

Union Park

Application for Amendment to the Downtown Centennial Plan

Letter of Justification – August 21, 2006

Applicant – Office of Business Development, City of Las Vegas

This request to amend the existing downtown Centennial Plan is done to bring the approved plan into conformance with the current City Council approved development plan and guidelines for the development area.

1. Since the downtown Centennial Plan was adopted July 5, 2000, the areas around the Union Park site have changed in unanticipated major ways.
 - a. The existence of the World Market Center, its tremendous market success, and its now more feasible build-out at 12 million S.F. were not anticipated and create the need for transportation and service changes in the area.
 - b. The RTC has now routed a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line along Grand Central Boulevard providing increased opportunity for public transit access to a high density development on Union Park.
 - c. Changes in ownership of key parcels east of the Union Pacific Railroad Tracks has created an opportunity to rethink the location of key public facilities such as a new city hall.
 - d. The market for mixed-use high density office, residential, and retail projects has expanded greatly and been proven by numerous new projects in downtown.
 - e. Two new major institutional initiatives have been committed to the Union Park site in the form of the Ruvo Alzheimers Institute and the Smith Center for the Performing Arts. These have necessitated a whole new approach to the organization of the land area in Union Park.
2. The proposed plan and guidelines impose burdens that are consistent with the existing Centennial Plan but are also specific to creating a high quality, high density, pedestrian friendly urban environment that extends downtown features and qualities to Union Park.

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3. This request to amend the existing Downtown Centennial Plan is being made to establish a Master Plan for development, supplemented by the Design Standards, pursuant to the goals of the Centennial Plan, which specifically addresses the goals, objectives and requirements of the Union Park development.
 - a. **Vision of Downtown - p. 2**

"Jobs will be created—construction and permanent, professional and service...daily visitors to downtown will sustain a variety of new cafes, restaurants, and supporting commercial uses...high-rise condominiums...growing synergy of uses will create a dynamic, rich, urbane environment that will promote other redevelopment and desirable land uses downtown...a complex and intriguing pedestrian-oriented 24-hour lifestyle."
The Union Park Plan's land use plan shows a rich mix of these uses, with the addition of a dynamic performing arts center, all linked to the surrounding downtown and World Market Center in a lively mixed-use environment.
 - b. **Vision of Downtown - p. 3**

"...a long-term strategy to re-establish Downtown Las Vegas as the region's premier cultural, civic, financial and business center." **Union Park will bring all of these uses into immediate proximity to Downtown, plus the essential element of residential community, which is cited in this element of the Vision.**
 - c. **Definition of Downtown Districts - p. 30**

District 4: Parkway Center "... Parkway Center should become a dense, walkable mixed-use environment linked to the existing downtown street grid."
Union Park comprises high-rise and mid-rise residential development, high-rise office development, continuous retail streets, pedestrian amenities on all streets and pedestrian linkages and view corridors aligned with the downtown street grid and connection to the Clark County Government complex.
 - d. **Downtown Renaissance - p. 10**

"These projects will create a new critical mass of people which will create further market demands for additional cafes, retail, and entertainment venues,

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thus transforming Downtown Las Vegas into a sophisticated and urban environment."

Union Park's City Parkway and Union Park Promenade will have continuous, active uses such as entertainment, restaurants, retail, coffee shops, and other attractive uses that will satisfy the growing need for neighborhood and visitor services and venues.

e. **Downtown Renaissance - p. 10**

"...the development of new residential communities will not only be possible, but highly desirable in rounding out the land uses downtown...new residential towers with panoramic valley views, townhouses and courtyard apartments...the fate of the vacant railyards may be determined with new buildings rising on this now vacant site..."

High rise residential towers in Union Park (on the vacant railyards) will have valley views, and these will be complemented by townhouses and courtyard apartments. The residential community will be a vibrant generator of round the clock activity, and an appealing, authentic Las Vegas neighborhood, close to many attractions.

f. **Urban Design Framework - p. 23**

V3D Linkages 4 p. 23 "Lewis Street should be developed into the primary east-west pedestrian corridor for the revitalized Office Core district...the City's commitment to rebuild this street into the Lewis Street Corridor...the new Civic Corridor..."

Lewis Street, projected west from the Office Core, bisects the site of the proposed City Hall, and across the tracks, the extension of this street creates a Civic Axis with Discovery Drive accessing the site from the west, alongside which will be located the new Performing Arts Center. This is intended to extend and strengthen the Civic Axis of Lewis Street.

g. **V3D Linkages – p. 25**

"The net effect of all linkage systems and improvements will result in drawing people from one place to another, improving the image and character of the area, and consequently encouraging a greater use of Downtown Las Vegas in its entirety.

All sidewalks and streets in Union Park are designed as linear open spaces with high levels of pedestrian amenities to link areas within Union Park and to areas outside Union Park. Pedestrian bridges are planned to link Union Park directly with the Clark County Governmental Complex, the proposed City Hall site on Main Street, and the Fremont Street Experience.

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- h. **V3E Proposed Mixed Use Opportunities Residential Neighborhoods - p.26**
"The City has identified the potential of building some 5000 residential units over the next 10 years within downtown Las Vegas...the creation and strengthening of neighborhoods is essential...successful integration of residential development into Downtown Las Vegas will require focusing on efforts in specific areas, establishing a critical mass..."
Union Park can create well over half of the City's residential unit goal on the 61 acres. This will be the critical mass that is needed to generate demand for many other uses and create an exciting downtown place to live.
- i. **Parks and Open Space - p. 26**
Many downtowns across the nation are recognized for their formal public open space...Over the next few years, the City should pursue the creation of a series of a series of small urban park spaces linked by trails and enhanced pedestrian streetscapes to expand the livability of Downtown."
Union Park will feature a major Symphony Park on the Civic Axis, as a forecourt to the new Performing Arts Center, as the open space heart of Union Park and its neighborhood. Smaller publicly-accessible open spaces are planned throughout Union Park, and along its streets, which are designed as linear parkways.
- j. **V4 Definition of Downtown Districts -District Four: Parkway Center - p. 30**
"Parkway Center should become a dense, walkable, mixed-use environment linked to the existing downtown street grid."
The major planning premise of Union Park is to create a highly walkable, very dense and mixed-use environment, which will be a catalyst and linkage to the surrounding land use districts in Downtown Las Vegas. The mix of high-density residential towers and lower residential blocks, the continuously active streets, the office and employment uses and the comfortable, walkable streets of Union Park will create this district.
- k. **DS Downtown Las Vegas: Design Standards - pgs. 47-59**
Union Park includes, in its Design Standards, the design standards discussed in the Centennial Plan for Downtown Las Vegas. See separate justification letter for description of these Design Standards and the Design Review process.

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This request to adopt the Design Standards for Union Park is being made to establish a guide for quality development in Union Park, pursuant to the goals of the Centennial Plan, and also specifically addressing the goals, objectives and requirements of the Union Park development.

Design Standards

The Union Park Design Standards are graphic and written principles of design which are to be incorporated into the design of all development blocks in the project. They are an aid to achieving a high level of design excellence. The success of Union Park depends on each developer and designer incorporating the Design Standards into the Designs for each block and individual project.

The Design Standards will guide developers and architects through the process of creating a pedestrian-oriented, visually cohesive and economically viable urban community. They promote a clear and consistent process for the development of parcels. While they provide a clear vision, they are also flexible in accommodating a mix of uses while helping to shape a variety of building forms. They do not mandate particular architectural styles or building materials. Instead, they do the following:

- Recognize that Union Park will be built and evolve over time
- Create and maintain a standard of architectural and urban design quality that will sustain real estate values for everyone
- Promote a cohesive development pattern while allowing for diversity and variety in the design and construction of individual projects
- Assist designers, City Staff, developers and other in making consistent design choices that reinforce the vision
- Provide clear guidance to the process of Design Review and public approvals

Each development project will be reviewed for compliance with the Design Standards, according to the Design Review process described in the back of this book. The Design Review Committee will be made up of City and Development Manager representatives. This book of Design Standards is organized into four major parts:

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Section 1 Union Park Orientation

This section informs the project developer and designer to the systems and requirements that affect not only the individual sites but also the Union Park site as a whole. Items addressed include parking and access, site drainage, public open space, tower location, sustainability and solar orientation.

Section 2 Streetscape and Open Space

This section delineates the major characteristics of all the streets and open space, including their cross sections, design themes and streetscape elements. The section illustrates designs which are to be followed by developers who will own and develop the areas behind the curb lines, including the sidewalks.

Section 3 General Site and Building Design Standards

This section covers non-geographic features of the development such as building articulation, signage, site lighting and active building frontages. Each of these contributes to the success of the urban environment by adding a functional and aesthetic note to the overall look and feel of Union Park. The section addresses Required, Recommended and Allowable standards for each of the topics.

Section 4 Character of the Blocks

This section shows how the design standards in sections 1-3 are applied to each building parcel. It describes allowable and encouraged building setbacks, active frontages, parking access and other parameters of each land parcel. Setbacks, open space features, view corridors, parking, tower location and other features are displayed so that the designer has a logical starting point for design.

Each Design Standard is organized into Intent and Standards. The Intent is a statement of the purpose or goal behind each design standard. If the specific language is not definitive, the Design Review Committee reserves the discretion of making decisions on the basis of their understanding of the Intent. This will be the governing decision.

Each principle is either Required (this shall be done) or Recommended (this should be done). In some cases a principle is stated as Acceptable, meaning that if someone chooses to use it, its use is permitted.

Design Review

To ensure that each Union Park project complies with the Design Standards, each will be reviewed with respect to its architectural, urban design and landscape design qualities, as measured by the Design Standards.

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The objectives of the Design Review are primarily to provide timely, fair and firm design direction for each project, and to resolve differences in design approach between the parcel developer, the Development Manager and the City of Las Vegas.

A Design Review Committee consisting of 2 people appointed by the Master Developer and 3 people appointed by the City of Las Vegas will review each project, supplemented as they determine, by design and/or engineering consultants.

The Design Review Process

Each project will be subject to the same review process, with submittals at these stages: Block Plans—A review of the project at a Conceptual Design level, identifying parking, access, site plan, pedestrian and open space, concept elevations, a program and a 3-D model.

Plans and Drawings—A review of the project at a Design Development level identifying more detailed site, grading and drainage plan, floor plans, sections, elevations, key details, color and material boards, signage and a refined 3-D model.

Review of Construction—An on-site review to ensure the project's construction in compliance with the Design Standards. This is an inspection carried out on the construction site to confirm the fidelity to the approved design.

Waivers to the Design Standards may be granted by City Council upon a recommendation from the Design Review Committee, upon presentation of a justification evidenced by economic or other hardship, or improvement in the goals and objectives of Union Park, or the City's redevelopment efforts.

Amendments to the Design Standards may be recommended by the Design Review Committee, when they are warranted to address deficiencies or changes in the development. Changes will be made in accordance with the requirements of Title 19.18 of the Las Vegas Municipal Code.

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