



Memorandum

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS

FROM: WINSTON RHODES, AICP, PLANNING MANAGER

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF CHAPTERS 7 - 11 OF THE DRAFT SPECIFIC PLAN FOR SAN PABLO AVENUE, APPIAN WAY, AND PINOLE VALLEY ROAD

DATE: March 23, 2009

BACKGROUND

A specific plan combines the goals and policy statements and implementation measures typically contained in a general plan with the development standards typically contained within a zoning ordinance. Specific plans are a mechanism to achieve a logical and orderly development pattern as well as to coordinate the provision of infrastructure and encourage economic development.

The draft Specific Plan was forwarded to the Planning Commission on January 23, 2009, prior to the January 26, 2009 meeting. At that time an overview of the document was provided. In order to facilitate a thorough review of the draft Specific Plan by the Steering Committee and members of the public, initial discussion of the draft document was scheduled in three parts: 1) Chapter 1-4 on February 23, 2009, 2) Chapters 5 and 6 on March 9, 2009, and 3) Chapters 7-11 this evening. This is the third of these three Steering Committee initial discussions to review the draft document, provide feedback, and initiate adjustments based on the feedback received. The Draft Specific Plan Update will be discussed further in April when wider stakeholder input is available for Steering Committee consideration.

DISCUSSION

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 relates to private realm design guidelines. This Chapter addresses site planning and design, site amenities, architecture, landscape and hardscape, fencing, private circulation, parking, service and storage, lighting, signage, and green design.

This Chapter includes both “should” and “shall” statements. Chapter 7 (as well as 8) denote “shall” policy or guideline statements with bold text. The Steering Committee should carefully consider what guidelines or policy direction is advisory or encouraged as well as what statements are mandatory to arrive at the proper balance between flexibility to encourage development and certainty to encourage the type of development desired by the community within the Specific Plan corridors. This balance and what warrants mandatory rather than advisory statements will vary depending on the issue and location.

For example, the Downtown area within the San Pablo Avenue and Pinole Valley Road corridors may warrant special consideration because it includes many characteristics that the community wishes to preserve and protect as well as enhance.

In addition, an important objective of the Specific Plan is to have areas experienced more frequently by pedestrians. Design details are especially important in visible areas where pedestrian travel is encouraged. Building form, building massing, building articulation, signage, colors, "touch zone" textures and materials, landscaping, hardscape and lighting need special consideration in these areas to encourage walking and attract the public.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 relates to public realm standards and design guidelines. The Chapter addresses topics including landscaping, sidewalks and crosswalks, street furniture, public art, signage, and plazas. It is important for the Steering Committee to reflect on the available public right-of-way and how much is devoted to infrastructure that serves different travel modes. The amount of right-of-way will dictate the range of amenities that can be accommodated. In addition, durability and ease of maintenance as well as aesthetics are important considerations. Steering Committee feedback on the appropriateness of the range and depth of topics addressed and the appropriateness of the mandatory statements and advisory statements in this Chapter would be very helpful.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 includes a description of existing conditions pertaining to public services, infrastructure and public facilities within the City. The Steering Committee should consider the level of existing services and future needs resulting from proposed land use changes. This topic and the policies and actions to be taken will be further addressed as part of the implementation chapter as more direction on the draft Specific Plan is provided.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 is a placeholder for implementation information that will be developed and evolve based on further public input and direction from the Steering Committee on the Specific Plan, General Plan Update Zoning Code Update, and the Environmental Impact Report that are under preparation concurrently.

The Steering Committee should consider how existing uses would be treated as part of the administration of the Specific Plan and the types of development incentives that should be considered to achieve the Specific Plan vision over time. The pace for implementation of the Specific Plan will be heavily influenced by ongoing economic conditions and the effect these conditions have on City and Redevelopment Agency revenue over many years. Private investment will be necessary to incrementally implement the Specific Plan. The level of private investment and development interest will also be closely tied to economic conditions and the needs and concerns of property owners within the Specific Plan.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 is the appendix and currently includes definitions for terms included within the plan. The

appendix is intended to clarify terms with the draft document for all readers. This information will be important to help answer zoning questions and interpret the development regulations. The Steering Committee should carefully consider whether the uses mentioned in Chapter 6 are adequately defined within this Chapter. Consistency between the definitions in this Chapter and within the Zoning Code Update that will be provided later in the year will be important to prevent future confusion. Feedback on whether additional terms should be defined would be helpful. For example, the graduated setbacks to help reduce multi-story building bulk may be a useful addition to this Chapter to help illustrate expectations and enhance the compatibility between existing and proposed development.

RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS

Staff recommends that the Commission acting as the Steering Committee receive public testimony on the contents of the draft Specific Plan, review draft Chapters 7-11 page by page, and provide feedback and direction to staff and the PMC Specific Plan consultant team on desired changes. April 27, 2009 is scheduled to complete the preliminary review of the draft Specific Plan after receiving further stakeholder input. Additional more detailed information relating to Specific Plan implementation (Chapter 10) is scheduled for review in May.

ATTACHMENT

Draft Specific Plan Chapters 7 -11 (provided previously under separate cover)