

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE
FOR THE
DOWNTOWN CONCORD SPECIFIC PLAN
PERMIT CENTER CONFERENCE ROOM, 1950 PARKSIDE DRIVE
DRAFT MINUTES
January 13, 2014
6:30 P.M.**

The introductory meeting of the Downtown Steering Committee, City of Concord, began at approximately 6:35 P.M., Monday, January 13, 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; Ross Wells, Design Review Board member; Tim McGallian, Planning Commissioner; Amos Munoz, Chamber of Commerce; Adam Foster, At-large Member; Kathy Renfrow, At-large Member; Ed Andrews, At-large Member; Darrin Walters, TSBA; Jeff Woods, At-large Member; Virginia Thomas, At-large Member, Larry Gray At-large Member (Alternate); Richard Eber; At-large Member (Alternate).

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robert Hoag, Planning Commissioner; Larry Gray At-large Member (Alternate)

STAFF PRESENT: Carol Johnson, Planning Manager; Joan Ryan, Senior Planner; Florence Weiss, Downtown Manager.

I. ROLL CALL

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

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ray Barbour commented regarding the planned arches at Todos Santos Plaza and noted that he felt that the arch is a piece of art and not a sign. He stated that he felt putting Concord on it took away from the branding of the area, and thought the arches were an important opportunity to use branding and indicate you have arrived to the North Todos Santos District. Mr. Barbour provided a graphic of the arches and indicated that he thinks branding can tastefully occur through the arches letting people still know they have arrived at the City of Concord, but within the Todos Santos District.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

III. CONSENT ITEMS

A motion was then made by Tim McGallian and seconded by Ross Wells to approve the meeting minutes from the previous meeting. The meeting minutes dated October 15, 2013 were then unanimously approved.

IV. DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION ITEMS

A. Downtown Specific Plan progress on document/schedule

Chair Ron Leone discussed he had told Rich Eber he would allow him some time to speak regarding some concerns he wanted to discuss and then noted he would allow Richard Eber to initiate a discussion for the Committee to respond to.

Richard Eber noted that there have been some concerns of a few of the Committee members. He noted they have been unhappy with the work that Perkins + Will is doing and that although the City is paying them it seems their allegiance is elsewhere. He also stated that Committee members have not had enough time to provide enough of their vision. He stated that he believes the Committee has been on a very short leash with not enough opportunity to participate. He also noted that staff in polling for comments of the Committee regarding implementation strategies in November and using a 1, 2, 3 rating system he felt had simplified the process and did not provide adequate opportunity for feedback.

Mr. Eber noted that Kirk Shelby, Virginia Thomas, Kathy Renfrow and he had a meeting with staff to share their concerns throughout the process and staff subsequently prepared a handout (FAQs) summarizing the questions from the Committee members. He noted that staff did a very good job in recapping the points and providing a summary of the meeting. He noted his concerns are that in order to make it diverse and take care of priorities of ABAG and the State of California, we may be losing what we love about Todos Santos Plaza and making it too dense and losing too many parking spaces. He noted that he is concerned regarding ABAG and their mandates with more density and intensity of development downtown. He questioned whether we wanted to create a downtown that he feels may be difficult for existing residents to access. He stated that he had a meeting with Ron Leone on this subject and Chair Leone urged Mr. Eber to provide positive things the Committee could move forward with, in an effort to achieve consensus. Mr. Eber noted that he is interested in making Concord a better place to live. He offered that the downtown has positive things and he wants the Commission to reach consensus. He reiterated that he would like for the City to maintain independence from ABAG.

Chair Leone questioned whether the Committee could perhaps review each of the points/concerns on Mr. Eber's list. Mr. Leone suggested opening the floor to the

Committee to discuss the various points and in particular the first item regarding maintaining independence as a Committee from ABAG or from the State.

Virginia Thomas noted that there were certain deadlines associated with the grant funding, and felt perhaps that this didn't let the Committee be as independent. She noted there seemed like a back side push to get things done within a timeframe without necessarily having time to think things through.

Adam Foster noted that he respectfully disagreed with Richard and believes the consultants had performed a professional job and that he had learned a lot from them.

Ed Andrews noted he agreed with Adam to the extent that P+W can provide some expertise. He noted, although we want more housing, and some of the economic development that comes with that and we need a certain level of expertise to do so. But he agreed that we don't want to be run by someone's agenda that is not for the betterment of Concord.

Ross Wells stated that the consultants are professionals and have been doing an excellent job. But noted that we do want to maintain independence. He indicated what he was hearing is that the process may be moving forward to quickly.

Kirk Shelby noted that in the Plan that we are seeing we do not necessarily see how are comments have been incorporated and he noted that the Committee has not necessarily come to agreement on everything. He noted that strong opinions were expressed regarding Clayton Rd. and Concord Blvd. and that bike lanes should not be included on those roads because it is not healthy. He noted that he has frustration to a certain extent was regarding the bike lane issue and that although they were protected bike lanes that is not enough for safety on these roads, along with the health and safety aspects. He noted that the plan feels pre-ordained to a certain extent.

Tim McGallian agreed that we do have certain time constraints with a grant and that we probably would not have been able to do the project without the grant, but he noted he has also noticed that the comments provided to the consultants do not come back in the following meeting and he noted that was also for the Committee to address in

Ms. Johnson noted that the PDA grant does have certain strings attached in that certain parameters need to be addressed within the Specific Plan. But she noted that in terms of the density, these are all issues that were already addressed back with the General Plan adoption when the current densities of the designations downtown were determined. She stated we are not making any changes to zoning with this Plan. She noted those are all policy decisions that were determined back in 2007. She noted the bike lanes were a result of Ray Kuzbari submitting a grant to OBAG and receiving that grant for the two streets and thus Perkins + Will has

simply been reflecting bike lanes per the approved grant for projects that will be implemented soon. She indicated that is an area where we can't really step back. She noted that there has not been a lot of strong consensus on some of these other issues. She noted that this is where Joan and I were looking for the Committee's assistance in terms of the review of the Draft Plan and noted that we only got a handful of comments from the Committee. She noted that we only got a handful of comments on the implementation strategies and only one set of comments on the entire document, and noted that was the opportunity of the Committee to provide specific comments on the Plan, and she noted that unless you do that we cannot forward that information to the consultant.

Mr. Eber noted that it was difficult to respond regarding the implementation strategies.

Ms. Thomas noted that she was not sure how to reply regarding the implementation strategies that she did not like and thus did not respond on those.

Adam Foster noted that he came up with his own notation system to provide his comments to staff and provided more detailed comments on some. He noted that finding consensus among 13 committee members on many issues was going to be difficult. Dealing with a large specific plan area, is almost like a general plan, he noted that many of the strategies do indicate that this is a component we will have to study further.

Kirk Shelby noted that he thinks the Committee would be surprised by how many things they probably agree with. He indicated he would like to look for those opportunities to create some agreement. He noted his frustration was with this Committee potentially missing the mark and not getting the circulation right, especially with the bike issue and missing certain opportunities.

Kathy Renfrow noted that she was surprised that not more people read the Plan, because most of the plan was pretty good. She stated she was not sure how to have a conversation regarding the Plan if nobody commented on it.

Mr. Leone noted one of the things he thought was useful was having the additional meetings and noted that additional meetings had already been added and that was the reason that you did not see the consultant at all of the meetings. He then suggested that one of the things we need to do is draw consensus and that does not mean that everyone has to agree then we can give direction to P+W so they can put it in the plan. He noted he thought we were all in agreement that Concord wants its own plan. But that we need to be more specific so that they have clarity.

Ms. Johnson noted that she could start making a list for discussion, noting that the first one would be regarding the bike lanes, and went up to the white board.

Ross Wells questioned whether this was a mute discussion item regarding the bike lanes since they have already been granted the funding. He questioned would we send the money back?

Kathy Renfrow noted that there are other people who would use those bike lanes.

Adam Foster noted that he rides a lot and would feel uncomfortable on bike lanes there and has ridden on Clayton Road, but where he feels safer on the sidewalk.

Ms. Johnson noted that we should be getting the Safe Routes to Transit grant which would be \$200,000 in addition to what we have toward a Bicycle Master Plan and if we think that the bike lanes associated with the OBAG grant would not be a good idea, you may want to consider studying that further.

Mr. Leone noted that one of the things he was thinking is having some general consensus saying for example, we don't want to have traffic hindered on Clayton Road. Even if certain items are going under study, the Council will know there is consensus on those items.

Ms. Johnson suggested you could also come up with a performance standard.

Mr. Foster noted it would be difficult to become to prescriptive. But agreed there may be certain items to study further.

Kirk Shelby noted the key item was in staying safe. He noted he has seen lots of collisions with bikes and cars on Galindo and Clayton Rd.

Richard Eber noted that he has had the need to take Cowell Road over to Monument Blvd. and that this area has experienced more traffic. He cautioned unintended consequences and noted that bikes are never going to represent more than 1% of the total. He noted that bikes do not accommodate riding in the rain or riding with packages. He noted we should not put so much emphasis on such a small segment of reality.

Mr. Foster noted that a multimodal approach could alleviate some of your concerns about congestions and traffic. When you have large discrepancies in speed this can be a huge safety matter, as well as turning movements. He noted, nobody wants to cause an accident when they are driving.

Mr. Eber noted for #2 that he does not want development to reach such a level that residents are not able to achieve good access to reach downtown.

Ms. Johnson noted that this goes back to what is already allowed in the downtown and that up to 100 du/acre is allowed with up to 70 feet in height around the Plaza and 200 feet in most of the remainder of the downtown. This is what would be

allowed if we did not do anything. If we did not want that to happen we would need to change the General Plan and the Development Code.

Mr. Eber indicated he just doesn't want to see what happened near the Pleasant Hill BART Station where people cannot access the area with lack of parking and general congestions. He noted he wants to keep Todos Santos Plaza the great place it is.

Tim McGallian noted that Mr. Eber continues to refer to this area, and that this is what we have a Planning Commission and Design Review Board for. He agrees that we need to be aware of the downsides, but we have already agreed on the mix of housing and retail and office. We can discuss the low income and affordable side of it.

Mr. Leone noted that the reality is that the downtown concord area has a sufficient amount of affordable housing already. What we are really looking for is market rate housing with people with disposable income that will help to support our businesses and our restaurants and he noted this is something we have already discussed.

Darrin Walters agreed that we were moving forward with market rate housing to generate disposable which was mentioned a number of times by the Committee members.

Ms. Johnson noted yes, this was the case and that we also discussed retaining existing affordable housing within the project area to ensure we are meeting our fair share, but that currently the need is for more market rate housing.

Ms. Ryan noted that we also spoke of setting milestones so that we can check in and quantify the amount of affordable housing over time such that we do not lose the existing affordability that we do have, and that slowly over time as market rate units are added, adjustments may need to be made, but that currently there is adequate affordable housing downtown.

Ms. Johnson indicated if there were specific phrases or modifications to implementation strategies, we could address those.

Adam Foster stated that Mr. Eber had indicated that the increased density may detract from the downtown, noted that we had a transportation professional look at the parking issue and they indicated that there was adequate parking even for special events.

Mr. Eber noted he didn't want to jeopardize the access to the downtown.

Mr. Foster noted he believes that he would welcome additional people downtown and feels the streets would be safer with more people on them. He challenged Mr. Eber and noted that the outside agency influence affecting the process seemed to be the tea-party platform that Mr. Eber was bringing in and that he had used their

language verbatim with the “stack and pack housing” and noted that he felt he was trying to bring in outside influences more than anyone on the Committee.

Mr. Eber noted that he disagreed.

Mr. Leone noted that what he heard Mr. Eber saying is that he did not want new projects to be built without enough parking such that overflow parking occurs out into neighborhoods and streets.

Mr. Eber stated that is exactly what he meant. He indicated this is what was indicated in comment #5.

Mr. Walters noted that he works in the downtown and there are people waiting for stalls in the parking structure as he leaves and he believes that there is not adequate parking now especially for special events.

Mr. Foster noted that overall by providing free parking it is first come, first serve. He noted that Walnut Creek now has meters in many of the parking garages. He noted the reality is that the City is subsidizing free parking. Those funds can be put back into the downtown. If we are going to make parking free, you are not thoroughly analyzing the issue.

Mr. Walters noted that there are other ways to get to the downtown, but people are not necessarily aware of them, and indicated he had three people that day ask him where the BART station was. He noted if we developed the Grant St. corridor people would know that they didn't have to drive. He stated that the City does not fully utilize the downtown BART station and that if we did more people would utilize it for the events; and we are very fortunate in that our City has two.

Mr. Shelby agreed but for those who cannot use BART, it is realistic to expect that they would take their car. He noted, if we are looking way out into the future there may be other alternatives that may become available that families could utilize. He stated yet our whole infrastructure has been set up on the private vehicle. He indicated you need a check and balance and this debate has gone on since the 1980s in linking traffic up to the freeways. He stated at this time there is a dearth of opportunities where you almost have to twist someone's arm to come here. But at some point it will turn around. He noted this is where consultants can be helpful based on their experiences in other cities.

Mr. McGallian queried if we are talking about additional people living downtown, there was ample parking provided at past projects such as the Renaissance. If we are planning properly, these people should not be creating a parking problem.

Ms. Johnson noted that the Plan also calls for a Parking Management Plan because most of those lots are sitting empty many of the times and they are not allowing people to park in their lots during the events.

Mr. McGallian noted that with the Swift Parking garages, those are being leased out during the day.

Mr. Foster noted that there will be some substantial demographic shifts with younger people being attracted to urban areas, similarly empty nesters will be doing the same. He invited the Committee to the craft beer festival on Jan. 25 and noted many of them will be coming via BART to a live, festive event.

Florence Weiss stated that you will see waves of people coming from BART from San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland to the Brew's Fest for its third year and this is evidence also of how we get new businesses as we now have two new businesses about to open with brew pubs downtown. She stated that she too lives in Concord and that the demographic is not necessarily what you would think on a Saturday night downtown. She noted there are parking issues on the weekend. She indicated that Bank of America does now open their lots on Thursday nights for the special events and charges for it, and that lot gets used more and more.

Mr. Wells noted that sitting on Design Review and we always want to make sure that there is adequate parking. He noted that more of the issue is people from other areas of the City needing parking and that may call for the use of trolleys or something similar, but most of those will be using their car.

Mr. Eber noted that issue #8, that the Grant St. corridor would assist with this and promote people to use BART, to walk, to bike and that there are other cultural attractions which can be done, beside just concerts downtown.

Kathy Renfrow noted that when looking forward 30 years, much of the attraction to in the future could will likely be out to the Naval Weapons Station and so many of the people that we think may be downtown, may actually be out a the new weapons station.

Ms. Thomas stated that is why she would like to see the downtown grow stronger now.

Mr. Leone questioned whether there was yet agreement on this issue of parking and the Committee agreed that there was.

Mr. Andrews indicated that he does not have a problem with higher density and questioned Mr. Eber as to how that will impact access to downtown.

Mr. Eber noted he that is not against, nor for anything in particular, but does not want to make Concord into a mini-San Francisco and wants to preserve our current way of life.

Amos Munoz noted that what I just heard Mr. Eber say is that I don't want to disrupt my current lifestyle, but this plan will change that because what I am hearing is this

will change the residential, this will change the retail and increase jobs and so there will be a different high level picture and if you disagree with that picture then we are never going to meet.

Kirk Shelby noted that the downtown plaza is pretty much at capacity during special events. In the development part of it, besides just housing, you need to provide for other activity areas, beside Todos Santos Plaza.

Adam Foster indicated that Mr. Munoz brought up a great point, he noted that a small time feel is an appealing thing to many and noted that high speed traffic does not promote a small town feel.

Kathy Renfrow noted that in the plan it was noted that along Grant St. there would be businesses and activities and that most of the focus would be along Grant St.

Kirk Shelby responded that it was a delicate synthesis that has to happen.

Mr. Leone stated that he thought it would become a synergy as more people started living downtown, with other people who have visions of businesses and activities that could happen to have your capacity enhanced. He noted that in his opinion this vision of the plan enhances Concord, it doesn't destroy Concord.

Mr. Eber noted that we did not have to go into #6 at this time, as CSBA has invited DeSaulnier to speak on SB 1.

The Committee then agreed they could go onto item #7.

Mr. Eber indicated #7 was one area where it seemed there have not been as many opinions as he would like to see, especially with cultural opportunities.

Ms. Johnson responded that staff had asked for participation in preparing the vision statement and that little had been forthcoming and so staff brought forward some examples from other cities with successful downtowns, and thus staff drafted a vision statement based on the comments that we heard from the Committee and you had an opportunity to comment and we incorporated those comments and everyone expressed satisfaction with the vision and so she indicated she was puzzled by the comment.

Mr. Eber noted that Mayor Grayson had indicated a small convention center, libraries, other people museums and a small performing arts center, artist's lofts, it seems that we have not explored this enough.

Mr. McGallian stated that the infrastructure put forth in this plan does not prohibit any of that, but he noted you also have to have someone who steps forward who wants to build it. He noted at no point did we ever say you can't put it in. He noted, we can't just park a piece of land and say that will be a convention center in 20 years.

There are really only so many options, we have not prevented any of them, we are encouraging certain uses, we can only go so far.

Kirk Shelby noted that on Grant St. we would like to encourage certain uses in certain areas with more retail for example along Grant St. and any developer should be made aware of that from the beginning and the Design Review Board and Commission will be there to review that as well to make sure it is consistent with the plan.

Kathy Renfrow stated that this is why she keeps asking what the economic development plan for the area is and the outreach to different businesses and what is the plan to bring those additional businesses here.

Mr. McGallian noted, but that is a different department, that is John Montagh and he has an economic development plan that he is following to do that on a daily basis.

Ms. Renfrow responded that she believes that is an important part of the plan.

Ms. Andrews stated there is not a lot of retail that works in this town and that soft goods does not work at all. He noted that in order to have the synergy of retail, you need to have a good 150,000 sq. ft. of retail in an area where people can feel like they are walking. He noted that it is not the strongest market that people think. He recommended revisiting the PBID to brand and promote the downtown as a shopping area for something besides just eating and restaurants.

Mr. Leone noted that he agreed. He mentioned that Ray Barbour had mentioned this before of re-branding the downtown as the Todos Santos District.

Mr. Foster indicated Broadway Plaza was a great example of downtown pedestrian retail. He noted that small blocks were more helpful. He questioned whether the high speed corridors were helpful in encouraging those downtown pedestrian tenants and stated that he thought an organic mix of businesses and the use of Todos Santos District as a brand with Todos Santos Plaza as the anchor was appealing and believes it can grow from there.

Mr. Leone noted #10, that the desire for Early California Architecture had been discussed and agreed to.

Mr. Foster noted that he would like the Galindo House tied into the house more and that he liked what Carol had suggested with the Adobe Drive and that exploring that area as more of a retail center was interesting.

Mr. Eber noted that he was disappointed that the historical society had not had any appreciable input to the plan because he thought they should really be included in some of the conversations.

Ms. Ryan noted that Jay Trolin of the historical society had been made aware of the meetings and website and had provided input to the implementation strategies and that there was a specific implementation strategy crafted by him.

Mr. Eber noted that it would be nice if the historical society representative had attended some of the meetings.

Ms. Renfrow questioned whether Mr. Eber had invited him.

Mr. Eber noted that he had not but would be willing to. Do you think that if we invited them to the meeting we would have time for them. Mr. Eber noted that they would have more expertise as to the historical nature of the downtown.

Mr. Leone questioned whether the Committee had been successful in getting through Mr. Eber's entire list?

Mr. Eber noted that yes, he believed they had and that he felt the discussion had been a very healthy one and one that needed to happen.

Mr. Leone thanked everyone for their discussion and apologized to staff for trailing off of the agenda with other topics.

Ms. Johnson noted that the summary the Committee had discussed actually hit on a number of the agenda items including a) the progress to date, and b) discussion of the FAQs that was prepared as a result of the meeting with the subset of the committee. Ms. Johnson also made the Committee aware of agenda item c) that the Draft Addendum would be available for review on Jan. 21st on the webpage and that the Addendum would be looking at regulatory updates since the Supplemental EIR was prepared in terms of Air Quality, Green House Gas and an updated Urban Water Management Plan prepared by Contra Costa Water District. She emphasized that because we are not changing anything, in terms of the land use, an EIR was not required. She noted that because there was not any rezoning, most of the environmental analysis had already been prepared previously through the General Plan EIR and Supplemental EIR for the Development Code and that the Addendum was simply providing these regulatory updates.

Ms. Ryan confirmed that the Open House would be held on Jan. 27th and encouraged the Committee to attend.

Ms. Johnson noted that this would be a different format than previous workshops with more of an Open House format with different stations set up for land use, environmental, circulation and implementation.

Ms. Ryan noted that there would be copies of the Specific Plan as well as the Draft Addendum available for review at the different stations and that these would both be available on the website.

Ms. Johnson also reminded the Committee that they could still take comments regarding the plan and that if there were parts of the plan that they continued to have concerns about or that were unclear, there was still an opportunity to do word-smithing.

Ms. Ryan confirmed that the Open House was at 6:30 p.m. and the location was at the Salvio Pacheco Building, Suite 201.

Ms. Renfrow inquired as to whether there would still be visual renderings to assist in understanding the plan.

Ms. Ryan indicated the renderings would be available at the Open House which would include both an aerial looking north over BART as well as a view down Grant St. with a before and after in terms of what the future could look like.

Mr. Foster noted that staff had done a great job at the previous workshops and that he had been very proud to be a Committee member involved with those workshops and he thanked Jeff for allowing the use of the meeting space. He offered one suggestion noting that perhaps it could be noted here are some changes based on your input.

Mr. Shelby offered what about outreach to residents in Clayton Valley and outside the area.

Ms. Ryan noted that staff could utilize the City's facebook page to get additional information out and noted that a press release could be used.

Ms. Johnson noted that the City Talk

Ms. Ryan then provided a brief update regarding the Housing Element Update and noted two roundtables had been held in November and a third update would be provided in January. She noted that the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for the next cycle for Concord was approximately 3,500, and that this was Citywide, not just downtown. She noted that the important thing was to understand that the City was not required to build these units, but did need to provide land adequately zoned to provide the capacity for those units to be built and a regulatory environment with policies to encourage development. But noted that the Downtown Specific Plan would inform the Housing Element Update.

Mr. Eber asked whether a portion of this was geared toward the naval weapons station?

Ms. Johnson replied that ABAG had assumed that 10% of the Naval Weapons Station would develop during Cycle 5 and that this could be a bit optimistic given that the City is just now in the next month going out for a Request for Qualifications from developers which would be followed by a Request for Proposals for a master developer. She noted there was enough existing capacity within the City without having to rely on the weapons station to put housing on during that timeframe.

Ms. Ryan noted she had provided a previous Housing Element presentation with their materials and that it was important to note that during the last two years there had only been 0-2 new units built as compared to 385 back in 2000-01. She indicated the noteworthy item was the finding regarding the increasingly younger population.

Mr. Leone noted that he sees impending growth happening in the near future for Concord and that is because apartments in San Francisco are now approaching \$3,000-\$5,000/month and it is more expensive than in New York, so people will start moving out of the City. He noted, we will be able to attract some of those people. He also noted the TBID as another opportunity as they are beginning to market as a destination location in addition to the dealerships.

Ms. Johnson noted that during the roundtables, one thing that was mentioned as a challenge according to developers was the schools, but this may be also be an opportunity for residents in the community or on the Committee to get more involved.

Mr. Leone noted that the meeting was finished and that the Committee had done a great job today.

Board list at end of meeting:

Bike lanes Concord/Clayton Rd.

- Performance Standard
- Don't want level of service reduced
- Safety is most important consideration

Development Intensity

- Checks/balances

Downtown Parking

- Special event trolleys

FUTURE MEETINGS

Ms. Ryan indicated that future meetings were currently scheduled for March 18 and March 31.

ADJOURNMENT

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT APPROXIMATELY 8:30 P.M.

DRAFT MINUTES PREPARED BY:

Joan Ryan
Project Manager