



**Centre City
Development
Corporation**

DATE: April 21, 2005

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of April 28, 2005

STAFF CONTACT: Alexandra Elias, Senior Planner
Garry Papers, Manager – Architecture & Planning

SUBJECT: Downtown Community Plan Update Workshop

REFERENCE: Attachment 1: Preliminary Draft Community Plan
Attachment 2: Downtown Community Plan Update Summary

SUMMARY

Staff Recommendation – Receive a presentation on the process and status of downtown's Community Plan Update and provide input. No action is required.

Other Recommendations - None

Fiscal Impact - None

BACKGROUND

The effort to update the Community Plan advances the Visions and Goals of the Centre City Community Plan and the Objectives of the Centre City Redevelopment Project by:

- Increasing the capacity and range of downtown housing opportunities;
- Retaining and expanding employment uses downtown; and
- Pursuing policies consistent with the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan of the City of San Diego.

Scope and Purpose of the Community Plan Update

According to state law, each city and county in California must prepare for its future by developing a general plan to indicate where and what type of development should occur, and to establish general policies for population density/building intensity, transportation, parks, and other public facilities. The Centre City Community Plan, which was last comprehensively updated in 1992, is the downtown component of the Progress Guide and General Plan for the City of San Diego. The City's Strategic

Framework Element of its General Plan recognizes downtown San Diego as the regional center, calling for more residential development and growing its role as the business, government, and cultural hub.

Because downtown San Diego is both a Community Planning Area as well as a Redevelopment Project Area, development downtown is subject both to Community Plan and Redevelopment State law. Updating downtown's Community Plan also results in amending the Redevelopment Plan(s) for consistency. As a result, the proposed Community Plan will be considered together with:

- An Amendment to the Redevelopment Plan for the Centre City Project Area
- A revised Centre City Planned District Ordinance (or "PDO" - downtown's zoning)
- A draft Environmental Impact Report

In 2002, CCDC began work with Dyett & Bhatia, a San Francisco planning consulting firm, to complete the update. Project Design Consultants was selected to complete the EIR. Work has been ongoing since that time.

Work Program and Public Participation

In brief summary, the work program encompassed the following tasks:

- Taking stock of downtown's resources and potential;
- Drafting planning principles;
- Completing working papers and studies on a number of topics from "trenching" the rail lines, to assessing the potential for growth of arts & culture downtown and the feasibility of creating land for open space or development over Interstate-5 by building a "lid";
- Completion of a series of three-dimensional models of downtown to determine the effects of shadows on sunlight access to parks, massing and placement of high-rise towers, and a graphic representation of a buildout scenario; and
- Completing a Preliminary Draft Community Plan based on the above (November 2004).

The public participation effort included:

- Initial interviews with 60 individual stakeholders;
- Creation of a 35-member Steering Committee representing a broad spectrum of business and community interests provided incremental input to the project team and acted as the primary venue for public input during the process;
- Subcommittees of the Steering Committee in five topical areas (arts & culture, economic development, urban design, neighborhood amenities, and transportation & circulation);
- Four public workshops and meetings;

- 20 Steering Committee meetings;
- Project website at www.ccdc.com/planupdate;
- Four newsletters distributed to CCDC's mailing list and parties interested in the Community Plan process; and
- Outreach to adjacent neighborhood and community groups.

This outreach resulted in over 1,500 individuals participating at one or more levels of the process.

Consensus and Issues:

Several themes emerged during the public dialogue on the future of downtown San Diego:

- Support for a dense, mixed use, yet livable downtown;
- Broad support for the concept of downtown serving as the regional hub, providing a mixture of office, retail, housing, and public uses;
- A need for additional parks of varying sizes;
- Opportunities for arts & culture throughout downtown;
- The desire for everyday amenities within walking distance of residences;
- Parking and quality transit;
- Expanding the supply of affordable housing; and
- Creating links from downtown into neighboring communities.

A number of new ideas were discussed that would result in developing new approaches to development projects:

- Transfers of development rights for the purpose of acquiring parks/open space and preserving historic structures;
- Floor area bonuses and incentives for affordable housing, open space, larger family units, green roofs and enhanced public improvements;
- Regulations on bulk, height and tower placement to ensure generous sunlight to priority full block parks and ambient sun to streets; and
- Minimum requirements and incentives to ensure that land will be available for employment uses in the Core area of downtown.

Recent Status:

A Preliminary Draft Community Plan was written based on the work completed and the input received through the public participation process. The document was released to the Steering Committee and the Corporation Board of Directors on November 19, 2004. Since that time, staff has been working with community groups and interested parties to discuss the document and receive comments. At its meeting of January 21, 2005, the Steering Committee accepted the preliminary Draft Community Plan to be finalized by

staff for public hearing. Work to complete the Public Hearing Draft, the Revised PDO, and a draft Environmental Impact Report is currently underway.

As the Preliminary Draft Community Plan has been circulating, a number of topics have received special interest from the Steering Committee, the CCDC Board of Directors and interested parties. They warrant additional discussion here:

Parks

Early in the process of holding public workshops, a clear theme of public support for public parks and open spaces emerged. Additionally, the “Urban Design” Subcommittee of the Steering Committee developed a concept of breaking downtown into numerous and distinct neighborhood centers—each with active commercial uses and a neighborhood park nearby. While the waterfront and Balboa Park were recognized as significant outdoor amenities, there was general agreement for the need for additional parks, accessible to as many downtown residents as possible. Assurance that the parks would be sunny, flexible and well-used was important to both the Subcommittee and the public.

Dyett & Bhatia determined a number of criteria in proposing park sites. First, it was assumed that parks needed to be at least a half block or larger in size. While smaller parks were welcome, the priority was to establish a series of larger neighborhood parks that would serve a variety of active and passive uses. Blocks that were underdeveloped and/or if known faults constrained future building, there was more likelihood of a site being recommended for designation as a park. If the Redevelopment Agency owned a site it was also favored. Since sun access would become a critical feature of future parks, the sites were also chosen based on the ability to regulate future development on the south and west blocks adjacent to parks to ensure sunlight for a minimum of three hours a day in late summer. Through analysis of a 3-dimensional model and shadow studies developed specifically for downtown’s planning effort, the Dyett & Bhatia team determined the heights, bulk and tower placement requirements that would ensure the desired sunlight in the new parks.

Full block neighborhood parks are proposed in currently under-served areas like Cortez, Core and East Village, and one “triple block” park in the heart of East Village is proposed to serve several neighborhood centers.

Land that is shown on the Preliminary Draft Community Plan maps as proposed parks (see Chapters 3 and 4) cannot be assured except to the extent that CCDC/Agency can provide for their purchase or acquisition. That may be accomplished in a number of ways, including: funds being available to purchase land outright, through partnerships with developers to provide on-site parks, or through a newly-proposed program to

transfer or sell development rights from proposed park sites to other sites that would receive the additional density. This topic will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Since development regulations on surrounding blocks are proposed to be more restrictive because of their adjacency to the park sites and the desire to provide sun access, the acquisition and eventual construction of these parks has increased significance. Finally, maintenance of existing and proposed parks will continue to be an issue unless mechanisms are in place to ensure that the appropriate agencies/departments maintain the new facilities that retain their quality and ensure their success over time.

Floor Area Ratios and Transfer of Development Rights

The use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) was discussed by the Steering Committee early in the process as a way to facilitate the desired amount of growth, but with flexibility to achieve plan goals. Dyett & Bhatia produced a memorandum on the uses and potential for such a program to be used downtown. The information in this staff report comes largely from that memorandum.

Downtown San Diego appears to be well suited to a TDR program because land values are high, and the trend over the past three years has been that generally, development project types that three years ago would be at 50-60% of the allowable floor area ratio (FAR) are being proposed at close to 100% of the allowable FAR, and where bonus provisions of the existing Centre City Planned District Ordinance (PDO) are being used to add FAR to proposed projects.

The challenge in defining a TDR program is to balance a base allowable FAR with adequate incentives to facilitate a transfer. However, since downtown was anticipated to take a considerable amount of the City's growth, FARs needed to be increased at least to the extent that a minimum amount of this expectation would be met.

In order to motivate sending site owners to sell their development rights, there is incentive to make it more profitable or efficient to sell development rights from the property rather than to build the allowable base FAR on-site. This can be done primarily by increasing the transfer ratio and making the TDR process efficient and certain. For buyers of the development rights, incentives to participate in the TDR process are created in the following ways: by lowering the allowable FAR, restricting the ability to gain additional development rights through other bonus programs, or providing other incentives to participate (fast-tracking projects or streamlining the process in other ways). Overall, restricting the allowable density on all projects is more likely to result in

the development community's use of the TDRs, but the desire for a successful program must be balanced with other, competing downtown growth goals.

In order to maximize public benefit from the program, a focused TDR program has been proposed as part of the Community Plan. Originally, the TDR program was exclusively to facilitate the acquisition of park/open space land, but at the request of a number of members of the public, will be expanded to include the preservation of historic properties on the same block as well. The program will be implemented through the Centre City PDO.

Circulation and Parking

The Community Plan addresses parking by setting policies to allow the adequate provision of parking while avoiding excessive supplies that discourage transit ridership and disrupt the urban fabric, to site and design parking structures to enable shared use, and to distribute public parking garages throughout downtown. Also, transportation demand management strategies (TDM) are encouraged by the Plan. Following this policy, the draft Centre City PDO proposes increasing project minimums to 1 space/unit, and 1.5 spaces/ 1,000 sq. ft. office/commercial, as well as adding a requirement for visitor/service parking to large residential projects. Freeway couplets into/out of downtown are intended to be calmed, but this may require signalization changes and cooperation from CalTrans. With the passage of TransNet last fall, and SANDAG's upcoming planning efforts to update the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), future partnership with transportation agencies to achieve mutual circulation goals will be critical.

Community Outreach and Adjacency Issues

Through the course of circulating the Preliminary Draft Community Plan, staff has been working with individual communities and groups to discuss issues and solicit comments. The comments have been gathered through meetings and work sessions, email messages and phone conversations.

In recent meetings with adjacent communities, staff became aware of concern in Barrio Logan and Sherman Heights/Grant Hill about the intensity of development in areas of downtown adjacent to these communities. Although the I-5 Freeway physically separates Sherman Heights from downtown, the types and intensity of development downtown will be considerably different from what remains a predominantly single family area. Improving the links between these neighborhoods and downtown is a part of the plan. The Barrio Logan neighborhood shares a boundary with Centre City with no major physical barriers between them. At the request of the Environmental Health Coalition, staff has directed the consultant to reduce the allowable FARs in the area

immediately adjacent to the Barrio Logan community to reduce the impact of higher intensity in this area.

Staff will continue to meet with adjacent communities and work to the greatest extent possible to resolve issues for inclusion in the draft Community Plan and related documents.

Comments and Modifications to the November 2004 Draft

The Preliminary Draft Community Plan (Attachment 1) will be modified prior to presentation at public hearing; this section of the report will detail how the document is anticipated to change.

The philosophy and underlying assumptions of the Preliminary Draft have been widely accepted and are not expected to change, and the purpose of the workshop is to offer the Planning Commission the opportunity to become familiar with the components of the Plan in preparation for public hearing this summer (tentatively scheduled for July 14, 2005).

Since November 2004, more than 20 organizations have reviewed the document and provided comments, and an additional 15 individuals have commented on the Preliminary Draft. Staff will analyze the comments that have been received from the public and interested parties as well as the CCDC Board and Planning Commission, and incorporate them into the public hearing Draft Community Plan, and/or other plans/ordinances where appropriate prior to the documents proceeding to public hearing.

Note that the attached Preliminary Draft Community Plan is not a public hearing draft. Changes that are anticipated to date in the Public Hearing Draft can be generally described as:

Chapter 1 and 2: Minor edits.

Chapter 3:

- Change title of Chapter 3 to “Land Use & Housing”
- Expand discussion in Chapter 3 to include more information about affordable housing
- Include policy to support the provision of family housing
- Incorporate density bonuses for affordable housing
- Retain “East Village” name throughout eastern downtown as today. Show new neighborhood centers, but—with the exception of the Ballpark area—describe them in terms of their position in East Village (i.e. NE, SE, NW)

- Lower building intensities (FARs) in areas adjacent to Barrio Logan
- Modifications to proposed Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program

Chapter 4:

- Rename a number of the parks per community suggestions

Chapter 5:

- Emphasize the importance of good architecture & design
- “Guidelines for the Design of Key Streets” should emphasize the importance of improving C Street

Chapter 6:

- This chapter will be revised to shorten to a more manageable size. Text/maps/diagrams that are eliminated from this chapter will form the basis of Neighborhood Design Guidelines that will be developed following the adoption of the Community Plan. The subheadings in this chapter that will be retained are: introductory paragraph, Community Plan Vision, and a generalized land use map.

Chapter 7:

- Modifications to “Street Typologies” map and “Pedestrian Priority Zones”

Chapter 8:

- Move the “Health Care” Section of this chapter to Chapter 12, Human Services

Chapter 9, 10 and 11: Minor edits.

Chapter 12:

- Change title to “Health & Human Services” (health services section of Chapter 8 has been moved to this chapter)
- Change title of Section 12.1 to “Human Services”; change title of Section 12.2 to “Facilities” and change title of Section 12.3 to “Homeless Prevention Strategies”
- Other general edits to eliminate somewhat negative focus on social services.

Chapter 13: Minor edits, and add concluding statement to the Plan.

Follow-Up Tasks

It is valuable to know that the below list of tasks is contemplated to follow adoption of the Community Plan:

- 1) Downtown Comprehensive Parking Plan
Including: On-street/off-street/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)/parking structures
- 2) Fundamental Design Principles and Improved Design Review
 - Strengthen process
 - Urban Design Guidelines
- 3) Neighborhood Design Guidelines (in sequence/clusters)
- 4) Streetscape Manual Update
 - Revised to neighborhood boundaries
- 5) Sustainable Development Program
 - Construction practice/recycling
 - Design, Green Materials, Daylighting, etc.
 - Energy Conservation

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The purpose of this workshop is to offer the Planning Commission an opportunity to receive information on the work that has been done to date on the downtown Community Plan Update, and to provide input to staff prior to beginning public hearings on this topic.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexandra Elias
Senior Planner

Approved: Peter J. Hall
President

Garry Papers
Manager – Architecture & Planning

Attachment(s):

1. Preliminary Draft Community Plan
2. Downtown Community Plan Update Newsletter