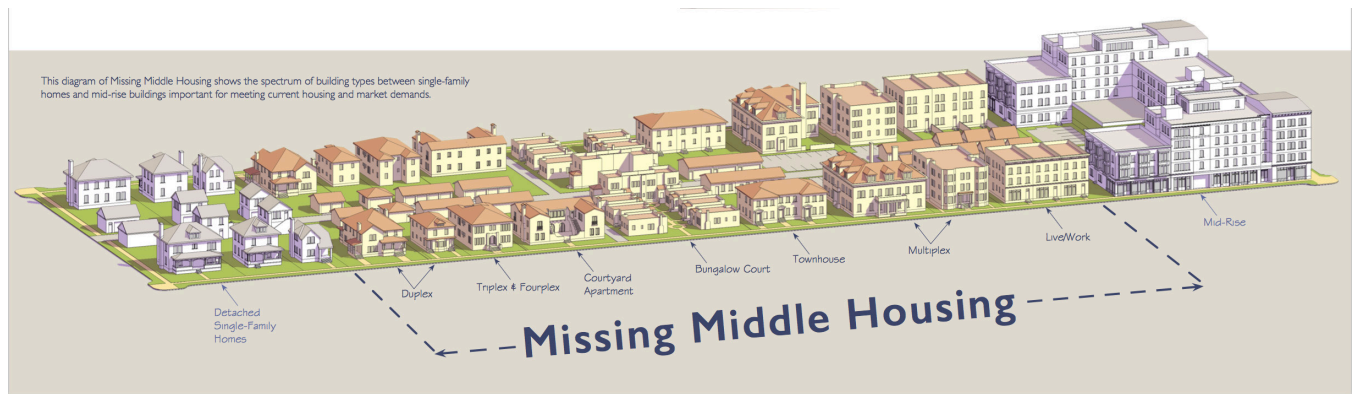


Diagram of Missing Middle Housing Types. *Opticos Design, Inc.*

The following are examples of housing types which could be encouraged on the Chet Holifield site:



Urban townhouse: single unit, or multi-unit. *Mueller Austin Homes.*





Multi-unit urban townhouses. 8901 ORANGETHORPE AVE, BUENA PARK, CA 90621

Multi-unit urban townhouses. WILLIAM HEZMALHALCH ARCHITECTS; Ivy; Chino, CA



Medium density multi-family residential. *The Westerly*, Irvine, California.

# DESIGN CONCEPTS

## Design Concepts

All the following concepts included a variety of community benefits. Financing and implementation of these benefits would entail both private and public efforts.

All the concepts contain housing as their primary use. Housing was determined to be the “highest and best use” for the property and would drive additional demand for community-serving uses, including food and retail. Housing would also help the city meet its future state-mandated housing requirements.

The panel created three different design concepts. They all consider:

- The market context (supply & demand for various use types).
- Community benefits requested and other criteria provided by City of Laguna Niguel.
- Stakeholder feedback.
- An assumption that the buildings on the site can be removed.
- Previous site planning efforts.

## Sports Village

**Overview:** The Sport Village is a residential and active sports park community. It includes connections with the regional trail system to the west and south of the study area via roadway underpasses.

The underpass trail connection to the west would integrate an existing, isolated park area with the new park facilities. The new park facilities shown include 8 multi-use sports fields, which could be used to attract regional sporting events. It also includes a signature performing arts center, which does not exist elsewhere in the City and is desired by the community. The bulk of the site is a series of smaller residential neighborhoods with a range of housing types, from small lot single family to walk-up town homes, to podium buildings. A dining node is incorporated at the corner of Alicia Parkway and Aliso Creek Road. The concept also expands upon the Vineyard Church facilities.

**Concept Details and Examples:** The sports fields are purposely clustered to attract regional competitions. This concept shows fields that could be used for soccer, though they could be designed to be converted into fields for other sports.

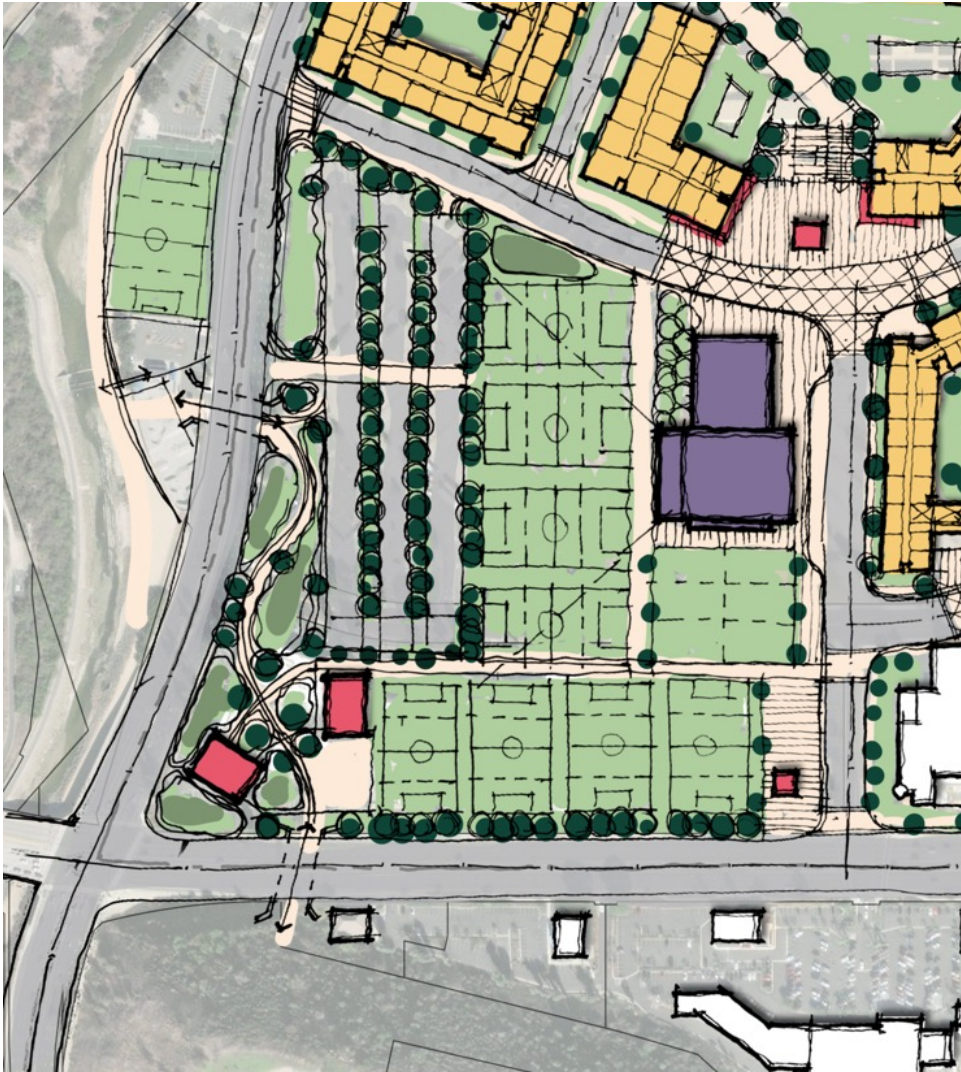
The performing arts center is shown adjacent to the sport fields. This would allow the center to potentially share parking with the sports complex, since they would likely have different hours of operation. The sports fields could also be converted to an outdoor amphitheater attached to the performing arts center. In terms of the size & scale of the center, the Northstar Performing Art Center in Truckee, CA is a possible equivalent example.





Rendering of the Sports Village development concept.





Rendering of the Sports Village, Concept Detail – Performing Arts & Fields



Northstar Performing Art Center - Truckee. Williams + Paddon.



### Concept Detail: Vineyard Church Outreach

This concept also includes an expanded master plan concept for a social service provider, Vineyard Church.

The vacation of the El Lazo right-of-way is proposed to better integrate the new services with the existing site.

This concept includes a multi-use gymnasium, which could be shared by Vineyard and other community users.

The Orange County Rescue Mission is an example of some of the other on-site facilities or programming that could be included.

Rendering of the Sports Village, Concept Detail – Vineyard Church Outreach



Gymnasium example. *Valentine Health & Recreation Center, SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY*



## Campus Village

**Overview:** Although the site is not a great location for a more traditional office environment, it could be a desirable location for a corporate headquarters or facility that then attracts supporting industries. The Campus Village concept incorporates this idea and is designed around an anchor tenant (e.g., life sciences, biotech, education, healthcare, etc.) supported by similar industries all oriented towards a central green. The concept also includes a “Main Steet” small-scale food and beverage-based retail. The three neighborhoods in this concept are all anchored by their own park. Like the Sports Village concept, a “Wellness District” would be located adjacent to the Vineyard campus.





**Concept Details and Examples:** A key element in this concept is the Main Street, which runs perpendicular to Aliso Creek Road. This linear mixed-use feature would connect the central green space to the existing Aliso Village Shopping Center, activating both. It would also create a walkable “downtown” environment that does not currently exist in the city. A small amount of mostly food and beverage focused retail could be added here to activate the corridor. Residential or small office above the commercial may be feasible on a limited scale.



Rendering of the Campus Village, Concept Detail – Main Street

Illustrative  
example of the  
Main Street





At the top of the center green is a performing arts center. Similar to the Sports Village concept, the performing arts center could extend performances or activities onto the central green. This type of use would also help activate the large park space after working hours. A bridge across Alicia Parkway would connect this site to the regional trail network.

Additional programming and placemaking will be required to activate the central green to make it a regular attraction to residents. Examples of uses that could work include destination retail – food & beverage; roller rink in the summer, ice skating in the winter; shade for a regular farmer's market or food trucks; and/or an Inclusive Play Area.



Rendering of the Campus Village, Concept Detail – Premium Performing Arts & Central Green

Illustrative example of the scale of the premium performing arts center





## Entertainment Village





**Overview:** The Entertainment Village design concept is centered around a ~250 seat outdoor amphitheater branded as “Live at the Zigg”. The amphitheater is also connected to a series of sports fields and courts that would be designed and amenitized to be a regional sports complex. Residential neighborhoods flank the sports uses with a mix of townhomes, multi-story wrap-buildings or podium housing products. A senior/assisted living project is also included in the concept design.

**Concept Details and Examples:** “Live at the Zigg” is envisioned as a signature outdoor entertainment venue. The design takes advantage of the change in elevation on the site, using the higher-grades found on the north end of the site to buffer the sounds from the stage. The stage is also facing existing open space and commercial centers, minimizing exposure to residential areas. The name of the venue is an homage to the ziggurat building, elements of which are preserved in this proposal. This concept also includes a location for a city yard for vehicle storage – which was a request by the City. The location of this city yard is proposed to replace the current the cooling plant for the ziggurat building, on the northeast corner of Avila Road and Alicia Parkway.



Rendering of the Entertainment Village,  
Concept Detail – The Zigg



Outdoor amphitheater example. *The Arvada Center.*



As noted previously, the study area included commercial properties around the edge of the Chet Holifield site. Each of the design concepts addressed the potential of these areas a little differently. For the Entertainment Village concept, the commercial site on the northwest corner of La Paz Road and Aliso Creek Road, which is currently performing well, would mostly remain in its current form. However, an entertainment option in the form of adult miniature golf was added to activate the site and extend the recreational and entertainment options. An example is “PopStroke by Tiger Woods”, a new miniature golf concept that is gaining popularity.

Rendering of the Entertainment Village, Concept Detail –  
Adult Mini Golf



Example of Adult Mini Golf - PopStroke by Tiger Woods

## Design Concepts Summary

Each of these concepts sought to respond to near-term market opportunities, provide positive fiscal benefits to the city, and be an inspiration for future planning efforts. There is an opportunity to “mix and match” various elements from each of the plans.

## FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Each of the different design concepts contain various tradeoffs. In terms of community benefit, the proposals contain a wide spectrum of different types of amenities at different cost points. While all the concepts contain housing as a primary use, there is some variation between the numbers and types of units. Below is a summary of each of the sites, the various types of uses and their potential costs.

	Sports Village	Campus Village	Entertainment Village
<b>Multi-Family Housing Units (Market Rate)</b>	1,986	2,765	3,100
<b>Multi-Family Housing Units (Affordable)</b>	0	120	0
<b>Townhome Units</b>	30	110	220
<b>Single Family Housing Units</b>	30	0	0
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	2,046	2,995	3,320
<b>Residential Density</b>	5-80 units/acre	60-80 units/acre	60-65 units/acre
<b>Retail Square Footage</b>	25,000	75,000	180,000
<b>Campus Square Footage</b>	N/A	1.6 M sf	N/A
<b>Performing Arts Center or Amphitheater</b>	500 seat (indoor/outdoor)	500 seats @ \$40 M	500 seats
	\$25 M	\$40 M	\$6 M
<b>Park Facilities</b>	8 Soccer fields (can be used for outdoor events with Arts Center)	8 acres activated urban park	4 multi-use fields
		2.5 acres community parks (3)	
		3 acres greenways	
	\$15,669,200	\$9,475,400	\$7,200,000
<b>Total Development Costs (Amenities)</b>	\$40,669,200	\$49,475,400	\$13.2 M
<b>Funding Source (Amenities)</b>	CFD for all OR CFD for parks/fields and private donations for Performing Arts Center/Amphitheater		
<b>Developer-Provided Community Benefit (Minimum and Maximum)</b>	2-5 acres for Permanent Supportive Housing (2 acres) + Vineyard facilities (3 acres)		



## NOTABLE DESIGN ELEMENTS FROM THE ZIGGURAT BUILDING

While there was general agreement that the ziggurat building would be challenging to repurpose, there are some notable design elements that could be incorporated into whatever replaces it on this site.

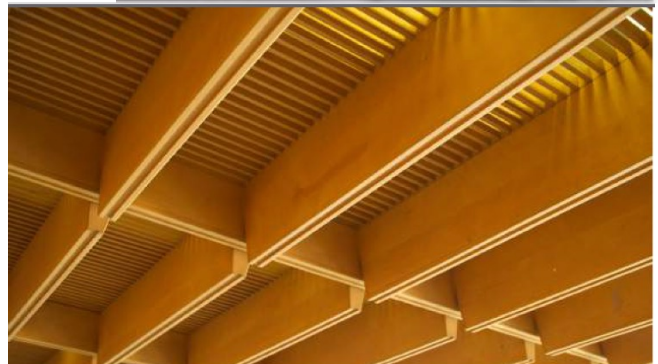
- **Potential Reuse of Lobby Ceiling** – this unique ceiling finish could be preserved and reused, perhaps in one of the new restaurants.
- **Historical Documentation On-Site** – interpretive signage with images and text descriptions of the ziggurat building could be strategically located throughout the site.
- **Box and Save Quality Trees** – mature, healthy trees on site could be boxed and relocated at key entrances to neighborhoods or used within open space areas.
- **Potential Branding of Site with Ziggurat Form** – the distinctive style and design of the building could be incorporated into the branding of the new development. Perhaps the “Ziggurat District” could be used in future naming of development.
- **Recognize the Guard Buildings** – the guard buildings have been described as key features on the site. Elements of their form, especially roofline, could be replicated elsewhere in recreation buildings, signage, or even commercial buildings.



Guard structures and interior images. *Community Design Charrette of the Chet Holifield Federal Building.*



Perspective of lobby



Original wood wall paneling and a decorative wood ceiling finish

# MOBILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a variety of mobility recommendations which could contribute to greater success of redevelopment on this site.

## El Lazo Street Design

- **Reduce lane widths and repurpose curb-to-curb** – the city and the panel agreed that El Lazo is wider than necessary for the volume of vehicle traffic it sees. If this road is to remain as part of the future development, consider redesigning the right-of-way with a variety of techniques:
  - **Provide on-street parking** – could be parallel or “Main Street” style angled parking.
  - **Add bike lanes where feasible** – this increases mobility options and visually narrows the street.
  - **Bump-outs for street trees to improve shade canopy** – trees provide a variety of benefits, including shade to increase the comfort of walking and visual narrowing of the street to help reduce speeds.
- The above recommendations could apply to any of the streets surrounding the site or new street built as a part of the redevelopment process.

A regional example which includes many of these elements is Yale Ave. in Claremont, CA. It is the same width as El Lazo:



## Trail and Recreational Opportunities

- **Off-street trails through recreation areas and paseos** – all of the design concepts included a network of parks and low traffic/car-free streets. This could be an effective technique for reducing automobile use in the development on the site.
- **Connect open spaces** - connecting the site to the existing Aliso Creek Trail, via an over or undercrossing on Alicia Parkway, is an important opportunity that was highlighted in all the design concepts. It should be prioritized in any site development agreement, as it would also connect the site to the nearby skate park.



# AFFORDABLE HOUSING

## RHNA Implications and Permanent Supportive Housing

The City of Laguna Niguel's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for Extremely Low-Income Housing Units, as required by the State of California, is 174 units. In addition to helping the city meet its RHNA for extremely low-income households, a permanent supportive housing project adjacent to Vineyard Church could be envisioned. Vineyard has a success rate/track record with assisting individuals and families with interim housing solutions, and with fund raising. They also have experience providing services to unhoused individuals and families, as well as the potential to provide additional services with a recreation facility).

## Developer Provided Community Benefit: Challenges & Opportunities

Community desired density limitations on the Chet Holifield site (compared to The Gateway area) limit financial feasibility for lower income units. The inclusion of affordable units in a market rate development is subsidized by the market rate units. This means that fewer market rate units will result in fewer affordable units that can be included within the site.

If the site developer donated 2-5 acres for a permanent supportive housing site (2 acres) and to the Vineyard (3 acres) for other supportive services, this could be a way for the city to meet RHNA requirements and also provide community benefit. The city can also apply development and other fees to public benefits included in the various design proposals, such as an amphitheater, a performing arts

center and/or parks and other recreation facilities. This could also be a way for the city to offset developer cost for land donation towards for permanent supportive housing site and to the Vineyard.



Oakcrest Terrace, Yorba Linda. *National Core.*

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The Technical Advisory Panel ended its two-day effort by identifying the following strategies for next steps:

- **Require Comprehensive Planning of Site with a Specific Plan** - the city will receive the greatest community benefit if site development is guided by a comprehensive master plan.
- **Provide Flexibility to Adapt to the Market** – while a specific plan is recommended, it is advised that this plan allow for adaptability to respond to market changes. This will increase the likeliness of timely development. An example of this could be a wide range of densities, unit types, and other permitted uses.
- **Minimum of 2,000 Housing Units** – the pro forma prepared during the TAP indicated that for development on this site to be financially viable, a minimum of 2,000 housing units is recommended. This number is also a factor affecting potential site activation and viability of on-site retail.
- **Estimated Capacity of 4,000 Units** – the site has the capacity for 4,000 units, based on the density recommendations provided by the City. The actual number of units which can be built on the site will depend on site design; housing types; and percentage of the site dedicated to community benefit elements, such as park and entertainment space.
- **60-80 Dwelling Units per Acre** – this is an average estimated density range
- **Provide Land for Other Benefits** – due to the size of the site, there is ample room to both build a large quantity of housing as well as provide community benefits. These benefits could also ultimately increase the value of site and the entire City.
- **Don't Over Retail; Allow Spillover Effects** - due to the large quantity of existing commercial space, very little additional retail is recommended for this site. However, the proximity of existing successful retail to the site creates value for the site itself. Any retail on the site should be primarily food and beverage or small site-serving uses.
- **Provide Certainty and Reduce Risk through a General Plan Process** – use the new General Plan Update process to set the stage for development by identifying maximum densities and intensities of development and outlining the vision for the site. This will increase predictability both for the city and future developer.
- **Manage Community Expectations** – the community clearly desires public benefits (public-serving uses) on this site over any other use. The city needs to clearly communicate that these benefits can only be achieved with private development of the site. Even then, other sources of funding will likely be required for “big ticket” items such as the performing arts center. There are great examples of how this can be accomplished.
- **Community Benefits Need to be Communicated Upfront and Negotiated** – the city will have the best chance of getting the development desired if they provide predictability. This means that community benefits need to be identified and negotiated with the developer upfront. Given the size of the site, it is possible to find creative solutions involving different financing partners and sharing of amenities, but it will take time.



- **Market to Preferred Developers and Assist with the GSA Process** – the city is already building a strong relationship with local developers through the Gateway development. The city should also work with local stakeholders to determine if there are other partners with the right experience, and then market directly to them. The city should also take a more active role with the GSA to guide the disposal of the site in a timely fashion.
- **Recommend Elements to Include in the Development Agreement:**
  - **Community Facility District financing of improvements (CFD)**
  - **Land Donation for Affordable Housing (2-acre site)**
  - **Phasing**
  - **Other Community Benefits, as Articulated by the City**

Redevelopment of the Chet Holifield site is an incredible opportunity for the City of Laguna Niguel and the entire region. It has the potential to house many people and serve as a community hub. Articulating a clear yet realistic vision from the beginning is the key to successful development of the site.



Illustrative example of the future Chet Holifield site.



# Orange County/ Inland Empire

---

ULI Orange County/Inland Empire  
2030 Main Street  
Suite 1200  
Irvine, CA 92614

[kendra.chandler@uli.org](mailto:kendra.chandler@uli.org)

[orangecounty.uli.org](http://orangecounty.uli.org)



[knowledge.uli.org](http://knowledge.uli.org)