



Las Vegas

Agenda Item No.: 4.

AGENDA SUMMARY PAGE
SPECIAL JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR: AL MARGO WHEELER

Consent Discussion

SUBJECT:
REPORT, DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION REGARDING THE BACKGROUND, KEY POINTS, MAJOR COMPONENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN THE CITY OF LAS VEGAS

Fiscal Impact

No Impact

Augmentation Required

Budget Funds Available

Amount:

Funding Source:

Dept./Division:

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

Receive reports and enter into a discussion on sustainability to include background information on sustainability rankings, U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, greenhouse gas inventory, existing city of Las Vegas policy framework and planning and zoning ordinances, ongoing city initiatives, and efforts of local professional organizations. The workshop will focus on how to implementation strategies for organizational sustainability, land use policy, density, streetscapes, parks and open space, and transportation.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive Reports and provide direction.

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

1. Submitted at meeting Handouts by Michael Kinsley
2. Submitted after meeting PowerPoint presentations by staff, Windom Kimsey, Deepika Padam, Rita Brandin and Michael Kinsley

Minutes:

MAYOR GOODMAN thanked City staff, Planning Commission and City Council for their efforts to promote sustainability in the City of Las Vegas and noted several projects currently underway. He briefly described City Management's successful green efforts such as the City's hydrogen fleet and LEED-certified buildings. He stated this meeting would be instrumental to the City Council and Planning Commission in finding direction for future sustainability efforts in the City.

DR. DOUG SELBY gave a brief report on the recent storm and related flooding in the Las Vegas Valley, explaining that the storm was a remnant of Hurricane Dean. Noting no serious injuries

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

had been reported as a result of the storm, he stated numerous lightning strikes to buildings, minor flooding in streets and homes and significant rainfall had been reported. He concluded by stating area flood facilities were working well and that rain remained in the forecast throughout the rest of the day.

DR. SELBY stated this meeting was dedicated to sustainability, one of the most important initiatives currently before the City, and that with the Council's leadership, the City has made significant progress. He explained the meeting would be facilitated by RON PORTARO and would include several presentations on sustainability. Following the presentations, DR. SELBY invited the Council to discuss the information and give direction to staff.

MARGO WHEELER, Director of the Planning and Development Department, introduced the meeting's presenters, WINDOM KIMSEY, POLLY CAROLIN DEPIKI, PADAM, RITA BRANDIN and MICHAEL KINSLEY.

RON PORTARO noted the meeting's ambitious agenda and encouraged the Councilmembers and Commissioners ask any questions regarding clarification of presentations. He explained that he would track any issues they wished to discuss and state those issues would be addressed during the discussion portion of the agenda. He clarified that the purpose of this meeting was education, awareness and understanding between the Councilmembers, Commissioners and staff regarding sustainability and asked the Council to give staff direction at the end of the meeting.

DEPUTY CITY MANAGER STEVE HOUCHEM utilized a PowerPoint presentation for a brief history of sustainability in the City which was made a part of the final minutes. He described the City's sustainability policies which included smart growth principles within the City's Master Plans, strategic policies and City Manager policies. Acknowledging that the definition for sustainability is unclear, MR. HOUCHEM gave the City's definition for sustainable development and listed the City's many sustainability initiatives. He then turned the podium over to TOM PERRIGO, Deputy Director of the Planning and Development Department.

MR. PERRIGO utilized a PowerPoint presentation regarding greenhouse gases and their impact on sustainability which was made a part of the final minutes. He briefly described the negative impacts of greenhouse gases and several different approaches to reducing those gases and their impacts, highlighting MAYOR GOODMAN'S support, with other Mayors, of the Kyoto Protocols. Emphasizing that sustainability is about efficiency, MR. PERRIGO briefly described the City's framework for sustainability which was multi-faceted approach that included City business practices, City operations and community outreach.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW requested clarification of the heat island effect and the City's community outreach efforts.

In response to MAYOR GOODMAN'S question regarding the impact of ignoring global warming, MR. PERRIGO explained the result would be a series of bad outcomes. MICHAEL KINSLEY, Rocky Mountain Institute, stated global warming will create significant weather

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

anomalies, negatively impacting living environments. He suggested that the resulting chaos and collapse could be dangerous for democracy.

WINDOM KIMSEY, Chair of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) 150 Initiative, gave a detailed presentation, referencing a PowerPoint presentation regarding a blueprint for Las Vegas. He described the 24-hour town meeting format which had been used to come up with recommendations and detailed some of the topics which were discussed, including conservation of resources, economic diversification, infrastructure and land development.

MAYOR GOODMAN complimented and thanked MR. KIMSEY and the AIA for their work with the 24-hour townhall meeting. MR. KIMSEY expressed the AIA's support for the City's sustainability efforts and stated the result of the town hall meeting would be published shortly.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW requested later discussion on community incentives and other conservation efforts. COMMISSIONER TROWBRIDGE also requested further discussion on water and return flow credits.

FLINN FAGG, Planning and Development Department, presented a PowerPoint presentation for his presentation on sustainability. The first half of his presentation pertained to community design and density. He noted problems with supporting the current suburban model of development and highlighted the benefits of appropriate density development. MR. FAGG listed and explained the requirements for sustainable and appropriate higher-density development. For the second half of his presentation, MR. FAGG stressed the importance of streetscape and parking. He described several approaches to streetscape and parking requirements which would maximize their contribution to the City's sustainability measures.

COUNCILMAN BROWN requested further discussion on density driven by the government compared to density driven by the market while COUNCILMAN BARLOW questioned how the City could plant more trees and reduce its water usage at the same time.

VICE-CHAIRMAN GOYNES suggested that the need to educate the community on the benefits of mass transit also be discussed and COMMISSIONER TROWBRIDGE requested more information on the impact of higher density development on public recreational space.

JOHN RIDILLA, Public Works Department, gave a detailed report on sustainable transportation, referencing a PowerPoint Presentation which was made a part of the final minutes. He described the Casino Center Alignment, joint mass transit efforts between the City and the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), and how the alignment would interact with other efforts in the valley. MR. RIDILLA also noted several mass transit projects currently underway, such as other bus rapid transit systems on other major streets and Park N Ride facilities. He added that a magnetic levitation train system was in the planning process for the I-15 corridor between Las Vegas and Anaheim, CA.

COMMISSIONER EVANS requested additional discussion regarding traffic light synchronization and driving habits of the public.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

POLLY CAROLIN, gave a in-depth presentation on transit-oriented development, utilizing a PowerPoint Presentation which was made a part of the final minutes. She defined transit-oriented development and described how it functions. She emphasized its many benefits and underscored the importance of finding the right balance of transit and development options.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW requested clarification of the City's status in planning mass transit, with regards to the City's success or lack thereof, and COMMISSIONER TRUESDELL added, as a corollary, his question regarding the best ways and most appropriate times to implement mass transit efforts. COUNCILMAN TROVATI requested more information regarding demographics, affordability, and the economic impact to mass transit, while COUNCILMAN WOLFSON requested suggestions to assist the City in implementing the presenters' recommendations.

DEEPIKA PADAM, U.S. Green Building Council, gave a detailed report on green building, using a PowerPoint presentation which was made a part of the final minutes. She listed the many benefits of green building, defining the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system and its certification levels. She detailed the certification process and noted various LEED-certified buildings.

COMMISSIONER STEINMAN, wondered if adoption of LEED building standards could put the City at a disadvantage with regards to economic development and COUNCILMAN BARLOW requested clarification of the rewards and incentives for LEED certifications.

RITA BRANDIN, Newland Communities, gave a report on the LEED Neighborhood Development (ND) pilot program, utilizing a PowerPoint presentation which was made a part of the final minutes. She explained the program, its development, and Union Park's role within the program. MS. BRANDIN then compared Union Park to other LEED ND projects and highlighted the certification and development goals for Union Park.

MR. POTARO noted the Councilmembers and Commissioners had requested discussion on several issues and he asked for direction from the Boards regarding which specific items should be discussed collectively and which items could be discussed at a later time.

MAYOR GOODMAN recessed the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

MAYOR GOODMAN called the meeting back to order at 2:31 p.m.

MICHAEL KINSLEY, Rocky Mountain Institute, utilized a Powerpoint presentation which was made a part of the final minutes. He began his report by emphasizing that investments in land and real estate in areas with marginal climates will become increasingly risky as the world's climate changes and noted that insurance companies are withdrawing from risky environments. MR. KINSLEY emphasized that whole-system thinking is need for sustainability and explained that sustainability is about integration. His principle point was that humans are going through a huge transition in history, changing the ways we manage ourselves and making us think differently about our communities. He stated sustainability requires a change in the definition of success, using LEED as an example, and underscored that sustainability presents huge opportunities and multiple benefits from a single investment. MR. KINSLEY described several

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

sustainability practices and listed their various benefits. He compared those practices to existing energy policies and noted negative impacts and risks of not choosing sustainable practices. He mentioned the publications his company has produced and some of their clients, describing the increased profitability and efficiencies enjoyed by those clients as a result of working with his company.

After briefly going over definitions for growth, expansion and development, MR. KINSLEY emphasized that opportunities to develop without expanding are preferable, more efficient and gave several examples. Observing that federal policy had created the suburban development pattern, he stated that sprawling development does not pay for itself and creates a drain on a government's resources. He suggested a different development strategy and listed its benefits, emphasizing the importance and influence of local government on sustainability. MR. KINSLEY complimented the City's current efforts on specific projects, stating the City was heading in the right direction with LEED certification and green architecture, but noted that sprawl was an obvious problem in the City. He described a subdivision allotment system which had been successful in controlling the rate of growth and improving the development in his jurisdiction when he was a County Commissioner. MR. KINSLEY noted many problems with investing in sprawl and suggested solutions. With regards to green buildings, he pointed out the increased capital investment is not egregious and he gave several examples, emphasizing sustainability efforts are good business practices. MR. KINSLEY concluded by acknowledging the difficulty in changing government policies regarding sustainability and by underscoring the importance of thinking about sustainability as a whole system problem with a whole system solution.

In response to COUNCILMAN BROWN'S question, MR. KINSLEY described sprawl as resource-inefficient and the kind of settlement patterns and development patterns that force people into their cars. WINDOM KINSLEY defined sprawl as fragmented and disconnected growth.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN thanked MR. KINSLEY for his presentation and for confirming her belief that growth does not pay for itself. MR. KINSLEY thanked COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN and pointed out that measuring performance and taking fiscal responsibility seriously is central to sustainability.

COMMISSIONER EVANS expressed concern with the difficulty in discussing sustainability in real terms internally and with other jurisdictions. MR. KINSLEY acknowledged the difficulties, but emphasized the importance of having those discussions. MAYOR GOODMAN suggested sustainability issues will only be addressed when the Las Vegas Valley consolidates.

Observing that several members on the City Council and Planning Commission would soon reach the end of their terms, COMMISSIONER EVANS stated that sustainability measures must be in place soon. MAYOR GOODMAN and COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN both agreed. COUNCILMAN ROSS also concurred and added that the City needs to take immediate action and set the example for other municipalities and COUNCILMAN WOLFSON agreed. MR. KINSLEY emphasized that developing the plan with the community will enhance its success, noting the private sector would need to be deeply involved.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

MR. KINSLEY opened the discussion on sustainability goals, priorities and leadership and suggested an approach which would identify and frame sustainability goals. He suggested different methods of assessing environmental performance according to each program's goals and encouraged focus on barriers and solutions. MR. KINSLEY explained that if this measurable evidence that programs are performing, there would be higher probability that those programs will stick while those that aren't working will go away. He suggested placing initial focus on City operations, and then on community policies. He emphasized that this approach is two-pronged, beginning with the development of a comprehensive plan and then executing a short-term plan.

In response to COUNCILMAN ROSS' question on how the City should involve the public in sustainability, MR. KINSLEY stressed the importance of hiring marketing professionals and making the marketing unique to the City.

MR. PORTARO briefly reviewed the issues the Councilmembers and Commissioners had mentioned for further discussion and assured them that anything that was not discussed would be held for future discussion. He then requested further direction from the Council and the Commissioners.

COUNCILMAN BROWN observed that the City is approaching landlock and sprawl will no longer be an issue. He pointed out the many master-planned communities in the City and argued that despite the phenomenal growth the City has had a leadership role in sustainability efforts in development and has met development goals that the State should be handling.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN agreed with COUNCILMAN BROWN, but noted other areas of concern. She observed that previous efforts to create a development impact fee had not been successful and suggested that the City needs to examine growth costs in an effort to stay ahead of future problems.

COMMISSIONER TRUESDELL observed that the City's expansion is coming from empty nesters and was not significantly impacting the school district. He recommended better use of infrastructure with improved infill projects and better utilization of transportation dollars. With regards to the heat island effect, he suggested that the solution should be better landscaping interpretation.

COUNCILMAN WOLFSON stated that he had not observed any results from the City and County Growth Commission and he stressed the importance of working with the County in order to achieve sustainability goals.

COMMISSIONER TROWBRIDGE observed the product of the regional growth meeting was that the City had agreed to build more parks, resulting in the City leading other municipalities in park space and other sustainability efforts. He noted the City has many opportunities for future sustainability efforts and he gave several examples throughout the City.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

Citing several statistics, COMMISSIONER EVANS suggested that the City is subject to the pressures of California's population swells and that fact should be considered as part of the City's growth policies. He also recommended simple solutions for sustainability like trees and environmental homebuilding program incentives.

COUNCILMAN REESE stated the City has done a great job regarding sustainability and that other opportunities are still available. He suggested that planning is difficult, given the several projects currently underway, and he stressed the need to proceed with caution.

MR. KINSLEY explained that his duty as an outsider is to provoke discussion and suggest opposing viewpoints. He suggested that the idea of being landlocked should be considered as an asset rather than as a liability and pointed out that significant demand for an attractive place, combined with a slower growth rate, is good for the economy. MAYOR GOODMAN responded that other studies show that artificially slowing growth could be very detrimental, but noted the Council's actions had turned the City's landlocked situation into a benefit.

In response to MR. TORTARO's request for direction, COUNCILMAN REESE requested clarification of the course of action the Council should take. In response to COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN'S inquiry, he also suggested an assessment of City's traffic and mass transit, with particular attention paid to the impact of high-rise developments on the existing transit systems. COUNCILMAN TROSS stated that planning for and providing mass transit opportunities will benefit the City in the long term.

COUNCILMAN BROWN observed that the Council has a great vision for the City in its strategic plan and noted the plan's substantial support from the City's various departments. He suggested that staff investigate where sustainability could fit in or fit over the strategic plan, which would also give staff the opportunity to look for short-term wins. MR. KINSLEY confirmed COUNCILMAN BROWN'S understanding that the City should focus on its business of public service and how sustainability fits into the City's overall mission.

COMMISSIONER EVANS stated the City Council's and Planning Commission's legacy will be the downtown and expressed his hope that that the unintended consequence of sprawl will be that people will prefer to live in the downtown core. He observed that this meeting is a good starting point for discussion and suggested future mandates or incentives for solar energy. MR. KINSLEY noted that while other factors are part of the motivation for sustainability, a major driving force is the business' or government's sense of legacy.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN requested that a method for assessing the City's wins regarding sustainability be developed in order to effectively evaluate the success of any particular program.

COUNCILMAN WOLFSON wondered if the City should require developers to be LEED-certified. In response, COMMISSIONER TROWBRIDGE noted the many successful sustainability goals already achieved in the City and observed the Council was successfully

CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: AUGUST 27, 2007

encouraging developers to go green. He also made several specific suggestions which took into account issues unique to the City.

COMMISSIONER EVANS requested statistics on the rate of hiring of out-of-state builders and COMMISSIONER TROWBRIDGE pointed out that MR. KINSLEY's presentation listed the benefits of keeping the money local.

MAYOR GOODMAN emphasized the importance of creating a skilled workforce in the City and, with the hope that all the proposed downtown projects will be constructed, stated the secret to success in the downtown area and the City is interconnectivity.

COMMISSIONER DUNNAM suggested that the most immediate action the City could take would be to educate people about LEED certification and green building, emphasizing the public will drive the market.

VICE-CHAIRMAN GOYNES recommended putting in mass transit before any increase in density and suggested that developers incorporate transit elements into their projects. He pointed out other major cities have several transit options, while people in Las Vegas are forced to choose between their cars and the bus.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR PERRIGO stated that LEED is one standard among a number of green building standards that the City is currently evaluating as part of its residential, industrial and commercial building requirements.

MR. PORTARO thanked the presenters for their attendance and reports. MAYOR GOODMAN thanked the presenters and staff for their participation. He also thanked the Council and the Planning Commission for all their hard work. He concluded by saying that staff has a good sense of the diverse interests of the Council and that it was time for discussions to take place among the various entities and the private sector.

