



Las Vegas

Agenda Item No.: 4.

AGENDA SUMMARY PAGE

SPECIAL JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING OF: MARCH 23, 2009

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

DIRECTOR: AL MARGO WHEELER

☐ Consent ☒ Discussion

SUBJECT:

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE DIRECTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL AND/OR PLANNING COMMISSION REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABILITY WITHIN THE CITY OF LAS VEGAS THROUGH THE MASTER PLAN, THE ZONING CODE, CORRIDOR PLANS, WALKABLE COMMUNITY PLANS AND TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

Fiscal Impact:

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No Impact

☐ Augmentation Required

☐

Budget Funds Available

Amount:

Funding Source:

Dept./Division:

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

The Council and Planning Commission will receive reports and enter into a discussion regarding the implementation of sustainability, including a report on progress made since the August 2007 joint workshop, economic and demographic trends that are transforming the built environment, the LEED for Neighborhood Development program, the American Planning Association Great Streets and Great Neighborhoods program, the impact of street and neighborhood design on sustainability, and technology systems that assist in the reduction of natural resources. The workshop will address how codes and plans assist with the implementation of sustainability, including the development of corridor plans, walkable community plans, master plan updates and zoning code revisions.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive reports and possibly provide direction to staff

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

1. Biographical Sketch for Mark Pisano, The Ahwahnee Principles, Newspaper Articles, February 5, 2009 letter from Mayor Goodman to Jacob Snow with the Regional Transportation Commission, Characteristics and Guidelines of Great Neighborhoods and LEED-ND handout
2. Submitted at Meeting Articles on California's Sustainability and 10 Ideas Changing the World Right Now and Planning and Development Department Work Plan 2009-2014
3. Submitted after Meeting PowerPoint Presentations by Mark Pisano, Tom Perrigo and Flinn Fagg

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Minutes:

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the Historic 5th Street Elementary School, a very successful component of the City's redevelopment efforts, being used for multiple purposes by the entire community.

MARGO WHEELER, Director of Planning and Development, outlined the meetings purpose to talk about what has occurred since the last joint workshop on sustainability held in late 2007. It will also cover the importance of sustainability during this economic downturn and opportunities for the City as it matures in this new climate. She introduced MARK PISANO and summarized his biographical data.

MR. PISANO commended the Mayor, City Council and the Planning Commission on efforts to make Las Vegas one of the premier cities in the world. He addressed issues and impacts on the economy, demographics and environmental changes. He referred to an article written by RICHARD FLORIDA comparing the current economic situation to the long depression of 1873. That financial crisis and collapse required a 13-year recovery and ushered in suburban America.

From 1989 through 1991, the end of the Cold War, the Berlin conversion and the opening of the borders to free trade resulted in California experiencing a depression and the loss of thousands of jobs. The overall region took 12 years to recover and the City of Los Angeles has not yet done so. Major economic cycles have had impact on the shape, size, growth and development of the country. Suburban development drove city growth in Florida, Arizona, Nevada and Southern California. Those same cities aren't going to be able to rely on the same growth boom forces in the future and those relying on tourism will see a very slow economic recovery.

The demographic future over the next 30 years will affect the growth and development. Aging and family-structure trends have led to the hypothesis that people will move away from single-family detached dwelling units by 2015. Consumers will be forming different types of households with new needs associated with those development patterns. Over the last year there has been a significant depreciation of single-family detached dwelling units, and if this continues, there will be an increased demand for a different type of housing stock in different locations.

Issues with climate change, global warming and emissions of carbon-based fuel is making the current transportation system more expensive and will continue to tax the American consumer. Shifts in the economy and demographics as well as cost and penalties due to the globalization of the environment are pushing cities to rethink their policies. The most important thing that the Council and Planning Commission can do is create the vision and a new approach to prepare the City for the next century.

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TOM PERRIGO, Deputy Director of Planning and Development, used a PowerPoint presentation to give a brief review of the 2007 joint workshop and issues involving sustainability and climate change. He gave an overview on sustainability, the environment, land use, world energy consumption increases, buildings, transportation and infrastructure costs.

There are opportunities to create walkable communities and employment centers. He demonstrated on maps the location of appreciation and depreciation in property values as well as foreclosures. Neighborhoods west of downtown had the least decline in residential real estate values. He provided a comparison between downtown neighborhoods, West Las Vegas, Union Park, the Lakes and Summerlin as to the amount of walkable areas. COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN verified that many areas had a greater than one hundred percent appreciation in residential properties between 2000 and 2008, and the least price depreciation over the last two years. She agreed there needs to be a new thought process as to development, electricity, buildings, energy and how to be more efficient with those resources.

MR. PISANO utilized a PowerPoint presentation regarding Southern California's vision initiative. The four-year process resulted in changes to the general plan for 10 cities and the region focused on mobility, prosperity, livability and sustainability, similar to the goals of the City of Las Vegas. Using data from a geospatial office, every single parcel and general plan was converted into the same kind of planning analysis developers use to move forward with projects. It documented the increase in walkability within communities, as well as the increased return in investment, taxes and financial stream.

MS. WHEELER presented a video by CHRIS LEINBERGER, noted expert, regarding sustainability and walkable urbanism. MR. LEINBERGER divides the building industry into two categories; pre and post World War II. The pendulum is now swinging back to somewhere in the middle. Within this framework, he expounded on historical details, 19 kinds of drivable sub-urbanism, luxury housing to self storage and the five kinds of walkable urbanism involving traditional downtown, downtown-adjacent, suburban town, Greenfield town and redeveloped regional strip malls.

MR. LEINBERGER focused on the five kinds of walkable urbanism being driven by economic and demographic trends. There is a consumer demand for walkability and access to community amenities as evidenced by comparative real estate values. One study reflected that 30 to 40 percent of households surveyed desired to live in walkable urban places, yet only 5 to 20 percent of the housing supply would be considered walkable in most regions. He emphasized the importance of making development more sustainable, as is inherent in walkable urbanism. He summarized what needs to be done to make walkable urbanism legal, educating the financial community, ending subsidies for drivable sub-urbanism, investing in rail transit and intensively managing walkable urban districts to ensure that the needed complexity actually occurs.

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COUNCILMAN BARLOW discussed with MR. PISANO the loss of manufacturing jobs, including aerospace and cars, in Los Angeles and the impact of the relocation of the entertainment industry to outlying areas. Los Angeles is not competitive as a result of its business tax. He cautioned all cities to pay attention to the tax structure.

Regarding housing, he stressed creating policies to make residential and surrounding areas more attractive with mixed use, activity centers, walkable areas and efficient mortgages. An example would be a home located near a transit line may get reduced points on their mortgage. Increased values should be a joint venture between the municipality establishing policies and the private sector. A city can establish parameters to make the market place profitable. The walkability index can be turned into an investment index.

CHAIR TROWBRIDGE questioned the trend that only a small percentage of households will have children in 20 years. More intense density with accessible work opportunities would avoid transportation issues but increase the need for urban parks. The question was how this would fit in the Las Vegas community. MR. PISANO replied that 12 percent of current household not having children is a nationwide figure that may vary from city to city. There is a real change in demographics pertaining to household formation. Creating open spaces, transit capacity and allowing for development activities along those critical patterns is the task facing the City Council. Transit and new technology will need the most work.

Regarding the transit issue, MS. WHEELER referred to a letter sent by MAYOR GOODMAN to JACOB SNOW with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). She and JORGE CERVANTES, Director of Public Works, met with MR. SNOW and his staff for a long discussion on the importance of community transit. The City is moving with great vigor in the right direction. The recent updated Parks Element identified areas of the City with the largest amount of population where neighborhood parks are necessary. New neighborhoods will also be addressed.

COMMISSIONER EVANS discussed with MAYOR GOODMAN that stimulus monies could be used for light rail and a new transportation system but there is no specific information available. CITY MANAGER ELIZABETH FRETWELL added that the reauthorization bill will be considered by the next Congress and provides the greatest opportunity for the City to reposition its priorities. There is discussion on national transportation objectives to support transit-oriented design and funding may be shifted to other sorts of transportation modes for competitiveness. In preparing a master list for the U.S. Conference of Mayors, it was found that the City does not have transit projects ready for commuter rail or light rail. There may be transit money for buses, right-of-way for the ACE, but she does not hold hope for stimulus funding for new commuter rail lines as the City is not shovel-ready.

MR. PERRIGO added that the purpose of the Mayors letter was to prepare for an opportunity for available funding. MR. PISANO indicated that it is unlikely there will be public monies for

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infrastructure at the necessary level given the massive investment needed within the country and the federal fiscal situation. There is a national effort called America 2050 for a fundamental thesis on how to take the growth and development and capture a portion of that to help support infrastructure. The City could establish tax increment districts to capture a portion of increased appreciation if it had transit lines and stations in place. It is important to start business plans that make necessary business investments and not wait on Washington to provide resources.

COUNCILMAN ROSS was pleased with this concept but it is the same thing he heard four years ago about urbanization and the work/live developments. The product has worked for other cities, but he has yet to see it happen here. He does not see the consumer driven product as discussed because he does not see the needed transportation. He believes the people bought in the location they wanted and the developers built according to the market. A master plan policy could be created but it has to be bought into by everybody. MR. PISANO observed that the market needs to grow in a different way. Partnerships are needed between neighborhood groups, the private sector and the elected officials.

COUNCILMAN ROSS stated he firmly believes that single family homes would still be selling if the lending market was not in the current situation. He looks forward to this type of product should homebuilders start developing again and to seeing it work.

COMMISSIONER TRUEDELL supported transit-oriented development with great urban nodes, but it would take a fundamental policy change. He asked who would fill the gap if people are riding buses, trains and not using cars or paying gas taxes. He also commented on the street widths to accommodate refuse trucks and fire engines, but other cities have smaller streets, which saves the infrastructure.

MR. PISANO responded that gas tax is a user-tax to pay for roads. There has been a lot of tension between the transportation communities. The core should be a nexus between people that ride and the real estate that surrounds the transit stations. California put in a transit line, allowed for different densities and different setback requirements, which translated into dollars and cents in increased real estate value. Ultimately, developers will not develop an area if there is no profit. It will require both state and federal government to get started. As to wide roadways, that provides use in creative ways.

COUNCILMAN REESE remarked that Las Vegas is unique and redeveloped areas are small, unlike cities like San Diego or Los Angeles. The Council has worked closely with developers to build projects like Streamline Tower, Juhl, SoHo Lofts and LOctane. LOctane has full occupancy where the others have only 30 percent occupancy. He noted these buildings were built when real estate was expensive and not affordable to people. Projects like the World Market Center, Lou Ruvo Institute, Chelsea Outlet Mall and the Performance Art Center were created due to the Planning Commission and City Councils vision. There is a developer who

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wants to build two affordable four-story apartments with 600 to 700 square foot units on property zoned for high-rise condos. The apartments rent from \$700 to \$800. This type of development would target a need downtown. The Councilman expressed his belief that Las Vegas is ahead of the curve in doing those things that are necessary.

MR. PISANO noted that development in Orange County does not exceed four-story. Low-rise developments can be located within mixed use, even amidst high-rise, and the right design can enhance the character of downtown.

MS. WHEELER explained that MR. PERRIGO'S presentation compared early 2000 to now. The presentation by MR. PISANO and the Leinberger video demonstrate that economics have changed. The world is different than what it was in 2000. The point is not to focus on one type of development, but at all five different levels of development for different markets. The City creates policies needed to meet the new economics that have changed the demographics, the energy costs and the market. The City needs to position itself to accommodate different types of neighborhoods throughout the city for lifestyle, housing, work, and recreation choices for all its citizens. Staff wants to provide necessary information so that the Planning Commission and City Council can make informed decisions.

COUNCILMAN ROSE directed that the building industry be included in the discussions. MAYOR GOODMAN noted that without consolidation it will be difficult to agree on the transit system. For example, the City of Henderson voted against mass transit. The wonderful benefits provided to the developers will disappear because the first thing eliminated are incentives. The bottom line is not to create impossible situations. MS. WHEELER agreed that it is about accommodating, not forcing.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN commented on her attendance at a three-day conference on suburban renewal at the University of Southern California. She visited outlining renewed areas of Los Angeles, such as Pasadena and Redondo Beach. Management is the key to this type of urban development. She has been very vocal in protecting neighborhood integrity and continues to strongly protect the older neighborhoods in her Ward. Planning staff needs to lead the Council and she verified with MS. WHEELER that mixed use can exist next to existing residential neighborhoods. Another key is disseminating the information early to the community so they understand what is being planned. Walkable areas in her Ward can exist and residential areas can be connected to this type of urban development.

FLINN FAGG, Planning and Development, provided a PowerPoint presentation on great streets and great neighborhoods, demonstrating where these neighborhoods exist as mandated by the 2020 Master Plan goals, policies and objectives. The City's Strategic Plan supports and encourages sustainability and livable neighborhoods. MR. FAGG confirmed that MS. WHEELER chose her home because of its proximity to downtown and walking trails. MR.

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PERRIGO chose his because of its wonderful streetscapes, walking distance to schools and parks and proximity to Red Rock National Conservation area where he and his family hike.

MR. FAGG pointed out that people buy where they live for different reasons, but it is usually a combination of proximity to services, design and aesthetics. There are five different types of walkable neighborhoods within Las Vegas. The goal is to build those neighborhoods of lasting value, streets that function for all users and create memorable places. A website, www.walkscore.com, ranks neighborhoods based on their walkability from 100 down to 0 based on being able to meet daily needs.

MR. FAGG clarified for the Mayor a neighborhood is that which has a definable boundary, most often something like arterial streets. There are areas in Las Vegas that have amenities but there also areas that are considered to be neighborhoods based on their boundaries, such as the John S. Park. That neighborhood has its own character and presence, similar to others individually defined character throughout the City.

COUNCILMAN ROSS understood the importance of the streetscapes, but asked who would pay for it without burdening the taxpayers. MAYOR GOULMAY and ACTING DEPUTY CITY MANAGER MARK VINCENT discussed the initial agreement with a Special Improvement District (SID) established for land and infrastructure improvements along Alta Drive to Valley View Boulevard and that homeowners along the corridor are taking care of their obligation. There was an issue that arose as to how to select a maintenance contractor. In the long term, the SID process can be difficult and non-payment can result in foreclosure. There are similar projects located in Fremont East within the Entertainment District. COUNCILMAN REESE noted that he is very proud of the improvements made along the St. Louis Avenue corridor; making it more pedestrian-friendly. MR. FAGG added that the idea is to get the plans in place so that the City can bid and implement them when funds become available.

COUNCILMAN STEINMAN commented that effort, time and money have created a downtown west and east of the railroad tracks; however, there is no focus on a neighborhood. Different types of amenities are needed to make people want to live in those areas and use those amenities. MS. WHEELER noted that the urban pathway project provides for sidewalks through the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) funding. Improved infrastructure/streetscape will link downtown with activity nodes interspersed throughout the downtown area, including RTC improvements as the ACE center-lane stations link to Union Park. COUNCILMAN STEINMAN remarked that both sides of downtown need help to make it a true neighborhood. MS. WHEELER stated that the hope is to create the five different types of neighborhoods, necessary zoning, have the transit routes in place and the plans ready for funding opportunities, whether public, private or federal.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW stated there are areas in West Las Vegas where these plans can be implemented. He wants to move forward and identify the revenue stream. MS. WHEELER

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replied that the goal is to present today and then move forward to create the plans, wait for investment opportunities and pursue funding sources.

COMMISSIONER EVANS pointed out that Las Vegas design standards are ahead of other municipalities and is doing a great job in creating streetscapes with new housing developments. He suggested irrigation systems be installed into streetscape plans to diminish future costs. MS. WHEELER replied that MR. PERRIGO constantly seeks funding sources and will seek and obtain funds needed for streetscapes once the Urban Forestry Initiative is completed.

COUNCILMAN WOLFSON acknowledged the proposals are great. He added when he moved into his neighborhood there were certain fees to support the infrastructure. He asked if studies have been done whether homeowners would be willing to pay for certain improvements. MR. PISANO replied that there have been successful assessment financing programs in California. There must be a plan that the residents find acceptable.

MR. PERRIGO noted improvements made along the corridors Hoover Avenue and Casino Center Boulevard at the cost of \$3 million. These improvements will increase property values and the investment will pay for itself through property tax revenues.

COMMISSIONER QUINN indicated everything is everything, and it is unfortunate that Las Vegas has blighted areas. Redevelopment in one of these areas might trickle into other areas throughout the Valley. COUNCILMAN ROSS noted buy in by all stakeholders, without excuse, is paramount.

COMMISSIONER GOYNES commented on the expectation a homeowner would have to pay more for a type of lifestyle depending on a location, such as Summerlin. Ward 5 has the density and proximity to transit and downtown, but there are no tree-lined lanes. The market and the economy dictate what is developed in Ward 5. He asked if a plan was created to build homeless shelters within sprawling areas, such as Ward 6. The homeless situation in Ward 5 seems to have created a ward within a ward of homeless. COUNCILMAN WOLFSON stated that land planning should incorporate adapting to the homeless problem. COMMISSIONER GOYNES added that the homeless panhandle in the outlying before returning downtown. COUNCILMAN WOLFSON confirmed that his expectation to pay more was based upon information given to him when choosing his home.

MAYOR GOODMAN remarked on the serious homelessness issue on Foremaster Lane. There is a potential health hazard of epidemic consequences. He asked the City Attorney to draft an ordinance which will allow the Council to take in loco parentis those mentally ill who cannot take care of themselves. His past suggestion of housing the homeless in Jean was criticized by a local newspaper as sending the homeless to prison. The situation is intolerable and there is tremendous not-in-my-backyard response to creating an encampment for the homeless.

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MS. WHEELER referred to the Planning Commission Work Plan 2009-2014 schedule, a five-year outlook for the types of studies that will be conducted by Planning and Development. It entails general plan elements as required by the Nevada Revised Statutes as well as corridor plans, code updates, technological improvements and the City's sustainability initiative. The Planning Department will ensure that plans created are maintained and implemented. There is the potential of creating neighborhoods discussed during this meeting. The ACE route will be the start of real transit for commuters who want a downtown neighborhood in proximity of work and shopping. This is the first step in creating a transit model for this type of development throughout Las Vegas and the region. She introduced MR. SNOW to provide an update on the transit plan.

MR. SNOW indicated that the City of Las Vegas has shown itself to be a partner, ready, willing and able as to the downtown transit connection. This year that comes to fruition. As a testament to that willingness and capability, 95 percent of the community transit stimulus dollars are being spent in the City. The RTC looks forward to expanding upon that partnership. Later this year the Park and Ride Program created in the northwest at Dunes Drive and US 95 will open and connect to an ACE line directly to downtown. The new New Haven International Terminal groundbreaking is scheduled for May 27th. This will be the first federal stimulus transportation project.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW remarked that the plans show transit moving from downtown south and asked about the connectivity downtown going west. MR. SNOW replied an ACE line is planned for North 5th Street from downtown. The RTC is looking for dedicated right-of-way to bypass congestion as speed is a selling point for commuters. The Councilman pointed out the morning commute where US95 is gridlocked around the Rainbow Curve and the Spaghetti Bowl. MR. SNOW also noted another arterial being looked is Rancho Drive where right-of-way is available. Both COUNCILMEN BARLOW and ROSS expressed their desire to be part of these discussions. COUNCILMAN ROSS recognized MR. SNOW'S incredible foresight.

MR. SNOW verified for COMMISSIONER TRUESDELL that the RTC is looking at narrower streets and how they fit within the transit plans. When they look at some of the streetscapes they have had from the past several decades, they question how beneficial wide streets have been for the public when they have not been designed for multiple users. The RTC has incorporated into their Blue Book alternative designs and alternative mode master plans for the entire region bicycle striping, complete streets and pedestrian and trail infrastructures. Approximately \$150 million in funding was possible through Question 10.

MAYOR GOODMAN thanked MR. SNOW and MR. PISANO for their presentation as well as the entire Planning staff. This will be the beginning of a healthy discussion.