



Planning Commission Staff Report

DATE: December 12, 2006

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Downtown Precise Plan Team
(Jill Ekas, Charles Jany, Blake Lyon, Susan Moeller, Tom Passanisi, Dan Zack)

SUBJECT: Public Comments on the Draft Downtown Precise Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and take public testimony on the Draft Downtown Precise Plan (DDPP) and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). No decision on the DDPP or DEIR is required at this time. When taking testimony it is important to specify whether the comment is on the DEIR or the actual Draft Downtown Precise Plan itself.

BACKGROUND

On October 3rd City staff unveiled the Draft Downtown Precise Plan. The Downtown Precise Plan is the City's blueprint that describes the City's future vision for the Downtown, and then describes the regulations and guidelines necessary to reach that vision. Staff gave an overview of the Plan, its context in the Downtown and the overall vision.

On October 10, the Planning Commission hosted a panel discussion which addressed many of those topics raised at the previous meeting on October 3. The Downtown Precise Plan team made a presentation on the following topics:

- Height
- Public Spaces and Creeks
- Elevated Right of Ways
- Walkability, Access and Bikes
- Architecture, Noise and Gateways

On November 7, the City released the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Precise Plan. The public comment period is currently underway, i.e. from November 7 through December 22. During this time the public may comment on the DEIR and also on the DDPP at any of the Planning Commission public hearings or may send written comments directly to staff. (When commenting it is important to distinguish between comments on the DDPP versus the DEIR itself). Copies of the DEIR and DDPP are available on the City's web site, in City Hall, and at all the City libraries.

On November 14, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the DDPP and DEIR. At that meeting, staff responded to comments regarding transitional height limits along Brewster, Maple and El Camino Real, the inclusion of public art in the downtown, and discussion of the historical review process. Please refer to the attached staff report and minutes of November 14, 2006, for more information.

RECEIVED COMMENTS

Since the November 14 public hearing staff has received one written comment on the EIR and one written comment on the Downtown Precise Plan. (Copies of the correspondence are attached). The comment on the EIR is from the City's Fire Chief clarifying the fact that the increased demand from future development in the downtown may require additional Fire Department personnel or equipment, *additional resources* and not a new fire station. The Fire Chief concludes that the current spacing of Fire stations in Redwood City is adequate to provide appropriate response time for future anticipated growth in the Downtown.

Another correspondence was received from a local property owner in the Precise Plan Area. The property owner's concern is the DDPP's requirement for a new 60 ft. wide city street between Wilson and Maple Streets immediately adjacent to the west side of the railroad tracks on what is currently private property.¹ The property owner states that such a large encroachment will be a detriment to future development of his own as well as of adjacent parcels of similar orientation.



Proposed New Street

The purpose of the proposed new street is to improve circulation by removing the dead-ends of Wilson and Monroe Streets at the rail right-of-way; to provide access under a potential future elevated railway; and to provide a setback buffer from the railroad tracks. Staff has researched this subject in response to the property owner's concerns. As proposed, the new street is a two block segment that terminates at Maple and Wilson Streets. In the existing condition, part of the Franklin Street project building footprint actually encroaches in the proposed new street location. Because this development is relatively new, site reconfiguration is not expected for many years. The northwest most property affected by the new street also has a building currently located within the area proposed for the new street. Due to these existing conditions, it is anticipated that it could take decades to achieve the DDPP's intention for a new two-block long city street in this area. As an alternative, staff

¹ See Downtown Precise Plan, Pg. 47, Figure 2.3 (Required New Street Map) and Figure 2.3.1 (City Street)

recommends that a *much narrower* roadway, such as an alley or a lane, be proposed. This alley would encroach less into the affected private properties, while eliminating the two existing dead ends and providing both access to and a buffer between the railroad tracks and any new development. Alleys are typically on the order of 20 feet or so in width and can be treated with streetscape improvements to make them more attractive. The urban design consultants who prepared the Downtown Precise Plan are in agreement with this approach.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will evaluate all comments made on the DDPP and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission including possible revisions to the document. Those recommendations will be forwarded to you at your February 6, 2007 meeting.

Staff will forward the DEIR comments received during the 45 day review period to the EIR consultant who will then prepare responses to these comments. The Draft EIR together with the comments and responses will constitute a "Final EIR". The Planning Commission will then be asked to consider certification of the Final EIR at the February 6, 2007 meeting. Only after certification can the Planning Commission make a recommendation on the DDPP to the City Council.

Here are some important dates in the DPPP and DEIR review process:

- EIR public review period: Nov. 7 - December 22, 2006
- Second Public Hearing on the EIR and Precise Plan: December 12, 2006
- City Council Study session on the Precise Plan: January 22, 2006
- Planning Commission Certification of the Final EIR and decision on the Precise Plan: February 6, 2007
- City Council review and approval of the Precise Plan: February 2007

PUBLIC NOTICE

Initially, a formal public hearing notice was sent to individuals and businesses in the Downtown Precise Plan Area (and beyond) notifying them about both the November 14 and December 12 public hearings. Special effort was also made to notify interested stakeholders, public agencies, and nearby neighborhood associations. E-mails were sent to the City's e-mail newsletter list which includes approximately 1400 members of the public who have subscribed. News releases went to the City Boards, Committees, and Commissions for whom the City has e-mail addresses, to all media contacts, to neighborhood associations for whom the City has e-mail addresses, to City managers of other nearby cities, to a corporate list including the Chamber of Commerce, and to County and State elected officials.

CONCLUSION

The Downtown Precise Plan is a very important document which will guide development over the next 15 - 20 years in the Downtown. It is important that the Planning Commission review both the DDPP and its accompanying DEIR, and allow for public testimony. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission comment on both documents, hear public testimony, and refer the comments to staff for inclusion in the FEIR and possible revision to the Draft Downtown Precise Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

- Planning Commission Staff Report and Minutes dated November 14, 2006
- Correspondence from Redwood City Fire Chief dated November 22
- Correspondence from W.L. Butler Construction, Inc. dated November 17, 2006.