



DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Location: The Grand, 1401 Fulton Street, Fresno, California

MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 2010 - 5:15 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Patience Milrod called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

Members Present

Larry Arce, Mee Cha, Susana Cruz, Tony Dias, Adriana Figueroa, Isaac Fonseca, Becky Foore-Hayden, Socorro Gaeta, Daniel Guerra, Darlene Holland, Booker T. Lewis, Dorothy Lucatero, Chuck Manock, Patience Milrod, Gary Nachtigall, Doug Reitz, Jeff Sands, Phil Skei

Members Absent

Chuck Manock, Ivan Paz, Dasen Thao

Alternate Members

Lee Ayres, Bertha Lopez, Dominga Huerta, Lisa Van de Water, Mike Wells

Consultants Present

Stefanos Polyzoides, David Sargent, Juan Gomez-Novy

Staff Present

Craig Scharton, Elliott Balch, Sandra Berney, Cynthia Dondero, Amy Huerta, Wilma Quan, Elaine Robles, Dawn Steele, George Smith, Kelly Trevino, Angela Vasquez, Alex Villa, Joann Zuniga

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Introductory comments were given by Patience Milrod; stated the Moule & Polyzoides (MPA) consultant team members would be providing the committee with an update on their work to date; mentioned the committee received a summary with maps and photos, which was also posted online at the City's website for the public's viewing (www.fresnodowntownplans.com).

3. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Agenda Approval

Neighborhood Revitalization Manager Elaine Robles called for agenda approval.

Phil Skei moved for approval of the agenda, second by Becky Foore-Hayden; motion carried unanimously (m/s/c/ 18 yes, 0 no, 3 absent).

B. Approval of Minutes for the March 9, 2010, Regular Meeting

Elaine Robles called for approval of the March 9, 2010, meeting minutes. Patience Milrod clarified that approval would be for the final proposed March 9, 2010, meeting minutes that were received at the meeting.

A correction to the March 9, 2010, meeting minutes was made by Patience Milrod regarding the misspelling of the name Lee Ayres. Doug Reitz moved for approval of the meeting minutes, second by Socorro Gaeta; motion carried (m/s/c/ 18 yes, 0 no, 3 absent). Meeting minutes of March 9, 2010, were filed as submitted with the correct spelling of the name Lee Ayres.

C. Appointment of Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Elaine Robles stated Patience Milrod and Doug Reitz have offered to be the Committee Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. Elaine Robles called for nominations. Becky Foore-Haydon moved to nominate Patience Milrod for Chair and Doug Reitz for Vice Chair, second by Booker T Lewis; motion carried (m/s/c 18 yes, 0 no, 3 absent).

4. CONSULTANT TEAM'S SUMMARY OF DISCOVERY FINDINGS

Stefanos Polyzoides stated individual consultants on the team who had areas of specialty and expertise would be providing the committee with a summary presentation of existing conditions analysis of the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan area.

David Sargent, representing Dena Belzer on economic-physical issues, stated the consultants had conducted interviews to learn from departmental staff about the existing condition of the planning systems, infrastructure systems, economics; stated meetings were held with stakeholders, resident property owners, business owners, and others to learn how they viewed their neighborhood conditions and what they would and would not hope to change; stated consultants photographed field conditions and mapped the areas investigated.

David Sargent stated there were signs that the downtown neighborhoods had endured many years of disinvestment, private investments in downtown properties moved elsewhere, and the City's focus on the infrastructure; stated there were signs of demand for housing in the downtown area strengthening, new projects had been built within the last 10 years but no critical mass and no signs that it would continue without concerted effort on the part of the City and the public; public investment had been made on a project-by-project basis rather than a strategic district-wide basis; stated the City as the owner and steward of the City's infrastructure would have to become more hands-on with laying out and building public improvements above and below the ground.

David Sargent stated strategies for encouraging downtown development included prioritizing areas for higher density housing with a plan and a code that would allow various product types; planning for a combination of rehabilitation and preservation projects of existing housing units, which was a very important part of preservation strategy for the building stock that Fresno had and also a way for urban housing to be less expensive than building new; strategic public investments, investment decisions, infrastructure improvements system wide; streamlined approval process to facilitate development downtown; stated the challenge would be to develop adaptive reuse codes, infill development codes, preservation guidelines that would make the adaptation and rehabilitation of older structures and new taller buildings a routine procedure.

Lee Ayres asked did the consultants differentiate between investor and owner occupant properties. David Sargent stated it was predominantly investors, loft-type development either new or rehab. Lee Ayres reiterated the challenge would be to make downtown attractive for owner occupants. David Sargent added it was a challenge for both the neighborhoods and in the urban core; stated the need to ensure that the procedures, policies, and standards that the City would build into the new codes would encourage investment at many levels. Lee Ayres asked had an inventory of vacant buildings been done. The answer was not yet, but that both vacant buildings and vacant lots would be done.

Booker T. Lewis asked was there a list available of those who met with the consultants. David Sargent stated for every meeting attended there were notes, lists, and comments aggregated without attributing comments specifically to any one person; stated the consultants were not finished listening to people, and there would be charrettes in May for people to give their input.

Stefanos Polyzoides stated there would be multiple opportunities to engage the public in this process. Craig Scharton stated there would be full notification of property owners and residents for the entire 7,000-acre area of the charrettes to be held in May; stated it would be on a postcard and include a bus pass for a free ride to the Radisson Hotel where the charrettes would be held.

Dorothy Lucatero stated the community did want to attend, but faced challenges such as transportation and child care; thanked City staff for the free bus pass.

David Schneider, representing Fong, Hart and Schneider Landscape Architects, stated landscape and street trees were considered infrastructure; stated trees planted on east and west sides of homes provided energy savings and tree canopies reduced the ambient air level in neighborhoods upward 5 to 10 degrees; stated there was not a specific plan for street trees to identify neighborhoods or streets in Fresno; stated there was a general list of trees from which to chose a street tree, but the downside would be that characteristics about a neighborhood would not be by its identifiable street trees; stated the consultants would like to see street trees more specifically called out in the plan; stated the need to understand the right tree for the right place; cited examples in other cities where trees provided continuity and identity; showed pictures of trees in various Fresno City neighborhoods such as Jefferson and Lowell and stated the consultants would be working within that framework to develop landscape elements.

David Schneider stated the importance of street tree plantings would be to provide shade, energy, neighborhood identity, street image, walkability neighborhoods, and increased property value; stated goal would be to develop a street tree program; discussed existing park conditions; stated what made successful parks was equitable access, walkable parks located close to where people lived; park safety was important, eyes on the park, and homes looking onto the park; stated potential open space could be access to school playgrounds; stated the Fulton Mall was not considered a park but was valuable open space.

Doug Reitz asked were school playgrounds in use now or was that being looked at with Fresno Unified School District for future use and written into in the plan. David Schneider stated there was a reciprocal use agreement but there was a cost associated with that such as maintenance, staffing, security; stated the issue would need to be investigated.

Lee Ayres stated he chaired the San Joaquin Valley Urban Forest Council and the Council just filed a report with the City with respect to Eaton Plaza; stated members on the Council objected to the use of a single tree on a given street but acknowledged the aesthetic value of a pattern of trees on a street; thanked the consultants for giving attention to trees; asked for attention to be

given to alleys. David Schneider stated biodiversity and the various elements, cultural elements involved in street trees were important; cited Kearney Boulevard and through the years with the Eucalyptus trees dying, trees other than Palm trees were planted, which created diversity and patterning on that boulevard; diversity created by developing patterns of different trees within a street and still retain cultural needs.

Dorothy Lucatero stated the parents of students at Burroughs Elementary School were working with Fresno Unified to open the gates of schools because in their neighborhoods there were not nearby parks for children to go and play and be physically active.

Jeff Clark, representing Fehr and Peers Transportation Engineers, stated there was a grid pattern street network in the downtown neighborhood areas designed parallel and perpendicular to the railroad tracks; stated outside of the downtown area it was the standard street grid system and that there were issues where the two systems intersected; stated the grid system was tight throughout downtown with one-half mile grid on the arterial and minor streets; stated the system was bisected by a number of freeway and railroad systems, which created barriers when traversing in, out, and through the neighborhoods; the downtown network was a mishmash of varying road patterns of one way or one and two lanes, which created confusion; stated the street network was good, diverse, and provided much capacity; talked about the transit network, which provided good service to the downtown and transit center and throughout the neighborhoods; stated the City was looking at providing more high quality service into downtown from the Blackstone Avenue and Kings Canyon Road corridors and there was an ongoing traffic study of such issues along with a potential street car alignments in the downtown area; stated Fehr and Peers consultants were working on the update of Fresno's bike plan; talked about the existing bike network, its lack of connectivity into downtown; stated the consultants would be trying to provide a more robust system so that bikers could travel to/from anywhere in Fresno; stated with the implementation of the bike plan there would be opportunities to travel by bike to the downtown on a system of bike lanes and paths; talked about the downtown mixture of parking; stated approximately 200,000 people traveled downtown each workday and that the downtown parking ratio was 1.2 parking spaces per employee.

David Sargent, representing Eric Zikler of Sherwood Design Engineers on infrastructure, shared the key findings made by the consultants after their assessment of the infrastructure—hydrology, storm drainage, sanitary sewer system, water distribution, water supply and conservation; stated goals of the hydrology study were to find ways to accommodate drainage, least strain on the waste water system, and incorporate low impact development strategies in the urban watershed; stated sizes and locations of existing storm drainage systems would be studied in relation to anticipated capacity requirements if more hardscape and buildings were to be introduced and opportunities to introduce low impact development strategies replacing hard drainage systems with softer drainage systems that would improve water quality and allow for water to soak in (i.e., planted areas); stated the consultant firm of Sherwood Design Engineers were good at helping to find solutions to engineering problems that would also be solutions to environmental quality problems and solutions to neighborhood character problems in an integrated fashion; stated the consultants would be identifying demands and changes to sanitary sewer capacity, coordinating potential improvements with existing planned improvements, finding priority areas for development, and targeting infrastructure improvements; talked about water distribution within the overall context of the plan; talked about water supply and water conservation; stated the plan would be identifying ways to use water more efficiently and ways that development types/landscape types would deliver savings in water utilization and at the same time establish the kind of character and quality for the neighborhoods in the downtown that were wanted; stated the consultants would also identify any conflicts within the plan related to infrastructure and do a reality check on the feasibility; stated as the balance of single family development shifted away to

being infilled with multiple family options, it would deliver significant dividends in the water use per person.

Patience Milrod stated multiple family development was more expensive to construct and that there was tension between the two aspects of policy development and challenges related to housing and water conservation. David Sargent stated there were trends of types of housing, trends of amounts of water and overlapping curves on how over time to ensure that the plan policies would not create a period where it would not work.

Craig Scharon, on behalf of a citizen in the audience, stated so much of the sustainability movement focused on new construction such as lead buildings, and asked if the development of the community plan would also focus on the long-term sustainability of the existing neighborhoods. Stefanos Polyzoides responded preservation was the first issue of sustainability, and sustainability was about permanence not about fashion.

Christy McAvoy, representing historic preservation resources, stated the consultants would be looking at the preservation of neighborhood character, conservation of the built environment--keep what was existing, recycle it, use it for another purpose, and that the greenest way was to maintain existing buildings; stated considerable work had been done in Fresno with historic surveys and context, and documented historic resources in the downtown neighborhoods; stated there were additional areas for continued study in the neighborhoods regarding community character, types of people who lived in the neighborhood, the contributions these people made to the City of Fresno, and to celebrate the entire diversity of the City; talked about the kinds of buildings and property types seen in the plan area and the kinds of buildings that needed new life, adaptively reuse, or sensitive maintenance and rehabilitation; highlighted neighborhood areas and the architecture of buildings, ethnic building stock that told a story about Fresno's history of where people lived and worked, and Fresno's agricultural image; stated the consultants would be looking at neighborhood cohesion and adaptive reuse for today's needs; community-wide issues that the consultants would be looking at would be transportation and development patterns, specific types of buildings such as bungalow courts, shotgun houses, garden offices and celebrate the types of architecture that told a story of Fresno; stated the consultants would be looking at vacant parcels to do sensitive infill in the neighborhoods so that the character of the neighborhood would not be further eroded; stated there was a diversity of industrial buildings that might be able to be reprogrammed; stated the next step would be for the consultants to compile this information into data that would show the resources with which to work, resources whose stories needed to be told, and resources told through the built environment that already existed; stated continued research would be done on ethnic history, transportation and development, and confirm what the previously identified districts looked liked and to tell a story through the built environment and to enhance and enlarge on the personality of the city.

Stefanos Polyzoides stated a question well asked was half the answer; stated an important principle of urban design was an idea well mapped; requested the committee review the packet of information and summary of the consultants' understanding of the project area; stated the consultants' primary responsibility was to try to describe the world around us that would allow people to understand it; stated it was important to be looking at ways of understanding the physical configuration of the City; showed examples of the neighborhoods in a PowerPoint presentation; summarized comments from those interviewed and engaged in discussions; mentioned the charrettes to be held in May; stated the charrettes would finish with design projects, working together day to day throughout the week to ensure a clear direction that would integrate all the issues discussed.

Craig Scharton stated the charrettes would be more interactive, less formal, questioning; encouraged all Community Advisory Committee members to tour each of the neighborhoods within the community plan area before May when the charrettes would be held for the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan.

5. CAC INPUT ON DISCOVERY FINDINGS AND IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES, PRIORITIES, CONCERNS

Gary Nachtigall complimented Moule and Polyzoides and the consultant team on a very thorough mapping of the infrastructure issues; stated it was very helpful, useful information; asked was there a way to measure social elements such as poverty; stated downtown neighborhoods were thought of as poverty centers; stated until it was known what that measure(s) would be, how would one find strategies to combat neighborhoods where housing quality was low and deteriorating. Stefanos Polyzoides stated that was a charrette question; stated in the interest of time, the committee was not shown all the economic work that had been done; stated the consultant had an expansive series of diagrams on demographics, income, etc., that could be circulated to the committee.

Becky Foore-Hayden asked for an explanation of the implementation process of the plan; asked how the consultants viewed an implementation component to the plan. Stefanos Polyzoides stated a specific plan had, by law, a series of mandated chapters that addressed implementation in focused terms such as the state of the infrastructure and projected investment into the infrastructure to accomplish the level of change predicated in the plan; stated the advantage of a specific plan as an instrument was that it was not a vision that was important but idle, it was a vision to be implemented specifically through the municipal framework in a public-private partnership; this plan, through new form based codes, would reaffirm a level of zoning far more specific in physical form and a direct reelection of the vision itself.

David Sargent stated there were two parts to the implementation: the public improvements implemented by the City such as street networks, and in the Fulton Corridor it would be in the form of a specific plan and precisely list priorities and funding mechanisms for the public improvements; stated for the Downtown Neighborhoods it would be a series of very specific policy recommendations of improvement that would need to be made to water, sewer, etc., but would not be at the very specific level of a specific plan for the neighborhood; stated in regard to controls on how private development would occur such as a building rehabilitation, that would be addressed with equal level of attention in the community plan level; stated it was prescriptive rather than proscriptive and gave example of the choice of three kinds of buildings that could be built at a given location. Stefanos Polyzoides stated there would be a number reforms of engineering regulatory standards, primarily road standards; stated the committee's advocacy of the plan would be critical over time; stated the committee would need to direct it as well as understand it and believe in it.

Becky Foore-Haydon asked would there be an implementation committee attached to this plan; concerned that in the CAC bylaws it stated when the plan was adopted the committee would be terminated; recommended that anyone on the CAC could continue to serve on the implementation committee. Craig Scharton stated that a recommendation could be made to that effect when the plan was completed and ready for Council consideration.

Lee Ayres asked about the upcoming charrettes and would the affected neighborhoods have the opportunity to develop a vision, design a theme, present choices that would lead to a unique

neighborhood, which would be attractive to investment. Stefanos Polyzoides stated the responsibility of the consultant team would be to take the grand total of issues, input, and understanding and put forth suggestions in the form of alternatives for discussion during the evening sessions of the charrettes.

Doug Reitz asked how would the consultants, in gathering all the great ideas at the charrettes, propose to balance the cost verses the value of these great ideas and the reality of costs/funding for more trees, landscaping, and maintenance costs along with development. Stefanos Polyzoides stated there were economic-fiscal consultants on staff to establish the boundaries; stated the consultants would be working in balance between the best, the most expensive of ideas and setting priorities in establishing project boundaries, project sequencing and phasing, investment priority, and the committee in this regard would be giving its input to the consultants.

Phil Skei stated the economists on the MPA team stated they may consider holding a summit of economists in the City of Fresno to address the economics of the plan and asked would that happen. David Sargent stated it would be occurring as the plan evolved; stated in order for information transfer to be valuable, the decision was made to not be so much a community forum but for it to be a focused conversation with experts and individuals from the committee interested in that subject and for it to be a moderated conversation with the economists.

Craig Scharton stated all meetings were open to the public; stated the 2-day event with the economists would be held on May 4 and 5, 2010, at the Bethel Lutheran Church. Elaine Robles stated there needed to be ten or fewer members of the DNCAC in attendance at this meeting to not be in conflict with the Brown Act; stated notice would be mailed; requested interested committee members contact her regarding attendance at these meetings.

Jeff Sands asked for clarification on how deep was this work intended to go in identifying the physical needs of neighborhoods; asked was it the intent of the consultant to develop strategies to tackle those issues or would it be the work of another group. David Sargent stated the plan would first deal with the physical, it would involve those issues that the City controlled such as infrastructure, land use, codes; stated the plan would also be a policy document that would set goals, objectives, and targets for attainment and focus on what the City could do to improve the area; stated it would not provide so much as social services; used the analogy of the plan being a container for the society Fresno aspires to have that can thrive in. Jeff Sands stated neighborhoods within the plan area had many social issues that needed to be addressed and asked what long-term effect would the plan have given there were social issues that would not be addressed in the plan. Stefanos Polyzoides stated all of the issues would need to be part of the plan. David Sargent stated interagency cooperation on such issues as school ground usage for afterschool neighborhood recreation for children could be written into the plan.

Dorothy Lucatero, on behalf of Suzanna Cruz, asked what would take priority after the neighborhood's input into this planning process; gave example of a neighborhood wanting a park, and asked because it was a priority for the neighborhood would it be considered a priority in the plan. Stefanos Polyzoides stated the committee and citizens would tell the consultants what the priorities were and stated the example of a neighborhood park should be given weighted input.

Mike Wells asked about the joint use of schools, sharing facilities after school hours, and how would that vision written into the plan be enforced; asked about using vacant land for gardens and if the plan would be able to address that with "teeth" and follow through. Craig Scharton stated what the public controlled in the development of the plan was design, use, and form; stated secondary were written recommendations and policies to be adopted and followed in the future by strong input from an implementation committee or group; stated citizens had the power to do the

absolute best downtown neighborhood community plan possible.

Patience Milrod suggested keeping the door open and not say no yet. Stefanos Polyzoides suggested finding other California cities where this had been done and ask what were the specific terms by which this type of agreement between a parks department and community school was reached for joint use of open space for a park/recreational facility.

Mee Cha stated in the past Chinatown was trying to have a committee to revitalize Chinatown, which was the most ghostly area downtown, and asked would the City be working with them on their plan. Craig Scharton stated Chinatown was included in the planning program and was part of the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan and would be getting the full specific plan treatment; encouraged the committee to look at how southwest Fresno could relate to Chinatown, which was not beyond the boundary of the community plan, which encompassed the Chinatown area.

Gary Nachtigall stated whatever neighborhood organization there was, this was a very good time to get together and pool concerns and have a voice.

6. PUBLIC INPUT ON DISCOVERY FINDINGS AND IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES, PRIORITIES, CONCERNS

Bobby Pentorali asked was this plan missing the location of the high speed rail project, which would be located in the middle of downtown, and what were its impacts on the various neighborhoods. Stefanos Polyzoides stated the consultants have tried to make contact with those working on this project; stated in the latest round of discussions it was proposed to have a charrette in mid-June to understand the project, what the system was, how it crossed through town, when it stopped, what type of station it needed, and what collateral development possibilities there were so it would become seamless to the development downtown; stated one potential benefit to the City relative to the planning work being done and that was that the train station stopped two blocks from the heart of downtown, which meant its connection to the downtown could be seamless and walkable.

Hector Cerda stated transportation in City was an issue for him and asked how to integrate a transportation system that did not include a bus, car, or parking and how could the City use current landmarks and integrate into a network such as paths alongside Freeway 41, canals that could be fenced and its banks used as bicycle pathways; challenged the committee to think outside the street, off the road, and find a way to integrate paths and neighborhoods; stated Freeway 41 cut off neighborhoods; stated he would like to travel to downtown on a path that had minimal impact of having to stop to cross the street such as an underground tunnel; cited the Sugar Pine Trail in Clovis.

David Schneider stated consultants were in the process of completing the bicycle master plan for the City of Fresno and was coordinating with the City of Clovis on its master bicycle plan; stated connections to downtown and paths to downtown were part of the master plan for commuters; suggested looking at the web page, ibikefresno.com, and stated part of the bike plan was to be multi-modal.

Vincent Esquivel asked about physical fitness and health centers, health centers for youth and elderly and how would that be implemented in the plan.

David Sargent stated there was a component of the plan that was directly looking at health impacts of the plan on the community; stated the work of the consultants focused on making

places where people would not be encapsulated in their cars because they would have to be and focused on making retail destinations, parks, schools a place where one could walk to; stated in this plan health would be looking at health as an objective and asking what could this plan do to promote health, which would extend to policy recommendations and regulatory support for sources of healthy food widely distributed and easily accessible and could include plan recommendations and policies that the committee would decide was important; stated it could be included in the uses and there could be incentives.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given by Craig Scharton.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Approval Date: _____

CRAIG SCHARTON, Director
Downtown and Community Revitalization Department