

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE  
FOR THE  
DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN  
PERMIT CENTER CONFERENCE ROOM, 1950 PARKSIDE DRIVE  
FINAL MINUTES  
March 31, 2014  
6:30 P.M.**

The introductory meeting of the Downtown Steering Committee, City of Concord, began at approximately 6:32 P.M., Monday, March 31, 2014, in the Permit Center Conference Room at City Hall.

**ROLL CALL**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ron Leone, Councilmember (Chair); Tim Grayson, Vice-Mayor (Vice-Chair); Kirk Shelby, Design Review Board member; Robert Hoag, Planning Commissioner; Tim McGallian, Planning Commissioner; Amos Munoz, Chamber of Commerce; Adam Foster, At-large Member; Ed Andrews, At-large Member; Darrin Walters, TSBA; Jeff Woods, At-large Member; Larry Gray At-large Member (Alternate)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ross Wells, Design Review Board member; Kathy Renfrow, At-large Member; Virginia Thomas, At-large Member, Richard Eber; At-large Member (Alternate).

**STAFF PRESENT:** Carol Johnson, Planning Manager; Joan Ryan, Senior Planner.

**I. ROLL CALL**

Ten members were present and one at-large alternate was also in attendance.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

No Comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

**III. CONSENT ITEMS**

A motion was then made by Darrin Walters and seconded by Jeff Woods to approve the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. The meeting minutes dated January 31, 2014 were then unanimously approved.

#### **IV. DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION ITEMS**

##### **A. Recent Meetings - Update**

*Joan Ryan, Senior Planner* provided updates to the Committee regarding the Open House held on January 27<sup>th</sup>, the City Council update provided on February 4<sup>th</sup>, and the status of the Long Range Property Management Plan, the Housing Element Update, a PDA grant that would be submitted for Salvio Street improvements adjacent to Ravioli's restaurant, and the upcoming ATP grant that staff will be reviewing for potential projects.

##### **B. Agency Coordination - Update**

*Ms. Ryan and Carol Johnson, Planning Manager* provided updates to the Committee regarding recent meetings with BART and shared preliminary concept plans prepared by BART designed to provide station improvements at the Concord BART Station, including preliminary banner concepts. Ms. Ryan also indicated that BART would be conducting a deep cleaning of the station in the next 3-4 months.

Tim McGallian stated that any way-finding within the BART improvements should be consistent with the 13 way-finding kiosks already located in the downtown.

Darrin Walters inquired when the Committee could provide input to the BART plans.

*Ms. Johnson* responded that part of the BART process would be to hold a community outreach meeting to get the public's feedback in terms of preferences and that BART is still putting together cost estimates for each of the design components in the plan. She noted it may be similar to the process the City went through with "Penny for your Thoughts" in that there may not be enough funds for all of the improvements, so the community may need to prioritize what they see as the primary needs.

*Ms. Ryan* then shared that she and Chair Leone had attended the Airport Land Use Commission meeting on March 26<sup>th</sup> to provide a presentation regarding the Downtown Specific Plan project. She noted that the Commission was unanimous in determining that the Downtown Specific Plan was consistent with the Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

*Robert Hoag* stated that he sees the Buchanan Airport as a stealth asset to protect to attract businesses and that the airport could be an attractive asset when future businesses are considering whether to locate in Concord, for example at Bank of America tech center (now Swift Plaza), but especially as the Naval Weapons Station develops. He noted that it will be important to stay in contact with the ALUC as the downtown and the weapons station develops in the future.

*Chair Leone* agreed and noted that there is not currently a Concord representative on the Airport Land Use Commission and that he would like Concord to have a future representative.

*Kirk Shelby* questioned in returning back to discussing the BART plans, why the taxis and busses were located as they are and noted this poses potential conflicts. He noted that he would expand the walkway for pedestrians and even consider closing Oak Street (at Grant) near BART to coordinate a bike street to Laguna. He noted that it would be unfortunate to construct all this work but be too short sighted. He explained his vision of expanding the walkway north where pedestrians could safely walk up Grant St. or even through the Bank of America (Swift Plaza) campus.

*Adam Foster* stated that he believed the BART plans may be too conservative and provide the bare minimum, if we are looking at a longer life span for the area. He also suggested that Oak Street could be closed and become an attractive bike route.

*Ms. Ryan* then indicated that Downtown Concord had been selected for review and analysis by an Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel. She noted that the dates would be April 24-25<sup>th</sup>.

*Ms. Johnson* indicated that the Panel would participate in a tour of the downtown, sit in with interviews of stakeholders likely selected from property owner and business leaders and then conduct an intensive work session and charette designed to answer what would assist Concord in jump starting development in the downtown. She indicated staff would be providing the panel binders of information on the downtown including the Draft Specific Plan.

*Ms. Ryan* noted that the findings of the panel would be provided on the afternoon of April 25<sup>th</sup> and that the presentation would be open to the public.

*Ms. Johnson* noted that the Committee would be receiving an invitation.

### **C. Comments received on the Specific Plan and Draft Addendum**

*Ms. Ryan* shared the general comments received on the Specific Plan and the Draft Addendum during the public comment period. Three comments were received on the Specific Plan including those from TransForm, property owner Frank Dodd and Greenbelt Alliance. She noted that two comment letters were received on the Draft Addendum including those from Greenbelt Alliance and Adam Foster.

*Ms. Ryan* then summarized each set of comments through a power point presentation. She noted TransForm comments primarily addressed parking issues and indicated staff was providing updates in the Final document to accommodate a number of the comments or to study further based on existing implementation strategies.

*Ms. Ryan* then summarized the comments of Frank Dodd which were primarily regarding the City's existing Secondary Living Unit ordinance.

Robert Hoag noted regarding the water meter connection/service that a separate meter should not be needed as most of the water use is associated with outside watering.

Tim McGallian stated that the intention is not to see two lots or two homes on these lots and that this could become problematic later if the City should want to increase density in the area later.

Darrin Walters noted that with a separate meter it is easier to split the bill and track water use of renters and thus landowners would prefer separation, but the cost is high.

Adam Foster respectfully disagreed with Mr. McGallian and noted that more flexible secondary living unit language would allow the land owner an income stream in which to make continued improvements at the property. He noted that the City of Danville has many attractive secondary living units and that this is a great way to institute affordable housing by design because the units are small but affordable and provide an option to multifamily housing.

*Ms. Johnson* reminded the Committee that the reason they had not moved forward with intensifying the area south of BART was due in part not only to the neighborhood outcry at the neighborhood meeting held, but also due to the costly sewer upgrades that would likely be needed for densification of the degree associated with any multi-family housing.

Ms. Ryan noted that secondary living units are currently allowed on any single family property as long as the setbacks and coverage requirements are met. The commenter is requesting additional flexibility with respect to the deed restriction that currently requires the owner to live in one of the two units.

Mr. Foster noted that the current water connection/.service fee was excessive.

*Ms. Ryan* then summarized the comments of Greenbelt Alliance (Community Coalition for a Sustainable Concord which included requesting a delay in the process to allow for the outcome of the ULI panel, more specific language for safer walking/biking, parking demand management and affordable housing. She noted the comments also requested an affordable housing unit target, the dedication of two of four vacant city sites for affordable housing, creation of good jobs that pay living wages, and green jobs and ensuring connections to regional open space.

Kirk Shelby questioned didn't we discuss affordable housing months ago and conclude that we were focusing on market rate housing not affordable housing

initially at least to attract residents that would support local businesses? He noted the earlier findings were that the Downtown already has a lot of affordable housing.

*Darrin Walters* agreed and noted that we already meet the affordable housing goals in the downtown.

Tim Grayson agreed and noted that the only way to make Downtown work is that the City needs more market rate housing. He noted that the consultant had already provided information earlier in the process that the downtown has more than enough affordable housing, along the lines of 60% and therefore the City already exceeds the target. He stated the City needs to be attracting market rate housing in order to provide the support needed and the disposable income needed to allow local businesses to succeed and to attract new businesses. He noted that Greenbelt Alliance has good intentions, but that the affordable housing numbers are currently high, and that the City will focus on market rate housing and then continue to monitor affordability in the area. He noted adjustments can be made over time. He stated the City needs to create the economic movement and pursue the common goal of jobs.

Kirk Shelby noted that the idea is to create a vibrant mix of housing types. Committee needs to take care in terms of how the issue is addressed in terms of genuineness, but that this was also his understanding that we would be moving forward initially at any rate with a focus on attracting market rate developers.

Joel Devalcourt representing Greenbelt Alliance and the CCSC clarified that the letter on the Specific Plan was not just from Greenbelt Alliance but from the Community Coalition for a Sustainable Concord (CCSC) which includes the CNWS Neighborhood Alliance, East Bay Housing Organizations, IBEW Local #302, Carpenters Local Union 152, Public Advocates, Save Mount Diablo and TransForm. He noted that an earlier draft plan included 850 affordable units downtown (referring to Sept. 9, 2013 power point presentation - page 10) and wondered what happened to that earlier concept. He indicated that he believes we can come to a middle ground, with respect to affordability.

#### **D. Monitoring/Dashboard and Tracking Mechanisms for Implementation**

*Ms. Ryan* then summarized the concept of regular reporting of the progress of the specific plan, similar to how staff currently must report annually on the progress of the General Plan. She indicated that performance monitoring and reporting would be used to determine how progress is being made toward the implementation strategies included within the Specific Plan. She noted this could include observing trends as well as identifying problems with achieving objectives or strategies. She indicated that staff's preference would be to develop a web-based accessible dashboard for tracking implementation progress and provided some examples.

She then noted some examples of the types of quantifiable components that could be tracked including the number and types of units (built, entitled, and in the application queue), existing and new affordable units, activity trends with commercial and office sectors, pedestrian and bike improvements, parking availability, etc., and then invited discussion by the Committee in terms of what they would like to see tracked over time.

Mayor Grayson indicated that one of the components he wants to track more regularly is traffic counts and volumes along with bikes and pedestrians.

Robert Hoag stated he would like tracking of the number of businesses that come to the downtown and those that leave to understand why they are choosing Concord and also why they are leaving, so we can track the kinds of businesses and sector trends, he noted that business licensing may already have some of this. He noted, then we can determine how we may want to market differently.

Adam Foster noted that he would like to include accident data as well as information regarding the increase in pedestrians and bike riders over time, with a time table so we can track growth over time.

Larry Gray noted the importance of being able to see how the plan is progressing and indicated he would like a timetable for implementation.

Amos Munoz stated the break-down of retail is important as well as the diversity in terms of the types of retail; he noted that currently the retail environment is boring.

Ed Andrews echoed the concern and noted that currently the only interested parties he gets are those interested in opening restaurants. Soft goods are not attracted to the downtown. But he noted that gross sales tracking in the downtown would be helpful but can be tricky as many tenants are cautious about this, due to the fact that many leases are tied to gross sales, so they are protective of info, but demand and customer count would be valuable.

*Ms. Johnson* noted that there are technical solutions out there that can assist the City in providing a dashboard that makes the progress of the downtown more transparent to the public. She noted that she recently spoke with a few such businesses at the recent Planning Commissioner's academy.

Kirk Shelby stated that he agreed with Mayor Grayson and Adam Foster in the need for the tracking of accidents and the volume of bikes and vehicles. He also noted that there are emerging solutions. He also indicated that vacancy rates can be deceptive and that you need to know the reason behind certain vacancies. He also noted that tracking of average rental rates and sales prices would be valuable.

Adam Foster noted that there are sensors available to provide data regarding bike and pedestrian foot traffic, they are used in San Francisco.

Larry Gray questioned once the Specific Plan is adopted they what are the next steps.

Staff responded that action on the implementation strategies would begin, but that many of them require additional funding and therefore staff may be relying on grant funding for many of the strategies.

Larry Gray questioned whether the City would move forward with some of the improvements prior to any development necessarily occurring.

Chair Leone indicated yes that to the degree the City can, they will be moving forward with improvements as this is what attracts new businesses.

Adam Foster emphasized that he believes focus should be on moving Willow Pass Road toward a pedestrian focus that allows cars, but makes pedestrians a priority. He noted that the City needs to put more of a focus toward multi-modal priorities in order to attract the young professionals and the growing younger segment of the population that wants more urban living otherwise he noted, they will go elsewhere. He noted that the Concord Naval Weapons Station will add additional traffic to Willow Pass Road and so now is the time to make those adjustments.

Chair Leone noted that the original concept and city layout was not pedestrian oriented, but designed more for vehicular traffic.

Darrin Walters noted that just the re-timing of lights could assist with reducing the amount of traffic on Willow Pass Road if the flow of traffic on Clayton Road and Concord Blvd. improved.

Kirk Shelby responded that by routing or re-routing the traffic flow, the routes need to be capable of handling the traffic.

Amos Munoz provided kudos to staff in their planning of the recent Open House on January 27<sup>th</sup> and noted that the format and the information provided was very well thought out and received.

Tim McGallian noted that it is quicker to get through on Willow Pass Road than Clayton Road and that Clayton Road would be utilized better if the flow improved.

Chair Leone agreed and indicated that he won't use Treat Blvd. for that reason due to length of time it takes to get across town and to the freeway.

Tim McGallian noted that Park and Shop should be included more within the Plan and that Paul Sinz has a retail plan that he has been working on for the rear of Park and Shop along Salvio St. that staff should see.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

*Ms. Ryan* indicated that future DSC meeting was currently scheduled for April 28.

*Ms. Johnson* polled the Committee as to whether they were interested in meeting one more time and the consensus was that they would. *Ms. Johnson* suggested that perhaps the Committee could discuss the findings of the ULI Technical Assistance Panel

*Ms. Ryan* noted that Planning Commission and City Council dates are tentatively set in May for the adoption of the Specific Plan, but that staff would see what findings came out of the ULI Panel.

**ADJOURNMENT**

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT APPROXIMATELY 8:10 P.M.

DRAFT MINUTES PREPARED BY:

Joan Ryan  
Project Manager