

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Date: March 23, 2011

Agenda Item No.: Advance Item No. 3

Council Action Date: April 19, 2011

To: RICK COLE, CITY MANAGER

From: JEFFREY LAMBERT, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Subject: REVIEW AND INITIATION OF THE DRAFT WESTSIDE COMMUNITY PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT CODE FOR FURTHER STUDY

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Receive Draft Westside Community Plan and Development Code for incorporated Westside Community Planning Area (Attachment A and B);
- b. Receive Draft Westside Historic Resources Survey (Attachment C); and
- c. Initiate required environmental analysis under California Environmental Quality Act

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

Jan 24, 2011, Council appropriated funds for completion of the Community Plan and Development Code, associated special studies and civic engagement efforts and also provided direction to reduce the Westside Community Planning Area boundary to the existing city limits.

October 11, 2010, Council reconsidered a prior decision and provided direction to include the approximately 650-acre Canada Larga valley floor in the Westside and North Avenue Planning Area boundary.

August 2, 2010, Council provided direction regarding planning principles to shape development policy for the future Brooks/Petrochem site reuse.

April 19, 2010, Council provided direction to include the approximately 150-acre freeway adjacent western Canada Larga area in the Westside and North Avenue Community Planning boundary; considered the use of the optional zones tool for select urban areas in the development code; discussed planning assumptions for the Brooks/Petrochem site; and reviewed principles for planning and redevelopment project area formation.

January 25, 2010, Council provided direction to proceed with work plan formation and resuming planning efforts for the Westside and North Avenue Community Planning project.

September 26, 2005 – Council direction to proceed with drafting Community Plans to implement the General Plan at the neighborhood level and prioritized long-range planning work plan.

August 8, 2005, Council adopted the 2005 General Plan directing infill first and form-based code tools for future development of the City of Ventura.

SUMMARY

In 2005 the Ventura General Plan was adopted which directed implementation via community plans and development codes for select areas of the City including the Westside Community. Originally commenced in 2006, the current Westside Community Planning project included extensive input by the Community from past outreach efforts prior to adoption of the 2005 General Plan, as well as current outreach efforts conducted with Westside community in the past year (see detailed listing under the Public Engagement Citizen Advisory Group Review Sections of this administrative report). Key issues heard by the community during the extensive public outreach efforts were a desire for urban park space and plazas; enhanced connectivity for bicycles and pedestrians including improved crossings across Ventura Avenue and connections to the Ventura River bicycle trail; concerns regarding increasing building height along Ventura Avenue; sensitivity to neighborhood context and history; protection for the Ventura River watershed and overwhelming comment regarding environmental concerns of the previously included unincorporated Canada Larga area. Community Development civic engagement effort also included partnering with stakeholder groups such as CAUSE (Central Coastal Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy) and VCCOOL (Ventura Climate Care Options Organized Locally, a county *global warming action group*) to help inform various community members, including Latino business owners and residents. CAUSE and the City provided a translation summary (Attachment F) to further increase participation in the April 18th Council hearing.

Integrating this vast amount of community input, the current draft Westside Community Plan and Development Code have been envisioned by the Westside community to create an interconnected, revitalized Westside Community Planning Area that improves over time by:

- preserving neighborhood heritage,
- supporting and expanding the vibrant arts community,
- requiring well designed development,
- enhances multi- modal travel options,
- increasing urban plazas and green spaces, and
- expanding jobs, with an emphasis on green technology and high tech sector opportunities.

Core elements of the Community Plan and Code include an intensification and mixed-use strategy for the Ventura Avenue commercial corridor; and improved multi-modal connections at the western and eastern edges of the neighborhoods and through interior neighborhoods.

This Draft Westside Community Plan and Code are presented for review by the City Council as the project description for further analysis by Community Development, including proceeding with required environmental analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act. The Draft Development Code that accompanies the Draft Westside Community Plan will remain subject to refinement and input during the summer months as the environmental analysis proceeds until October of this year, at which time the Community Plan and Code would be prepared for final public hearings and adoption process commencing in late fall 2011.

DISCUSSION

In order to implement the broad vision of the 2005 General Plan, refined vision of subsequently proposed economic strategies in 2006 and current input of the Westside Community, the Westside Community Plan while structured in one Vision statement and 12 chapters mirroring the General Plan chapter format, essentially focuses key policies and actions on the 1) community core, the “*Avenue*”, 2) adjacent interior neighborhoods, and 3) the community edges along the river and hillsides respectively. The following discussion summarizes these policies and action items by area and concludes with the next milestones in completing the Community Plan and Development Code.

1) Commercial Core: Ventura Avenue Corridor

A key element defined by the General Plan for the Westside Community is the mixed-use commercial corridor along Ventura Avenue. The Ventura Avenue Corridor was envisioned to utilize the *warehouse model* to harness the existing commercial assets and burgeoning cultural expression on the Westside and become an eclectic center for emerging arts, crafts and neighborhoods-serving uses. The vision of the Westside Community Planning project is to create greater intensity and uses along Ventura Avenue with identifiable urban nodes that facilitate concentrated pedestrian and commercial activity.

At present the Urban Design Plan calls for reflecting the Ventura Avenue Corridor strategy of the 2005 General Plan along activity “node designations” between Park Row and Center Streets; Warner to Lewis; and at Stanley Avenue, but scaling back the extent of commercial corridor above Stanley Avenue from approximately DeAnza Drive to Shoshone Street in favor of concentrating activity closer to the intersection of Stanley and Ventura Avenues. This change would be a departure from the 2005 General Plan strategy in that it would lessen the requirement for a retail frontage along Ventura Avenue, from DeAnza to Shoshone, and allow for more ground floor residential development along that portion of the corridor. The required *Shopfront Overlay* would then be shifted to the existing industrial

use parcels closer to the Stanley Avenue intersection. Current market conditions would suggest that requiring additional retail in this more northerly portion of the Ventura Corridor reduces the Urban Design Plan strategy to concentrate retail uses at the urban nodes lower on the Avenue. The net result would be that while retail uses are still permitted in this area of the corridor, they would not be required, thus necessitating an amendment (GPA) to the 2005 General Plan for this portion of the corridor (See Attachment D, GPA No. 1). Instead a more concentrated "town center" forming a "T" up Stanley Avenue and outward along the Avenue from Comstock to DeAnza Drives would be proposed to serve as the retail node for this portion of the Avenue. This town center concept, also serving as a welcoming gateway from Highway 33 into the community, would further the cultural goals and goals of the 2006 Westside Economic Development Strategy by proposing another amendment to the 2005 General Plan at the Selby property from industrial uses to Commercial Corridor (See Attachment D, GPA No. 2) to accommodate the mixed-use retail, office and high density residential uses at this site (See Attachment B, page 31).

Parks and Green Space

In addition to the Avenue urban nodes and town center concept at Stanley Avenue, the Community Plan also calls for additional parks and greens to be included in urban redevelopment where possible. The proposed Development Code allows a building height incentive program for developers of mixed-use projects on certain size lots in exchange for creation of urban plazas and green spaces fronting along Ventura Avenue for the benefit of the community.

Key Strategic Sites

To address the industrial base and arts-based goals of the 2006 Westside Economic Development Strategy, the Community Plan identifies four economic catalyst sites for specific economic development goals. The area below Stanley Avenue along Olive Street is identified as the industrial area most suited for placing green and high technology jobs on the Westside. Portions of industrial areas above Dakota Drive, within the incorporated city limits and the Avenue School are identified as a transition area between mixed uses and heavier industrial uses farther to the north in the unincorporated area. The Avenue School is also identified as potential mixed-use development. A small parcel to the north of the Avenue School would also be proposed for a General Plan amendment to convert it from industrial to mixed-use to facilitate the urban use transition (See Attachment D, GPA No. 3). The third catalyst site, the previously mentioned Kellogg property, has been identified as a likely commercial and live/work development oriented to artists lofts, with neighborhood serving uses, including envisioning a prominent urban plaza located at the corner of Ventura Avenue and Kellogg Street (See Attachment A, pages 21-22). The fourth and final site is Rocklite/Ventura Avenue, the Selby property, located east of the intersection of Stanley and Ventura Avenues, which as described previously above, is envisioned to become a town center. As a community focal point, this site has great potential with new mixed-use development, increased commerce and opportunities for urban plaza or expanded park amenity, benefiting from the immediate adjacency to Harry

Lyons Park and a direct connection to the proposed bike path extension along Cameron Street. An illustrative of this vision will be prepared during the summer months for inclusion in the Final Plan before the adoption hearing process begins.

Commercial Core Development Code

As with previous community planning efforts, form-based coding is the tool to achieve this vision. Transects along the Avenue Corridor comprise the T.4.11, T.5.5 and Special Industrial District zones. The accompanying Development Code allows for a variety of building typologies to accommodate the character of corridor development along Ventura Avenue including multi-family housing building types such as duplexes, villas, bungalow courts, row houses, and various courtyard housing types, as well as commercial block and industrial flex shed for the commercial and industrial uses respectively. Frontage requirements on commercial and mixed-use buildings will define the character of the street in commercial areas. To ensure the desired retail frontage in the commercial node areas of the Urban Design Plan, the Development Code utilizes a *Shopfront Overlay* mechanism to require a shopfront and awning frontage type that precludes residential uses on the ground floor. The Development Code also contains the building height incentive program for mixed-use projects in exchange for creation of urban plazas and green spaces fronting along Ventura Avenue, a major refinement in the Development Code emerging from public comment on the preliminary draft Code (See Attachment B, page 38 & 40).

To define the public realm, the Development Code also includes street and streetscape standards to establish desired improvements to better accommodate pedestrians along Ventura Avenue including six-foot wide sidewalks, a required five-foot setback and street trees where feasible. Part of a long-term vision, new alleys are proposed on either side of Ventura Avenue to provide necessary additional circulation to support commercial uses and relieve traffic constraints for parking and loading. The current effort also includes a proposal to complete a parking study to assess the supply and demand for parking in the Westside Community, provide parking management recommendations, and to be used by staff to refine the Development Code parking standards this summer.

Nonconforming Regulations

Additionally in order to facilitate transition to the urban form delineated in the Community Plan and Development Code, the Development Code establishes more rigorous stipulations along the Ventura Avenue Corridor for nonconforming lots, nonconforming structures and nonconforming uses such that all new construction is subject to the code and nonconforming uses are discontinued 6 months after a qualifying event (see Attachment B, page 8). For the Westside community, this represents a more restrictive nonconforming regulation than in other parts of the city.

2) Westside Neighborhoods

The Westside Community is home to the oldest established residential neighborhoods in the City of Ventura, largely comprised of single and multiplex residential units on smaller lots. The General Plan calls for medium- and high-density residential land use designations in these neighborhoods and incorporates those assumptions into the state mandated housing element. The Development Code will accommodate the General Plan land use designations through the transect zone designations that allow for a combination of single family and multi-family building types to accommodate a variety of types and income levels of housing while respecting the existing character of the neighborhoods.

Historic Character

Neighborhood character is further addressed in the treatment of historic resources. One existing historic district, the Simpson Tract Historic District, is located within the Westside Planning area and is subject to adopted design guidelines. In conjunction with the Westside Community Planning project, a residential neighborhood historic resources survey was conducted which identified one additional eligible historic district between Lewis and Vince Streets. The draft Historic Resources Survey also identified additional areas, though not eligible as historic districts, that would benefit from special consideration in zoning to retain the architectural character of the neighborhood. Referred to as "conservation areas" and described in the draft historic resources survey as an emerging neighborhood preservation tool, that gives greater weight to conserving building form, mass and scale, and alignment, but not architectural style (see Attachment C).

The Community Plan calls for development of historic districts where appropriate and to preserve historic sites. Additional survey work is pending to address industrial uses in the Westside area that may also contribute toward the historic fabric of the Westside Community. This analysis will be completed by July 2011, incorporated into the Final Westside Historic Resources Survey report, assessed in the forthcoming environmental review, as well as further inform the Development Code refinement if applicable. Additionally, the context of areas of the neighborhoods that exhibit building massing that contributes to the character of the area, the *conservation areas* objective from the historic resources survey report, will be addressed through a *Building Mass* overlay in the Development Code. This overlay will provide measures that ensure future redevelopment or additions and remodeling of property is conducted with respect to the context and form of the existing neighborhood by placing more stringent requirements on upper story setback and restriction of commercial block building types in the overlay area (see Attachment B, page 51).

Parks and Green Space

One major area of interest for members of the Westside Community is the addition of green space to the urban environment where possible. However, development of parks and green space in developed, urbanized areas such as the Westside can be a greater

challenge than development in greenfields. Urbanized built-out areas face obstacles such as lack of space, shortage of funding, and conflicting priorities as to size and type of space. To address these challenges, and respond to the desires of the community members, the Community Plan calls for creating public plazas and green space along Ventura Avenue, and improving existing recreational amenities in the project area such as Westpark, Harry Lyon Park and the long term strategy for access and linear park trail along the hillsides. The Development Code will accommodate this vision by including a development incentive of height for open space provided in new development proposals. Additionally, to achieve more park space in new residential projects, the Development Code includes a 2 acre threshold for projects to provide public park space, as opposed to a 4 acre threshold for other areas of the city without adopted development codes or adopted specific plans.

The Community Plan also calls for recreation improvements at Westpark and Harry Lyon Park, use agreements with Ventura Unified School District for shared use of campus facilities, and creation of the Hillside Strategy workplan (see Attachment A, page 43).

Nonconforming Regulations

Nonconformities in the Westside neighborhoods are also addressed in the Development Code with more leniency than along the Commercial Corridor, in that nonconforming uses can continue with an indefinite timeline and minor additions are allowed to nonconforming structures. For the Westside community, this represents a more flexible nonconforming regulation than in other parts of the city.

Circulation

The Community Plan and Development Code address the issue of improved circulation through the neighborhoods and across Ventura Avenue. The circulation plan includes the creation of bike path connection at Cameron Street, bike boulevards at Vince Street, Simpson Street, and Park Row Avenue to better facilitate this mode of travel, as well as two new connections to the Ventura River Bicycle Trail at Simpson Street and Riverside Drive. The Community Plan also calls for improvements to facilitate safer crossings across Ventura Avenue at locations such as Vince Street, Warner Street, McFarland Drive and DeAnza Drive, utilizing tools such as improved signage, signalization and curb extensions.

3) Community Edges

The Westside Community, located between significant natural resources, the hillsides to the east and the Ventura River to the west, creates a need for contextual sensitivity in improvements and development of adjacent development and its potential impact to the natural environment. The Draft Community Plan places an emphasis on policies that acknowledge the necessity of low impact development (LID) practices as well as public improvements that contribute toward reduction of urban runoff to the river, and improved water quality for runoff that ultimately enters the Ventura River through stormdrain outflows. Locally, a program of public improvements, such as screens for stormwater intakes is

included in the Community Plan. On a regional level, the City will participate with multi-agency efforts to craft a remediation and conservation plan for the Lower Ventura River (referred as the *Vision Plan for the Lower Ventura River Parkway*).

To facilitate access to these natural amenities, the Community Plan proposes improved connectivity of adjacent trails such as the previously mentioned bike path connectors to the Ventura River Bike Trail, as well as completion of the Cedar Street connections adjacent to the hillside, portions of which are outside the incorporated city. Pursuant to Streets and Highways Code § 1810, the City may acquire property outside its boundary in the unincorporated area of the County for purposes of connecting or widening existing streets without necessitating annexation. The Community Plan proposes a collaborative workplan for a potential Cedar Street project that includes private ownership interests and responsible public agencies to address the hillside jurisdictional and engineering constraints prior to assuming a role in construction of a connected linear park and roadway on the eastern edge of the project area.

Lastly, along the eastern edge, surrounding the Seneca Gardens/Brock hills area, a General Plan amendment is proposed to change the land use from *Neighborhood Low* to *Parks and Open Space* (POS), in recognition of this area already deed restricted for open space and subject to the City's Hillside Overlay Management Program (See Attachment D, GPA No. 4).

Public Programs

Additionally, the Community Plan also proposes public improvements and programs to ensure adequate infrastructure to provide water and wastewater, protect the cultural heritage of the Westside Community, and provide opportunities for lifelong learning. Measures included in the Community Plan provide infrastructure for enhanced computer networking capabilities in the project area; a community envisioned mural program to enhance cultural heritage and vitality of the area; and partnerships with the Ventura Unified School District to provide adult education and training programs.

Next Steps

As Community Development continues with required analysis toward completion of the Community Plan and Code, several major next steps will need to occur. Due to the change in Project Area boundary, a new Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environment Impact Report will be circulated. The full scope of efforts to complete the required CEQA analysis is contained in a separate April 18, 2011 Council agenda item, which scopes the timeline, costs and process for producing the Environmental Impact Report. Additionally staff will re-engage the public in a finer grain level of input to refine the Development Code beyond the broader policy concepts addressed in the current public outreach effort. The "code refinement effort" will be in the form of several technical sessions comprised of interested local design professionals, community stakeholders and the public working together with representatives from the Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Committee,

Planning Commission and Parks Commission along with staff to refine the Development Code regulations. One desire by several community groups and the Design Review Committee is for the code refinement to consider how to retain the “Westside eclectic feeling” as it might relate to certain building form, rather than just design and architectural style.

Upon completion of the DEIR and required 45-day circulation period, the Community Plan and Code will be updated accordingly to mitigate for any identified effects disclosed during analysis or the public review process. The Westside Community Planning project can be brought forward through the adoption process including Planning Commission and City Council hearings at the beginning of 2012.

CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUP REVIEW

February 16, 2011, Parks and Recreation Commission
February 8, 2011, Historic Preservation Committee
January 26, 2011, Design Review Committee
January 24, 2011, Historic Preservation Committee
January 19, 2011, Historic Preservation Committee
January 19, 2011, Parks and Recreation Commission
December 7, 2010, Planning Commission
November 29, 2010, Historic Preservation Committee
August 23, 2010, Historic Preservation Committee
July 26, 2010, Historic Preservation Committee

Refer to Attachment H to review each Commission/Committee minutes.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS / PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

February 2, 2011, City of Ojai Planning Commission
February 2, 2011, Westside Community Council
January 24, 2011, VCCool/CAUSE Business Owners Meeting
January 21, 2011, County of Ventura
January 20, 2011, VCCool/CAUSE Residential Neighborhood Meeting
January 20, 2011, AERA Energy meeting
January 13, 2011, Ventura Unified School District
January 11, 2011, Ventura River Watershed Council
January 10, 2011, Ojai Valley Sanitation District Board Special Meeting
January 7, 2011, Buzz Bonsall Canada Larga Field Trip Study
January 5, 2011, Westside Community Council
January 5, 2011, Hillside Stabilization Ad Hoc Committee
December 21, 2010, VCCool/CAUSE December 7, 2010, CAUSE meeting
December 1, 2010, Westside Community Council

November 23, 2010 Ventura River Watershed Council
November 17, 2010, Community Plan and Code Public Workshop

FISCAL IMPACTS

The Community Plan and Code would have no short-term fiscal impacts as they affect land use policy and changes to zoning designations only. The intent of the Westside Community Planning project is to serve as a catalyst to facilitate revitalization of the community through improved urban form and public and private improvement projects.

At the January 24, 2011 meeting, Council authorized \$20,000 for the Civic Engagement activities associated with review and circulation of the Draft Community Plan and Code.

ALTERNATIVES

Where the Community Plan is proposing several changes to land use and density strategies found in the General Plan, several scenarios can be identified as alternatives to the proposed Community Plan.

First, the Community Plan could meet anticipated density per the General Plan without alterations. This would have the net affect of requiring increased heights and higher transect zoning designations in the residential neighborhoods than that currently proposed or are supported by the community.

A second alternative to accommodating increased density while preserving neighborhood context is raising allowable heights along the Ventura Corridor to retain lower density transect coding in the interior residential neighborhoods. This alternative would have the net affect of retaining the existing allowable, 6-story, 75' heights of the current municipal code rather than adopting the 3-4 story height limits currently contained in the T4.11 and T5.5 transect zones. This scenario would likely result in more abrupt urban form between the Avenue corridor and the adjacent neighborhoods while still achieving the densities in the General Plan.

Prepared by Margaret Ide, Associate Planner
For Dave Ward, Planning Manager

Jeffrey Lambert, AICP
Community Development Director

FORWARDED TO THE CITY COUNCIL


Office of the City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Draft Westside Community Plan, dated April 2011
- B. Draft Westside Development Code, dated April 2011
- C. Draft Westside Historic Survey, dated January 2011
- D. Proposed General Plan Land Use Amendments
- E. Proposed Historic District and Conservation Areas Map
- F. Summary of Major Issues, Spanish and English Translations
- G. Matrix of all Public Comment on the 2010 Preliminary Draft Plan and Development Code
- H. Action minutes for all City Advisory Commissions/Committees