



AGENDA BILL

Agenda Item No. 7

Date: November 5, 2013

To: El Cerrito City Council

From: Melanie Mintz, Interim Community Development Director
Yvetteh Ortiz, Interim Public Works Director/City Engineer

Subject: San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and Complete Streets Update and Study Session

ACTIONS REQUESTED

Receive a presentation regarding the development of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and provide comment and direction regarding proposed Development Standards, Complete Streets infrastructure improvements and Multimodal Level of Service approach.

BACKGROUND

On April 2, 2013 the City Council received an update on the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan (Plan) and authorized an amendment to the Professional Services Agreement with Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc. (MIG) to complete the Plan, including the additional Complete Streets element and Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR). (Resolution 2013-17)

Since that time, Community Development and Public Works staff have been working with MIG and its subconsultant Fehr and Peers (Consultants) to update and complete the draft Plan to respond to previous Council comments and to develop a final Plan that was more implementation focused, better incorporated contemporary land use planning and transportation strategies, and was more market-driven and reflective of Council's current priorities. In addition to responding to previous Council comments, staff has worked to respond to additional policies and direction adopted by the Council since that time, including the City's 2013-17 Strategic Plan (adopted on April 2, 2013) and the Climate Action Plan (adopted May 21, 2013.) The Strategic Plan articulates a vision of El Cerrito as an environmentally-focused destination with vibrant neighborhoods, businesses and public places. The Climate Action Plan (CAP) incorporates a number of land use, transportation and community development goals supportive of higher density housing, multimodal transportation and higher intensity commercial nodes along San Pablo Avenue. The CAP's Sustainable Community Goal #1 is to "encourage more compact, higher density infill development along transportation corridors to reduce vehicle miles traveled in El Cerrito and beyond."

In order to achieve a Specific Plan that fulfills Council's goals, staff and consultants have been operating under the following key principles to prepare the final Plan:

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1. **Deepen Sense of Place and Community Identity:** Encouraging context-sensitive site design that enhances sense of place for existing and future residents.
2. **Attract Private Development:** Provide clear goals and standards. Provide flexibility and respond to market-economics to leverage private investment and high-quality design.
3. **Build Upon Success:** Build upon previous public and private investments and successes, such as the El Cerrito Plaza, Cerrito Theater, creek restoration and rain garden projects, City Hall, San Pablo Avenue Streetscape, and new bicycle infrastructure to create a sense of place and physical environment that encourages people to want to live and spend time in the City's commercial areas.
4. **Strengthen Partnerships:** Work with other agencies and neighboring jurisdictions, such as Caltrans, BART, AC Transit, Albany and Richmond to assure Plans are implementable and leverage the synergies of other agencies and adjacent places. Partner with businesses and community groups to enliven the corridor.
5. **Enhance the Public Realm:** Assure both public and private investment enhances the public realm for existing and future residents and that each project contributes to a "return on investment."
6. **Foster Environmental Sustainability:** Reduce overall Vehicle Miles Traveled and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions through increased density and increased emphasis on multimodal transportation.

The final Plan will include a Hybrid Form-Based Code, Complete Streets Plan, Multimodal Capital Improvement Program and Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Tonight, staff and consultants will present key proposed provisions of the draft development standards, complete streets infrastructure improvement plans and a Multimodal Level of Service (MMLOS) approach. The proposed provisions and plans are summarized in **Attachment A** and **Attachment B**. Simultaneous with development of the Plan, the consultant team has begun conducting environmental analyses to determine the environmental impact of the proposed standards and improvements.

ANALYSIS

Development Standards and Hybrid Form-Based Code: In developing the proposed development standards, staff and consultants have utilized a number of documents and studies, including the AECOM Development Feasibility Analysis prepared for the City in November 2010 and CHS Parking Study prepared in November 2011; reviewed public and San Pablo Avenue Advisory Committee comments received during the earlier phases of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan; incorporated both City Council and Plan Bay Area goals as they relate to smart growth, reduced parking in transit-proximate locations and housing needs; and reviewed and incorporated best-practices of the real estate, urban design and "smart growth" sectors, to develop policies supportive

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of the type of residential and commercial development that would result in a more densely populated yet more walkable and vibrant San Pablo Avenue. The proposed Plan will initially only apply to parcels located within the Plan Area, along San Pablo Avenue and adjacent to the two BART stations, as these were originally selected as a part of the earlier phase of the San Pablo Specific Plan planning effort. Some of the proposed development standards, such as reduced parking requirements, might eventually be appropriate to apply to other transit-proximate neighborhoods. At the culmination of this Specific Plan process, the Community Development Department will initiate an update to the General Plan and can consider and incorporate such policies. The Plan Area includes parcels in the cities of both El Cerrito and Richmond. Each City will be responsible for adopting the Plan within their jurisdiction. The Plan and its regulatory components will only become codified within each City when adopted by the respective city's City Council.

Public involvement during this phase of the planning process has consisted of two community workshops (July 23 and October 19, 2013) and comments received during the parallel planning efforts underway, including the citywide Urban Greening and Active Transportation plans. Going forward, after receiving comment and direction from City Council, staff and consultants will host a workshop with developers and architects specializing in urban infill, residential and commercial transit-oriented development to test and verify the feasibility and intended outcomes of the proposed development standards (Hybrid Form-Based Code). A Form-Based Code study session and EIR Scoping session will be held at the November 20 Planning Commission meeting. Additional public meetings will be scheduled to review and comment on the draft Plan and EIR. The final Plan will be brought to both the Planning Commission for a recommendation and City Council for adoption.

The key parameters in zoning ordinances often have to do with height, use and parking. Form-Based Codes differ from traditional zoning, primarily, by lessening the amount of control placed upon *use*, and instead focusing on *form* and how the new development interacts with adjacent properties and the public realm. The draft development standards identify two "zones"-Transit Oriented Higher-Intensity Mixed Use (TOHIMU) and Transit Oriented Mid-Intensity Mixed Use (TOHIMU) and overlays them upon "street types." Together, these two classifications and multiple streets types result in development standards which aim to result in nodes of more concentrated, strollable commercial areas and areas that develop into primarily residential neighborhoods (in proximity) to transit and commercial areas. Attachment A outlines the key draft development parameters and includes a draft Table of Contents for the Hybrid Form-Based Code. Tonight, staff and the consultant team would like to confirm the basic development standards in order to move forward with developing the detailed code. How the code will be administered and how incentives will be provided to leverage the highest quality outcomes are still under development.

Complete Streets Plan: The Complete Streets Plan is intended to increase the amount of transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel along San Pablo Avenue by providing well-connected, safe and convenient multimodal transportation systems that serve travelers of all ages and abilities. This will be accomplished both by introducing new multimodal

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performance measures (Multimodal Level of Service/MMLOS) and design standards and by the provision of new bicycle, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The Complete Streets effort will evaluate how accommodating all travel modes within the existing public right-of-way can reduce the need for additional auto-oriented infrastructure projects (e.g., addition of vehicle travel lanes) and instead lead to achieving the various City goals of economic vitality, multimodal mobility and sense of place. To do this, staff and the consultant team are investigating several policy areas including: multimodal performance measures separated by mode to provide for an overall mobility metric for the corridor; new street and intersection design standards that are specifically targeted to improve facilities for transit, pedestrians, and bicycles; and goals and level of investment needed to achieve a future mode share (shifting towards transit, walking and biking). The Complete Streets Plan also contributes to placemaking and aims to be a catalyst for future private development improvements and identifies strategic opportunities to use the public right-of-way for commerce and social gathering.

As a part of the planning process, staff has convened a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to confer on the proposed San Pablo Avenue Complete Street Plan infrastructure improvements and MMLOS policies. The TAG has consisted of staff from Caltrans, AC Transit, BART, Contra Costa County Health Division, East Bay Bicycle Coalition, Richmond and Albany. City staff has also been actively involved in the update to the WCCTAC Action Plan where Multimodal Transportation Service Objectives (MTSOs) are established for all routes of regional significance, such as San Pablo Avenue.

Key policy considerations for the Complete Streets element include prioritization of travel modes and selection of the most appropriate performance metrics for each mode. Attachment B summarizes the multimodal infrastructure improvements and MMLOS methodology. Tonight, staff and the consultant team would like to confirm the basic approach in order to move forward with fully developing the infrastructure improvements and methodology along with input from the TAG.

Schedule: The schedule going forward will be to further refine the development standards, finalize the Form-Based Code and Complete Streets Plan, complete the Plan's Financing Strategy and Capital Improvement Program and develop the Environmental Impact Report. An Environmental Impact Report Public Scoping Meeting and Form-Based Code Study Session is scheduled for the November 20 Planning Commission meeting. Staff anticipates that a draft Specific Plan (including the Complete Streets Plan) and Environmental Impact Report will be ready for circulation in February. Upcoming public meetings related to the Plan will be noticed and posted on the City's Community Development Department's web page: www.el-cerrito.org/commdev.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Specific Plan is being prepared pursuant to Government Code §65450 and the Environmental Impact Report pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff and consultants will evaluate the draft Plan and all of its provisions with the City attorney prior to making a recommendation for adoption.

Reviewed by:

Scott Hanin, City Manager

Attachments:

1. Specific Plan/Hybrid Form-Based Code Key Provisions and Framework and Complete Streets Plan Key Provisions and MMLOS Framework (Powerpoint presentation)