



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: December 8, 2015 **REPORT NO.** PC-15-115

ATTENTION: **Planning Commission, Agenda of December 17, 2015**

SUBJECT: OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO AND MIDWAY – PACIFIC HIGHWAY
COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATES WORKSHOP

SUMMARY

THIS IS A WORKSHOP TO UPDATE THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON THE OLD TOWN SAN DIEGO AND MIDWAY – PACIFIC HIGHWAY COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATES. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AT THIS TIME.

BACKGROUND

The public outreach for the updates of the Old Town San Diego and Midway - Pacific Highway community plans began in fall 2010. These updates will include the revision of the Old Town San Diego Planned District Ordinance, the Midway – Pacific Highway Local Coastal Program, and the Midway – Pacific Highway Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone.

Old Town San Diego is the site of initial European settlement in San Diego County as well as the state of California, and is considered the “Birthplace of California.” Old Town is a Planned District due to the area’s historical significance. Development controls are provided by the Old Town Planned District Ordinance, as supplemented by the 1973 Old San Diego Architectural and Site Design Standards and Criteria. The Old Town San Diego Community Plan was adopted in 1987. The Old Town San Diego community plan update will provide a vision and policies to guide future development to preserve and enhance the historical significance of Old Town.

The Midway - Pacific Highway Community Plan was adopted in 1991, and includes a Local Coastal Program for the portion of the community within the California Coastal Zone. In 1998, the City Council amended the community plan for the North Bay Revitalization Program which included the Bay-to-Bay Canal link concept and its implementation through a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone. However, in 2003 a feasibility study determined that the proposed canal water link was infeasible due to cost and environmental issues. The City Council initiated a comprehensive community plan amendment in 2004 to remove the Bay-to-Bay concept, insert a park strategy to link future parks with pedestrian and bicycle connections, and identify mixed-use transit oriented nodes. The amendment process was put on hold in 2006 pending the adoption of the General Plan Update.

DISCUSSION

Old Town

From November 2010 through September 2015, City staff and the consultant team held fourteen community plan update advisory committee meetings to gather community input on the development of the update to the Old Town Community Plan. The public has provided input on the existing conditions, historic context statement, urban design, and past studies related to Old Town including the Old Town Visitor-Oriented Parking Study. A community walk audit was held in June 2011 to address existing conditions, and a community open house was held in August 2011 to receive input on the historic context framework for the identification and evaluation of historical resources. In September 2011, a charrette was held to focus input on the topics of land use and gateways, paths and public places, and urban design character.

Following the Old Town charrette, City staff and consultants developed potential land use alternatives and the community plan update, and a community workshop was held in September 2012 to review these with the community. Additional technical studies were undertaken, including economic and traffic modeling. Development of the “discussion draft” community plan was completed in September 2015, when the draft was released to the public for review and input.

Land Use

The land use vision for Old Town is of a visitor destination and a residential community; a small and local business core; and a community connected to its heritage and open space areas. As an organizing framework for land use, the community plan update continues to differentiate areas within the community based on planned land use as was done in the 1987 Old Town Community Plan. These areas are called “sub-districts” in the discussion draft, and are as follows: Core, Historic Core, Presidio, Heritage, Hortensia, Taylor, Hillside, Mason, Linwood, Jefferson, and Congress.

The Historic Core, Heritage and Presidio Sub-Districts encompass the regional and community parks within Old Town, which will be preserved and supported as public resources. The Core Sub-District connects the parks and is the commercial activity center of Old Town. The discussion draft maintains the Core as a pedestrian-oriented commercial area while continuing to allow residential uses above or behind commercial uses. The existing allowed residential density in the Core (up to 25 dwelling units per acre) is also maintained in the discussion draft.

Outside of the Core, the existing permitted residential density of up to 25 dwelling units per acre is maintained throughout the Jefferson and Congress residential sub-districts. Within the Mason sub-district, the residential density along Juan Street are proposed to decrease from 25 dwelling units per acre to 10-15 dwelling units per acre in order to create a better transition between the Historic Core and the potential George Marston Historic District. Residential density is also proposed to decrease from 25 dwelling units per acre to 10-15 dwelling units per acre in most of the Linwood district, which is constrained by its location adjacent to the Juan Street hillside.

Within the Hortensia Sub-District, the Fremont School property may redevelop in the future if the San Diego Unified School District identifies the facility as excess property. In order to guide redevelopment of the Fremont School property, it is designated for Mixed Commercial Residential use in the discussion

draft. Policies that call for provision of a public plaza or passive recreational space at the school property and a pedestrian path to complete the Arista Street connection are also included in the discussion draft.

Mobility

The primary theme within the draft Mobility Element is the improvement of pedestrian and bicycle connections between parks, attractions, and destinations within Old Town, as well as improvement of connections to transit and adjacent communities. Additional wayfinding signage and pedestrian lighting, sidewalk and intersection pedestrian improvements, additional bicycle routes, and near- and long-term improvements to the Taylor Street at-grade rail crossing will improve circulation for all modes of travel in Old Town. Parking for visitors and employees is also a significant mobility issue for Old Town. The discussion draft continues to recommend the development of a visitor-oriented parking structure at the Old Town Transit Center and the relocation of existing parking uses to the community periphery to reduce vehicle circling within the Core Sub-District.

Urban Design

The urban design goals for Old Town include building design that accurately reflects the architecture characteristic of Old Town prior to 1871 and a built environment and streetscaping that enhance the public realm and sense of place within the community. In drafting the Urban Design Element of the community plan, City staff has improved guidance on how development can be consistent with historical community character and provided visual examples to illustrate the desired building characteristics. The content of the Architectural and Site Design Standards and Criteria document has also been incorporated into the Urban Design Element in order to create a single comprehensive reference document for planning development in Old Town.

The community has expressed a desire to see the historic character found in Old Town State Historic Park brought through into the rest of the community. The discussion draft recommends the use of streetscape elements to enhance community character, in particular along the primary community corridors. These streetscape elements will include gateway elements, street trees and parkway landscaping, street furniture, street and pedestrian lighting, and historically compatible signage.

Recreation

The Old Town community currently has three community park facilities (Presidio Community Park, Presidio Recreation Center, and El Campo Santo Pocket Park) in addition to the regional and state parks in the community. The existing acreage of these community park facilities exceeds the community's projected population-based park needs. However, improvements to existing park facilities are recommended, including accessibility improvements for El Campo Santo Pocket Park and the development of a Park Master Plan for Presidio Community Park. Expansion of the Presidio Recreation Center is also recommended to provide additional space for recreational activities for residents of Old Town and adjacent communities.

Midway - Pacific Highway

Since November 2010, the City staff and the consultant team have had ten community plan update advisory committee meetings to gather community input. The community has provided input on the existing conditions and recommendations from past planning efforts. A community walk audit was held in July 2011 to address existing conditions. A community workshop was held in October 2012 to discuss the vision and concepts for land use and mobility. During 2013, City staff and the consultant team

prepared a “discussion draft” community plan to capture concepts from past planning efforts, community input, City Council direction from the 2004 community plan amendment initiation, and policies from General Plan. The discussion draft was released for public review in November 2013. In 2014, staff and consultants developed additional urban design concepts and potential redevelopment concepts for the proposed Dutch Flats Urban Village and Sports Arena Community Village. In 2015, work has focused on preparing the public review draft of the updated community plan, which will include textual revisions, photographs, illustrations, and urban greening concepts prepared through the North Bay Urban Greening project in the final community plan document layout.

In September 2013, a Planning Commission workshop was held to review the Midway – Pacific Highway discussion draft community plan. At that workshop, Commissioners requested additional information and detail on the proposed urban design concepts and policies to be included in the draft community plan. The following summary of the key land use, mobility, and urban design concepts found in the community plan update provides context for a focused discussion on urban design at this second Planning Commission workshop.

Land Use

The draft Community Plan organizing concept is composed of walkable-multimodal districts and villages with a complement of uses and linkages to parks, regional open space, shops, services, entertainment attractions, housing, and employment areas to enhance the livability and character of the community. It is envisioned that the larger super blocks will have a greater mix of uses framed with new streets, creating distinct mixed-use villages. The land use concept recognizes and supports maintenance of the existing military and military –support uses, as well as the mix of small industrial and commercial uses, for their contributions to the local and regional economy. The community is within the voter-approved coastal height limit and any proposed development exceeding 30 feet above grade will require a vote of the people.

Sports Arena Community Village is envisioned as a mixed-use commercial entertainment focused village at the City-owned Sports Arena property. This proposed village could include a combination of horizontal and vertical mixed-use or multiple-use with office, retail, residential, and park and public spaces that allow for outdoor gathering, events, markets and recreation uses. A new or existing Sports Arena building with the potential for structured parking will serve as the anchor for the village. The draft plan envisions a pedestrian and bicycle connection from a village green to the San Diego River.

Dutch Flats Urban Village, which includes the U.S. Navy’s Regional Plant Equipment Office and the Midway Post Office site, is envisioned as an employment focused village. Dutch Flats’ large parcels provide the ability to have large floor plate buildings with a mix of small to large defense/high-tech and research & development businesses, residential, supporting smaller scale retail uses, and parks space in an urban environment. The Midway Post Office building has been acquired by a developer of industrial space who proposes to reuse the building; however, opportunities remain for site and frontage improvements and for future business park uses with complementary residential uses.

Kenyon Neighborhood Village is envisioned as a mixed-use node along Kenyon Street and Midway Drive with existing and future residential, office, visitor serving commercial and institutional uses with the Continuing Education Center as focal point of the village. The former Cabrillo Hospital building is being redeveloped for educational uses, which are compatible with the draft community plan’s vision.

Kurtz Transit Corridor/ North Corridor is envisioned as a multiple and mixed use pedestrian-oriented transit corridor connected to the Washington Street Trolley Station, along with pedestrian-friendly commercial and residential uses along Hancock Street and Pacific Highway from Witherby Street to West Washington Street, supporting the construction of shopkeeper units for artists and business owners incorporated to adaptive reuse of existing buildings or new development. Pacific Highway has the potential to be converted from an expressway into a multimodal boulevard to enhance the livability and community identity of the corridor.

Mobility

The draft Community Plan envisions the development of a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that improves pedestrian, bicycle and transit access while also addressing vehicular traffic capacity and improved regional access on heavily traveled roads. A major component of the plan is a proposal to expand the street grid network through the creation of new roadways and pedestrian facilities to break up the scale of larger developments and superblocks to remove local traffic from the major arterials. The draft Community Plan addresses the need to work with SANDAG to connect the Old Town Transit Center and the Sports Arena and Dutch Flats villages with a future rapid bus route and working with SANDAG and Caltrans to improve regional freeway access and connections.

The “Bay to Bay” connection concept from previous planning efforts has been maintained in the form of an enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connection between Mission Bay and San Diego Bay. Additional enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connections are proposed for Rosecrans Street, Midway Drive, Sports Arena Boulevard, and Pacific Highway. Conceptual designs have been created for these connections through the North Bay Urban Greening Planning Study, a grant-funded project also managed by Planning Department staff. The urban greening concepts will also contribute to an improved urban streetscape environment along the major corridors in Midway – Pacific Highway.

Urban Design

The draft Community Plan seeks to improve the community character, create a sense of place and foster livability to transform the community into a vibrant pedestrian friendly community. High quality building design, the design of urban street-facing facades, and the creation of a pleasant environment through the implementation of reduced building setbacks, shade trees, landscaping, pedestrian lighting and street furniture, will be key aspects to enhance the interface with the public realm and strengthen Midway - Pacific Highway’s identity. Gateway elements are encouraged to emphasize entry points into and from Old Town, Downtown, Peninsula, Liberty Station, San Diego River, San Diego Bay, Mission Bay and the San Diego International Airport.

Public Spaces and Parks

The draft Community Plan seeks to enhance the public realm through:

- Incorporating linear parks along existing streets improved to emphasize walking and bicycling;
- Developing linkages between parks in the community and to regional recreational areas and open space;
- Fostering the community’s historic relationship to the Presidio, the San Diego Bay, Mission Bay and the San Diego River; and
- Integrating Midway - Pacific Highway with the surrounding communities.

The Community Plan's park strategy includes the combination of population-based parks, such as: neighborhood parks, mini-parks, pocket parks; and park equivalencies, such as: non-traditional parks sites, and joint-use recreational facilities that are accessible to the public.

Next Steps

Staff and the consultant team will continue to perform outreach to obtain community input on the draft Community Plans and to refine the community plan drafts through spring 2016. Concurrently in early 2016, the updated Old Town Planned District Ordinance will be drafted as will the proposed zoning and Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone for the Midway – Pacific Highway community. Also, the Impact Fee Studies for Old Town and Midway – Pacific Highway will be drafted during spring-summer 2016.

The Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) development process was kicked off in November 2015, and a draft is expected to be finalized in December 2016. It is anticipated that the adoption hearing process will begin in January 2017.

CONCLUSION

Staff is seeking Planning Commission input on the plan concepts currently being developed.

Respectfully submitted,



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Principal Planner
Planning Department



Vickie White
Senior Planner
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Attachments:

1. Planning Commission Report PC-13-109: Midway – Pacific Highway Community Plan Update Workshop



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: September 10, 2013**REPORT NO.** PC – 13-109**ATTENTION:** Planning Commission
Agenda of September 19, 2013**SUBJECT:** Midway – Pacific Highway Community Plan Update Workshop

SUMMARY

THIS IS A WORKSHOP TO UPDATE THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON THE MIDWAY – PACIFIC HIGHWAY COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATE. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AT THIS TIME.

BACKGROUND

The Midway Pacific Highway community plan was adopted in 1991. Between 1998 and 2008 the following communitywide planning related studies and actions have occurred:

- 1998 – The City Council amended the community plan for the North Bay Revitalization Program which included the Bay-to-Bay link.
- 2002 – The City issued a request for qualifications to redevelop the Sports Arena site and surrounding property. The process was terminated due to community concerns.
- 2003 – The Bay-to-Bay Feasibility Study determined that the proposed water canal link was infeasible due to cost and environmental issues.
- 2004 – The Redevelopment Agency funded the North Bay Station Area Concept Plan that provided a vision of mixed-use development between the Sports Arena and the Old Town Transit Center.
- 2004 – The North Bay Business Association funded the preparation of the North Bay Concept Plan that provided urban design recommendations.
- 2004 – Council District 2 formed an ad hoc committee to address the redevelopment of the Sports Arena and surrounding property. Majority and minority reports were prepared.
- 2004 – The City Council initiated a comprehensive community plan amendment to remove the bay-to-bay concept, insert a park strategy to link future parks with pedestrian and bicycle connections, and identify mixed-use transit oriented nodes. The amendment process was put on hold in 2006 pending the adoption of the General Plan Update.
- 2008 – The City Council authorized the update to the Midway - Pacific Highway Community Plan. The update includes corresponding amendments to the zoning program and City of San Diego Local Coastal Program.

DISCUSSION

Since November 2010, the City staff and the consultant team have had ten community plan update advisory committee meetings to gather community input. The community has provided input on the existing conditions and recommendations from past planning efforts. A community walk audit was held in July 2011 to address existing conditions. A community workshop was held in October 2012 to discuss the vision and concepts for land use and mobility. During 2013, City staff and the consultant team have been preparing a “discussion draft community plan” to capture concepts from past planning efforts, community input, and City Council direction from the 2004 community plan amendment initiation, and to be consistent with the General Plan.

Land Use

The draft Community Plan organizing concept is composed of walkable-multimodal Districts and Villages with a complement of uses and linkages to parks, regional open space, shops, services, entertainment attractions, housing, and employment areas to enhance the livability and character of the community. It is envisioned that the larger super blocks will have a greater mix of uses framed with new streets, creating distinct mixed-use villages. The land use concept recognizes and supports maintenance of the existing military and military –support uses, as well as the mix of small industrial and commercial uses, for their contributions to the local and regional economy. The community is within the voter-approved coastal height limit and any proposed development exceeding 30 feet above grade will require a vote of the people.

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Dutch Flats Urban Village is envisioned as an employment focused village which includes the U.S. Navy’s Regional Plant Equipment Office and the Midway Post Office, should these properties become available. Dutch Flat’s large parcels provide the ability to have large floor plate buildings with a mix of small to large defense/high-tech and research & development businesses, residential, supporting smaller scale retail uses, and parks space in an urban environment.

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West Washington Street, supporting the construction of shopkeeper units for artists and business owners incorporated to adaptive reuse of existing buildings or new development. Pacific Highway has the potential to be converted from an expressway into a multimodal boulevard to enhance the livability and community identity of the corridor.

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CONCLUSION

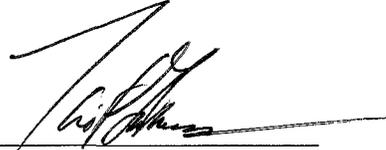
Staff is seeking Planning Commission input on the plan concepts currently being developed. Staff and the consultant team will continue to obtain community input on the draft Community Plan and to complete technical studies to inform the plan update, including traffic modeling that is expected to be completed by the end of 2013. In early 2014, the draft plan will be prepared and work will begin on a

Program Environmental Impact Report. It is anticipated that the adoption hearing process will begin by mid-2015.

Respectfully submitted,



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TSG/NB