



CITY OF NEWARK

Planning Commission

City Hall, City Council Chambers

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MINUTES

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

A. ROLL CALL

Chairperson Aguilar called the meeting to order, via teleconference, at 7:32pm. Present were Vice Chairperson Bridges, Commissioners Becker, Fitts, Otterstetter (all via teleconference).

B. MINUTES

B.1 Approval of Minutes of the regular Planning Commission meeting of Tuesday, June 22, 2021.

MOTION APPROVED

Commissioner Becker moved, Commissioner Fitts seconded, to approve the Minutes of the regular Planning Commission meeting on June 22, 2021. The motion passed 5 AYES.

C. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

D. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS

E.1 Hearing of the Planning Commission of the City of Newark to recommend that the City Council amend the Newark General Plan, adopt the Old Town Newark Specific Plan, adopt chapter 17.14, Old Town (-OT) Overlay District, of title 17 – zoning of the Newark municipal code, amend the Newark Zoning Map, and adopt miscellaneous related

amendments to Title 17 – zoning of the Newark Municipal Code, and adopt the addendum to the certified final environmental impact report prepared for the Newark General Plan.

(RESOLUTION)

Deputy Community Development Director (DCDD) Interiano provided a brief overview of the preparation for the project including three community meetings that were conducted to obtain community feedback for the project. DCDD introduced the consultants, Mark Rhoades from Rhoades Planning Group, Jean Eisberg from Lexington Planning.

Mark Rhoades, Rhoades Planning Group, gave a presentation (presentation on file with City Clerk) with an overview of the project and process recap, specific plan highlights, and CEQA information. The Old Town Specific Plan of today is much smaller in scope and scale compared to the Historic Specific Plan in 1990. This allowed Rhoades Planning Group to focus on streetscape improvements and use and development standards. Mr. Rhoades stated community feedback during the first community meeting in March 2019 were concerns about parking and traffic, support for streetscape improvements, and desire to incorporate historic elements in the plan. The feedback from the community meeting in June 2019 were ideas for identity and weaving in historic elements, support for streetscape and pedestrian/bike improvements, desire for community programming and gathering, and support for new housing and retail development. Mr. Rhoades provided a market snapshot with information regarding residential and commercial rents, development costs, and construction costs. Mr. Rhoades provided a summary of the Specific Plan including refining zoning regulations, identifying programs to support investment in the community, and make streetscape improvements.

Jean Eisberg, Lexington Planning, continued the presentation by laying out the Land Use Strategy and Zoning Map changes such as bringing the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance into conformance, creating transitions between taller heights on Thornton Ave and lower densities away from the main corridor, and focus retail commercial area between Sycamore St and Olive St. A key part of the analysis was to analyze what was physically feasible on site based on existing zoning standards. Development prototypes and feasibility modeling were created to include proposed zoning changes to expand

permitted uses, modify height limits, and increase residential densities. Other policies that were reviewed are affordable housing strategies to explore ways to generate housing within development projects to allow for 100% affordable projects. Key economic development policies to identify ways to support food businesses with pilot façade improvement program and to utilize the existing structures and to capitalize on existing resources, and streetscape & urban design to create room to add bicycle facilities and widen the sidewalk to create a multimodal corridor. Ms. Eisberg provided an overview of the environmental mitigations and project streamlining, infrastructure plan, implementation, and traffic analysis. Ms. Eisberg concluded the presentation that the plan will help create a stronger neighborhood-serving retail destination for the community to gather while retaining its socio-economic and cultural diversity.

Commissioner Becker expressed his concern with the reduction in parking and asked if there are any additional approvals that will need to be obtained to narrow Thornton Ave. Assistant City Engineer (ACE) Imai replied that there are no additional approvals required to narrow Thornton Ave.

Commissioner Fitts hoped there will be enough space to allow a railroad train station and parking in the future.

Vice Chairperson Bridges stated the presentation mentioned keeping the theme in the area the same and asked if there will be a variety of cuisine in the proposed area or if the cuisine will remain the same. DCDD Interiano explained that the policies in the draft plan will encourage those types of businesses to continue to operate and continue to come to the area and not necessarily about the type of business it was. So the policies are really to incentivize keeping those types of businesses in the area.

Vice Chairperson Bridges asked when this project will begin. DCDD Interiano clarified that the plan allows for 400 units of affordable housing but there are currently no projects proposed for affordable housing. Staff's immediate focus will be implementing the streetscapes portion of the plan in addition to removing the truck route from Thornton Ave.

Commissioner Otterstetter expressed her concern for parking and asked staff to ensure there's enough parking in future redevelopment plans. She is excited about the affordable housing and having food incubation opportunities as a focus for the area. She asked if Watkins Hall will be classified as a historical site. DCDD Interiano and Ms. Eisberg stated Watkins Hall was not designated as a historical site and it will have to be a future discussion on how to proceed with that property. DCDD Interiano confirmed that Watkins Hall is owned by the City.

Commissioner Fitts asked if there are other City owned properties in the proposed area that can be consolidated to allow affordable housing to be built. DCDD Interiano stated there are four City owned properties in the proposed area. Watkins Hall and the old fire station are the only two properties that could be a potential project if it was combined with other properties.

Chairperson Aguilar believes that the Specific Plan captures what the community has voiced over the last couple of years. He asked if everything moves forward, what are the next steps if the specific plan gets recommended to City Council and City Council approves it. ACE Imai responded that 35% plans are being produced by one of the consultants which is a key step in applying for grant funding. As part of the FY 2020-2022 biennial budget and capital improvement plan, the City has funded the design for the Old Town streetscape project. Once the design plans are at 100% and becomes shovel ready, the project will be more competitive to receive grant funding.

Chairperson Aguilar opened the public hearing.

Yoo-Yoo Yeh lives at Carter Station expressed her excitement for more frequent bus lines and new food venues. Ms. Yeh asked if there's a way for residents to continue to be involved in shaping what Old Town will look like and whether this development will help Newark achieve net zero as part of the climate action plan. DCDD Interiano stated that as projects come in, there will be public input opportunities. Staff has not had an opportunity to review neighboring city's climate action plan and how that would apply to Newark. Ms. Yeh would like to see a community space that includes a tutoring center

and a cooling center. Vice Chairperson Bridges mentioned that once the Newark library opens in October, it will be able to offer lots of tutoring opportunities.

ACE Imai mentioned that although it's not part of the climate action plan, there is a complete streets element that will be implemented in the streetscape plan to encourage pedestrian and bicyclist activity. The goal is to implement green infrastructure which will treat stormwater runoff. There are items in the plans for the streetscape project that will address environmental concerns.

Chairperson Aguilar closed the public hearing.

Chairperson Aguilar asked staff to walk staff through the process of the elimination of the truck routes on Thornton Ave. DCDD Interiano stated that staff are in discussions to include assessment of other areas for truck routes, implementation on the enforcement side, and an outreach program to our business community. The elimination of the truck route would require a General Plan amendment.

Commissioner Otterstetter expressed her concern that Watkins Hall might be sold and torn down. There was a previous plan to turn the lower level into a museum and the upper levels into an entertainment space. She hopes that staff will continue to explore that option rather than selling or tearing down the building.

Commissioner Fitts moved, Chairperson Aguilar seconded, to approve the Resolution Recommending that the City Council amend the Newark General Plan, adopt the Old Town Newark Specific Plan, adopt Chapter 17.14, Old Town (-OT) Overlay District, of Title 17 – zoning of the Newark Municipal Code, amend the Newark Zoning Map, and adopt miscellaneous related amendments to Title 17 – zoning of the Newark Municipal Code, and adopt the addendum to the certified final environmental impact report prepared for the Newark General Plan. The motion passed 5 AYES.

F. STAFF REPORTS

None.

G. COMMISSION MATTERS

G.1 Report on City Council actions.

Community Development Director Turner stated there is no specific actions to report. City Council will be considering the NewPark Place Specific Plan at the City Council meeting on July 22, 2021.

H. ADJOURNMENT

CDD Turner clarified that the library has not given a definitive timetable for the opening. There are number of purchases and build out of the interior spaces that needs to be completed before it can open for program and services. Staff does expect the Civic Center grand opening to take place on October 9, 2021.

Chairperson Aguilar adjourned the regular Planning Commission meeting at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



STEVEN TURNER
Secretary