



Memorandum

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS

FROM: WINSTON RHODES, AICP, PLANNING MANAGER

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF DRAFT SPECIFIC PLAN STAKEHOLDER AND STAFF INPUT AND FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, CIRCULATION, COMMUNITY SERVICES, LAND USE, AND PARKING

DATE: April 27, 2009

BACKGROUND

Since the March 23, 2009 Planning Commission discussion of the Draft Specific Plan additional public meetings were held and additional feedback has been provided. This memo summarizes this feedback in order for the Steering Committee to have the benefit of this information as deliberation continues on the Draft Plan. The purpose of this memo is to identify issues where further Steering Committee direction is desired based on the recent input received. Some of the input provided has relevance to the General Plan Update or Zoning Ordinance Update under preparation as well as the draft Specific Plan.

Three co-sponsored City/Chamber of Commerce meetings were held to obtain input from the business community on April 2, April 9, and April 16, 2009. Each meeting focused on a specific corridor. San Pablo Avenue was discussed on April 2, Appian Way on April 9, and Pinole Valley Road on April 16. A summary of the feedback received at each meeting is attached (See Attachment B). The attendees discussed issues of concern relative to each of the corridors as well as the draft Specific Plan.

The Economic Development and Housing Advisory Committee (EDHAC) met on April 20, 2009. A copy of the draft minutes including discussion of the draft Specific Plan is attached (see Attachment C starting on Page 3). EDHAC members focused on the consistency between the draft Plan and EDHAC's adopted work plan that was previously provided to the Planning Commission. Areas of input included the economic development, circulation, and land use as it relates to housing.

The Public Works Department has had the opportunity to review Chapter 5 and Chapter 9 of the Draft Plan in more detail. A memo is attached (see Attachment D) from our Public Works Director Dean Allison and Associate Engineer, Yanni Demitri providing feedback on the draft Plan primarily focusing on circulation issues.

The Transportation and Pedestrian Safety Committee (TAPS) discussed the Specific Plan on April 15, 2009. A summary of the feedback provided will be provided at the Steering Committee meeting. TAPS focused on circulation issues. Unfortunately, there was some confusion with the material provided to TAPS in advance of the meeting. While the intent was to forward pertinent sections of the Draft Specific Plan (e.g. Chapter 5), TAPS received Traffic and Circulation information from both the Draft Specific Plan and Chapter 5 of the Draft General Plan Update background information that is currently on the project web site. Enclosed is feedback from TAPS member Faith Dunham-Sims based on a review of the traffic and circulation background information and Chapter 5 material she refers to in her correspondence (see Attachment E). Further input from TAPS will be provided as it becomes available.

DISCUSSION

Economic Development Strategy

EDHAC members agreed with the direction of the economic development strategy in concept and thought the Draft Plan took EDHAC's approved work plan into account. They recognized more work is needed to implement the policy direction in the Draft Plan.

Prioritization

The EDHAC members thought that no corridor or opportunity site should have priority over each other or any other areas within the City from an economic development standpoint. Does the Steering Committee concur with EDHAC or see this issue differently? Direction from the Steering Committee on this issue desired.

Old Town Treatment

The Old Town area is frequently identified as a valuable community asset and cherished for its charm and scale. The Old Town area is included in portions of the Pinole Valley Road corridor and San Pablo Avenue corridor. Does the Steering Committee see a need from an Economic Development Strategy standpoint or document clarity standpoint to include the Old Town entirely in one corridor (e.g. San Pablo Avenue) or is the current treatment acceptable? Is this confusing from an economic development strategy standpoint or document clarity standpoint? Steering Committee direction on this point is desired. In addition, are further economic development incentives needed to encourage future development in the Old Town in exchange for desired private realm amenities? Steering Committee direction on this issue would be helpful.

Circulation

Reduction in Auto Lanes and Bicycle Lanes

The draft Specific Plan proposes decreasing the number of through lanes along two roadway segments: 1) Appian Way from Marlesta Road to San Pablo Avenue and 2) San Pablo Avenue from Alvarez Avenue to the shared city limits with Hercules.

The rationale for the planned lane reduction for Appian Way is to encourage bicycle and pedestrian modes of travel by allowing for a widened sidewalk (west side) and multi-use path (east side) within the currently improved portion of the existing public right-of-way (ROW). This change would prioritize non-motorized travel modes in this area to help serve existing residential areas west and east of Appian Way and support existing neighborhood serving businesses and planned mixed use areas along San Pablo Avenue in an effort to create an activity node the intersection of San Pablo Avenue, Pinon Avenue, and Appian Way. Feedback received notes that this change would significantly reduce auto travel capacity and that it is a route that carries significant truck traffic. This roadway segment also includes approximately ten residential properties (most of which are on the west side) that face the roadway. Typically single-family residences do not have direct access to a busy arterial roadway because of the adverse effect on roadway performance. Along this roadway segment the public ROW is significantly wider than the current roadway improvements. We also have received feedback on the need to consider a continuous network of bikeways so bicyclists do not follow a Class I path or a striped Class II lane that suddenly ends. An important consideration is what the Steering Committee envisions as far as encouraging bicycle travel in the future to achieve the sustainability objectives in the draft Specific Plan and General Plan Update.

Direction is requested on whether the Steering Committee wants to continue to show a reduction in the number of auto lanes along this portion of the Appian Way roadway segment with planned bike and pedestrian improvements, show two lanes in each direction and investigate whether additional bicycle and pedestrian improvements are possible, or eliminate this proposed change to current conditions from the Draft Plan and potentially study it as an alternative during environmental review.

Extensive feedback has been received about the lane reduction on San Pablo Avenue from Alvarez Avenue to the eastern city limits. Key concerns that have been raised is the effect on emergency services, delivery trucks, dual usage by auto and bus modes at stops, impacts to Hercules and the regional transportation impact if Interstate 80 is not available and an alternate emergency route is needed. The rationale for considering this change along this segment is to eliminate this as a cut through route and enhance the experience and activity in the Old Town by making the area more inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists. The elimination of one lane of traffic would enable the City to consider a wide range of streetscape amenities found in many downtown areas such as landscape enhancements, outdoor dining, attractive outdoor plaza areas, a variety of three dimensional public art, bus rider amenities, and decorative street furniture. A consideration is whether raised center medians are desirable. The draft plan (see Figure 5.2 and 5.3) currently conceptually shows raised center medians continuously between intersections. Utilizing striped medians or raised medians with more breaks for left turn movements helps to address some of the concerns associated with reducing lanes along this portion of San Pablo Way. Additionally, the consequence of not reducing the number of lanes is that insufficient existing public right-of-way is currently available for most of the contemplated bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Feedback in support and in opposition has also been raised about whether to have striped bike lanes on San Pablo Avenue within the Old Town Area as described in the Draft Plan. Concerns have included safety issues associated with interactions between busses on the existing WESTCAT routes, cars attempting to park, and autos utilizing a single lane of traffic. Eliminating striped Class II bike lanes would help address some of these concerns and could allow for wider sidewalks and other streetscape enhancements. However, this would discourage bicycle use as a viable means of travel to the Old Town area and along San Pablo Avenue for most bicycle riders. Feedback has been supportive of bicycle

access and connectivity within and outside the Specific Plan area to ensure this is a more viable future transportation mode throughout the City.

No final action is necessary on these topics at this time. However, staff would like direction on what changes might be desired and what should be studied further and contemplated in order to assist with the preparation of the implementation portion of the Draft Plan and with environmental review.

Community Services

Feedback has been provided about community services with respect to needing additional park and recreation amenities for future population growth, the desire for more cultural opportunities in the Old Town, Library improvements, the quality and condition of public schools, and availability of child care. Further direction from Steering Committee is desired on this topic to help ensure that an important community service issue not overlooked as the implementation portion of the Draft Plan is prepared.

Land Use

Land Use Districts and Allowable Uses In Each Corridor

Staff is requesting that the Steering Committee again closely review the land use district descriptions in Chapter 6 on pages 6.0-3 to 6.0-06 as well as the land use matrix tables (Tables 6.2, 6.9, 6.15) for each of the three corridors. This land use information will be used to prepare projections that are important to analyze anticipated projects impacts. Direction is requested on the range of land use categories, the level of detail within the descriptions, how to treat the uses identified (i.e. as permitted, conditionally permitted, or not allowed), and any additional uses that need to be added to the matrix tables given that these portions of the document will be utilized frequently.

Parking

Feedback received included concerns about the location of parking in the Old Town and periodically evaluating the available supply. EDHAC members thought future consideration of a parking structure is prudent but that more cost effective approaches to manage the available parking supply should be considered first if parking becomes a problem in the Old Town.

As requested, staff prepared a table illustrating parking required at five different types of recently developed projects (see Attachment G). The table provides a comparison between existing parking requirements for various land use types and the parking requirements included in the Draft Plan. One major development incentive that the City could provide is relaxing parking requirements or providing flexibility based on site specific conditions or project characteristics. For residential or mixed use developments including residential use some factors to consider include number of bedrooms, whether units are age-restricted for seniors, whether units are planned as affordable housing units, proximity to bus stops, and arrangements to share private parking areas through reciprocal parking agreements. For non-residential uses some factors to consider include proximity to bus stops, hours of operation of planned commercial uses to assess daily parking space turnover, reciprocal parking arrangements, and the ability to provide or share parking nearby.

RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends that the Commission, acting as the Steering Committee, review the report and attached information and provide further direction to staff and the PMC Specific Plan consultant team on desired changes or issues that need to be addressed further prior to conducting environmental review. May 11, 2009 is the next scheduled meeting when review of the Zoning Ordinance Update will begin. Review of the General Plan update information is also anticipated to begin in late May. Staff anticipates that additional Specific Plan information concerning implementation information (Chapter 10) will be available in June.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. January 22, 2009 Draft Specific Plan for San Pablo Avenue, Pinole Valley Road, and Appian Way (previously provided)
- B. City/Chamber of Commerce Meeting Feedback for April 2, 9, and 16, 2009
- C. EDHAC Draft Action Minutes of April 14, 2009
- D. April 23, 2009 Memorandum from Public Works Director/City Engineer Dean Allison
- E. April 20, 2009 Faith Dunham-Sims Comments with reference material
- F. April 13, 2009 Jimmy Chan Letter
- G. Recent Pinole Project Parking Information April 27, 2009
- H. April 10, 2009 Letter from Hercules City Manager Nelson Oliva
- I. TAPS Feedback Summary from April 15, 2009 (to be provided at meeting)
- J. Community Services Commission April 22, 2009 Draft Minutes (to be provided at meeting)