

Fremont Argus

Cargill plans to sell 54 acres of Newark land

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NEWARK

Farming, the waterways and the railroad put Newark on the map.

But the city was built on salt.

Today, Newark's first industry is concentrated in the hands of Cargill Inc., which is planning to sell a plot of its land near the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge — the first urban national wildlife refuge established in the United States.

If all goes according to plan, Cargill will split the land into two parcels — 10 acres zoned for light industry near the Newark Slough would be sold to a developer, and 44 acres would become a permanent wildlife habitat.

The transition could take years.

Meanwhile, the public, environmentalists, the Planning Commission and the City Council will have a chance to weigh in before anything is final.

The land west of Hickory Street and south of Thornton Avenue hasn't been used for salt making for about 50 years, and is not part of the 3,000 acres of salt-producing Fremont and Newark land currently in use by Cargill.

The company has no plans to develop that area or cut back the Newark-based production, which employs about 200 workers, spokeswoman Jill Singleton said.

"We will continue making salt in Newark," she said.

The move to divide the parcel was prompted by the potential sale of about 44 acres to a private habitat-restoration company, Wildlands Inc., Cargill property manager Pat Mapelli said.

Step 1 was getting permission last week from the City Council to split the parcels up.

The approval, however, came with strings attached: an update of the city's 1999-vintage specific plan for what is called Area 2, in which the 10-acre parcel lies.

The outdated blueprint still shows plans for an Ohlone College satellite campus that ultimately was built on Cherry Street instead of near the Cargill land. It doesn't show other changes such as the planned Dumbarton Rail Corridor project that would put a station in Newark.

A specific proposal for the land won't be reviewed until after the update, Community Development Director Terrence Grindall said. Instead of piecemeal planning, officials wanted to take a comprehensive look at future development in Newark, he added.

But the city wants businesses located in Area 2 such as Cargill to pay for the update, Grindall said. The revised plan could be completed within nine months once that happens, he said.

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