



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

DATE: July 6, 2016

AGENDA OF: July 21, 2016

ITEM: 1 **Draft Downtown Recovery Plan Amendments**

RECOMMENDATION: Hear presentation, hold public hearing to accept public comments, discuss item and provide direction to staff for language modification.

The purpose of this Public Hearing is to encourage comments on DRAFT development standards for the Central Business District as currently located in the Downtown Recovery Plan (DRP). A draft Redlined version of the entire DRP is attached for review and the associated Draft Clean version is intentionally focused on Chapter 4, the development standards.

BACKGROUND:

The Planning Department and the Planning Commission have been working on development standards for the Pacific Avenue Retail District and the Front Street/Riverfront Corridor since the City Council provided direction to undertake a massing study for this area in October 2014.

It is important to note that the scope of the massing study was to identify issues that might be of concern if allowable building heights were to be increased for properties in the study area. This effort and direction was never intended to be an entire re-write of the Downtown Recovery Plan or to modify the successful policies and standards that have served the City well for the past twenty-five years.

Instead, the effort was to focus on these areas as opportunities to achieve some of the key City objectives (e.g. providing additional housing and connections to the Riverwalk), while still preserving the positive aspects of downtown and the original vision as developed from the post Loma Prieta earthquake Vision Santa Cruz process.

On April 28, 2016, the Planning Commission heard a presentation from ROMA Design Group and McCann Adams Studio with recommendations for modifications to the development standards in the study area. This Planning Commission meeting was followed by similar presentation to the City Council on May 10, 2016.

Most recently, at the June 16, 2016 Planning Commission meeting, a Planning Commission ad hoc committee was formed for the purpose of focusing on the development standards relating to affordable housing provisions, the skyline variation, and the details of how development would interface with the Riverwalk. While some draft language is included within the draft Redlined and Clean versions relating to these issues, there will be more opportunities to refine the

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language before the Planning Commission and City Council take any final action on the plan changes.

FORMAT OF THE REVISIONS

As noted, the focus of the modifications to the Downtown Recovery Plan is on Chapter 4, the development standards. However, when viewing the DRP as a guiding document for context, it was apparent that simply modifying Chapter 4 would lead to internal inconsistencies. Maintaining the context of the original plan is critical, but an update of some of the language is equally important to recognize the past twenty-five years of positive development that has occurred in the downtown. The Redlined version and modifications to Chapters 1, 2, and 3 represent an attempt to balance maintaining the key visions from the original plan, but to also acknowledge that the City has grown and is currently experiencing critical needs for housing. These revisions are part of an overall effort (along with the Corridor Planning work) to re-confirm the City objective to maintain a compact and efficient urban form with public greenbelt to limit suburban-type sprawl and to provide some appropriate development incentives to activate the river connections, a longstanding objective of the City's vision.

The draft Clean version of the Chapter 4 has been reorganized to combine redundant sections and also add more section titles and topic headings for easier reference. This draft does not include all the subject headings, but it does include most subject lines for the particular policy, guideline or standard. Much of the existing language fluctuated between a general guideline and a specific standard, so rather than re-write much of the existing language, the categories were combined by topic and hopefully, can be more effective in the way the language is administered. Including some of the 'intent' language alongside any specific development standard should help to achieve better understanding of the section.

The Redlined version also includes language from the Appendices relating to Floor Area Ratio, High Density Overlay Zone District, a Live Entertainment Ordinance and other Central Business District ordinances. The Floor Area Ratio and High Density Overlay Zone District are no longer relevant since the adoption of the General Plan 2030 included specific density ranges in the Regional Visitor Commercial designation, which encompasses the entire downtown area.

LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM (LCP) REVISIONS

Chapter 4 of the Downtown Recovery Plan is an implementation section of the LCP, which means that revisions to the Chapter 4 require certification by the Coastal Commission. In addition to the development standards of Chapter 4, there are also several LCP policies that are proposed to be modified.

The adopted LCP includes a variety of land use policies from a variety of sources. Over the years, some policies have been added to the LCP from reports, studies or area plans without linking the policies to the true purpose of the LCP – to support the California Coastal Act,

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Proposition 20 approved by the voters in 1972. While there are many policies which may seem like good language at the time, when taken out of context, they are not necessarily appropriate for inclusion in the City's LCP. The Planning Department is in the process of updating the LCP to simplify the language to truly focus on being consistent with the Coastal Act. The full draft LCP will be presented to the Planning Commission later this fall, but in the interim, the modifications to the DRP include suggested language changes to the LCP, where related to the San Lorenzo Urban River Plan (SLURP).

The 2003 SLURP was never intended to be a land use development standard document, but rather a resource protection and enhancement document. There were 9 SLURP policies relating to Front Street development that were simply added to the LCP for certification after the SLURP was approved. The proposed policy modifications are shown in Attachment 3.

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Attachments:

1. Draft Redlined Version of Downtown Recovery Plan
2. Draft Clean Version of Chapter 4, Development Standards, of the Downtown Recovery Plan
3. Draft Local Coastal Program Policy Amendments