



GENERAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Miriam Warne Community Building/Chamber of Commerce
14491 Beach Boulevard, Suite A
Westminster, CA 92683
February 1, 2016
6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: Chair TA called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Vincent Agor, Don Anderson, Gloria Conostas, Sergio Contreras, Gilbert Cruz, Owen Eames, April Erazo, Lupe Fisher, Richard Jolly, Mimi Lozano, Gia Ly, Lisa Manzo, Sandra McClure, Khanh Nguyen, Tyler Nichols, Helen Ortega, Jamison Power, Patricia Robbins, Laura Sottile Rose, Syed Shah, Tri Ta, Diana Williams

PRESENT: Vincent Agor, Don Anderson, Sergio Contreras, Gilbert Cruz, Richard Jolly, Gia Ly, Sandra McClure, Khanh Nguyen, Tyler Nichols, Jamison Power, Patricia Robbins, Tri Ta, Diana Williams.

ABSENT: Gloria Conostas, Owen Eames, April Erazo, Lupe Fisher, Mimi Lozano, Lisa Manzo, Helen Ortega, Laura Sottile Rose (arrived late), Syed Shah.

SALUTE TO FLAG: GPAC Member Contreras led the assembly in the Salute to the Flag.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 26, 2015

Motion: It was moved by GPAC Member Anderson, and seconded by GPAC Member Nguyen, to approve the October 26, 2015 GPAC meeting minutes, as presented. The motion carried unanimously with one abstention by GPAC Member Robbins.

REGULAR BUSINESS:

Project Update

- Environmental Review
- Fiscal Analysis
- Upcoming GPAC Meeting Topics

Planning Manager Bashmakian reviewed the 10 strategies for Placemaking. The goal is to restructure government to support public places. The different Departments are focused on their own project not necessarily the spaces in between them. Everyone has brought value to the process and we are looking at it comprehensively. The Committee,

staff, the community, and the City Council worked together to create a vision we worked hard to draft a few months ago.

Associate Principal Grant wished the GPAC a Happy New Year. We are finally at the two optional elements: Community Design and Economic Development. We hear all the wish list items but we have to find ways to pay for the wish list. Chief Economist Gunnells will write the economic part of the plan. He will provide an overview of the economics and will go through exercises to prioritize and develop strategies.

Parks and Recreation

- Westminster's Existing Parks and Recreation Programs

Community Services Director Dobbert made a presentation regarding the existing Parks and Recreation Programs. The City has established facilities and has put a large investment towards them. These are much cherished spaces and there is not a lot of room to build more parks and recreation spaces. We are now looking to creating spaces in the built out areas.

Community Services Director Dobbert reviewed the Parks Renovation Process, as the City has invested \$10 million into parks including a new building and infrastructure improvements. Most of the funds went to addressing deferred maintenance on several projects. The City has 22 parks and received Quimby Act funds for subdivisions. The next step in the Parks and Facilities Master Plan would be to receive input and where the next improvements should take place and what should be prioritized. Next time the City spends \$10 million we want to see new parks and spaces, not deferred maintenance.

Associate Principal Grant stated that there is a ratio, a minimum of 3 acres per 1000 residents which the City is trying to achieve. Cities try to find every bit of open space it can. Certain areas, such as the cemetery, were designated as green open space in the current General Plan; however, it is not active, usable space and was reclassified. At the time when the City was established the focus was on neighborhood parks, rather than regional parks. There is also not sufficient parking at many of our parks.

GPAC Member Ly suggested bringing up two important park areas to add value to the plan, Hoover Corridor Walking Trail and Sigler Park Family Center.

Community Services Director Dobbert further elaborated that the City Council is committed to improving parks; certain ones are currently over programmed. There are many users and limited space. They are looking for opportunities to purchase larger lots in certain areas.

GPAC Member Nguyen inquired whether the 3 acre per 1000 resident ratio includes joint uses of school district space. He added that many of the schools are fenced off and unusable for a park area.

Associate Principal Grant stated that there are challenges when using school district space, but we really need to look at overall availability. There is an action item in the General Plan to look at joint use agreements and liability issues so that school areas can also be considered as useable park space.

Community Services Director Dobbert stated some of the school parks had more access previously, but the Safe School Act shrank usable park space, as the green space became less accessible. At this point, it is important to work toward a joint use after school program with the school district.

City Manager Manfro spoke about the proper rehabilitation of existing parks. Space was added at Russell Paris Park by filling in swampland with nine feet of dirt. This created a half-mile of actual, useable park space. In addition, additional funds were applied to use corridor for regular circulation and turning it from an eyesore to an amenity. There was also Family Resource Center building improvements and just because something is not specifically a parks project, it does not mean that we cannot look at other facilities and see if they can be used for usable space. The Hoover Corridor will be rehabilitated in multiple phases. Phase II will require more funding. The bicycle access will change how that corridor is utilized. There is a bigger vision of making the City a more usable space for pedestrians, bicyclists, and families.

Community Services Director Dobbert explained that the Park Facilities Master Plan provides the vision for the City's facilities, it is the roadmap to the future for our Parks and Recreation facilities.

In response to GPAC Member Contreras regarding the unused walkways and drainage courses are identified in the General Plan. Senior Associate Tropiano and Community Services Director Dobbert confirmed the Park Facilities Master Plan is still in the planning process and that the public wanted connectivity between parks. We are taking a look at what we have now and where the City wants to be ten years from now. We are identifying assets around existing facilities, looking at how and what those spaces can be used for. The public is also being engaged in the planning process to determine this roadmap for the future.

GPAC Member Williams expressed support for livability and walkability between all the parks and a desire for even small pocket parks. She also inquired regarding park memorial trees.

Associate Principal Grant and Community Services Director Dobbert noted that the majority of trees the City has planted over the past 15 years are drought resistant. The Senior Center exercise equipment is now used more often with the upgrade of exercise equipment. We are also looking at a 10 to 15 year re-evaluation of spaces they may need to be repurposed. The City is not always looking to acquire space. Another opportunity would be to have corporate sponsors improve spaces.

Community Services Director Dobbert described the memorial tree program which allows individuals to choose from a palette of approved trees and have it planted in memory of another individual. GPAC Member Rose suggested better marketing for the program. The State has also put money into trees and there are grants available for the City to plug into that money.

Community Services Director Dobbert and Associate Principal Grant further explained that we are looking to embrace every element of the community and we sometimes look for new developments to provide the open space. At this time, the City has about one (1)

acre per thousand residents and most developed cities in Orange County are at that ratio. It is difficult to achieve 3 acres per 1000 residents. As new development comes in they are responsible for providing that park ratio, and if they cannot provide it, they must pay in-lieu fees. The General Fund puts in the requirement for parks and the Parks Master Plan is the action plan to achieve the goal.

Associate Principal Grant and Director Dobbert explained that the parkland requirement must be publicly accessible land and each new development is reviewed on a case by case basis. The in-lieu fees are pooled as park dedication fees and are used to try and serve the area, not necessarily buy land. The General Plan Advisory Committee develops action items and regulations to achieve that.

A member of the GPAC Member Jolly inquired as to whether fencing off the schools and stopping youth groups from using the facilities because they cannot afford the insurance will ever change. The fencing has taken away much of the previously usable parkland. GPAC Member Nguyen responded that this will also be part of discussions relative to a future joint use agreement. Senior Associate Tropiano stated an inventory of the City's land uses is being prepared and ways to achieve the Park Master Plan are being investigated.

Placemaking

- What is Placemaking
- How will Placemaking be addressed in the General Plan?
- Establishing a Community Structure
 - Gateways
 - Enhanced Corridors and Intersections
 - Landmarks and Places of Local Significance
 - Neighborhoods and Districts

Senior Associate Tropiano described the organization “Project for Public Spaces” out of New York and showed exhibits and examples. The exercise began with a reflection on each of the GPAC members favorite spaces. Items for reflection included social environment, access, what links the space, and where do we want to see these spaces in Westminster. In terms of business retention and vacancy rates, the group was asked to review what could be done to encourage “active” and “vibrant” businesses.

Senior Associate Tropiano encouraged the group to think about people first and how they use places. Are these streets or sidewalks, outdoor dining experiences, walking kids to school, buildings and facades? They were also encouraged to think about how they would regulate these public or private spaces. Also, to take lesson learned from larger scale areas and apply those concepts to a smaller scale and to take into consideration activities for all ages, colors, lights, and other elements that can be brought in.

Senior Associate Tropiano spoke about the nine (9) strategies that can be considered when transforming place, including treating streets as spaces, as streets are the second largest land use, public parks and parking lots that are passive, designing buildings to define spaces, downtown appropriateness, linking public health with public spaces, and

involving community. The “Power of 10” was also discussed as to determining the 10 major destinations in Westminster, and then identifying the 10 uses for those 10 major destinations.

Senior Associate Tropiano stated it was determined that creating space was a priority for the GPAC and this was the time to create a wish list. Community structure was elaborated upon as an exercise from the small groups. The various areas of the City were described as gateways, corridors, activity centers, places that create districts, signage, special architecture, plaza spaces, general districts for Westminster that are not boundary lines, and discussing where these areas begin and end.

Associate Principal Grant described several districts including: Little Saigon, the Civic Center District, and the Downtown Area. Discussion ensued regarding the ability to get on and off the freeway. There will be flux with the 405 freeway expansion and many of the elements will change. Another district that was introduced was the Westminster Mall, which was described as having a mix of uses.

City Traffic Engineer Ozaeta stated the 405 Freeway was previously discussed and additional improvements favorable to pedestrians and bicycles were investigated including slowing things down, slip ramps from Westminster right into freeway ramp, the slowing down of vehicles onto regional highways, and looking at ways to have green striping when there are pedestrians likely in the area. It is likely that the construction will take 5 to 6 years.

City Traffic Engineer Ozaeta mentioned the City obtained an \$80,000 grant from OCTA to propose some improvements on Goldenwest from the 99 Cents Store to the Mall. However, CalTrans declined the previous proposal. He further explained the beauty of the project is that City owned infrastructure will be paid for by OCTA dollars and gives an opportunity for someone else to design and fund the corridors. GPAC Member Rose stated she would like to see the districts and the corridors addressed and encourage the owners of properties to upgrade.

Associate Principal Grant stated there is a concentrated effort to brand the districts or downtown so that people start to see them as recognizable areas. The design guidelines will encourage and foster these dynamics, including screening parking from the street. Also, the enhancement of corridors and intersections was prioritized and making the City more “green.” Enhanced paving could be installed and outdoor space activities could be encouraged at landscaped corners. Another option to consider, although expensive, would be the undergrounding of utilities as one of the objectives.

Discussion ensued on how the General Plan addresses private property improvements. Chief Economist Gunnells stated the City can advise property owners to make property look nice via policy and development code requirements to upgrade properties as changes are made to the property. The City can also establish funds for a financing program for façade improvements, establish design guidelines for particular areas, and entice people to upgrade their facilities. Associate Principal Grant further explained that it

is a fine balance to entice new businesses to come into the city without being too restrictive causing the business to move to another City.

Planning Manager Bashmakian explained code enforcement regulations also provide triggers for property owners to comply. It may be necessary to revise the existing guidelines down the road to force future improvement. GPAC Member Anderson stated another priority may be to more aggressively pursue Code Enforcement for regulations currently in the Code, but for which there is no staff to provide regulation.

The Cerritos Auto Square was given as an example of effective signage directing patrons to a particular place. The convergence of the two freeways in Westminster was also discussed as an area to focus on for gateways and districts.

For the purpose of identifying major gateways to Westminster, discussion ensued regarding a distinguishable sign, Civic sign plan, design guidelines and the particular look of each gateway. A sound wall plan to be built along the corridor was discussed and the opportunities to provide a window to the City where the sound walls are not located.

It was stated that gateways are not necessarily highways and it may be important to put a gateway on every single spot there is an entry. The General Plan will inventory future potential gateways and appropriate designs for it. The group was asked to think about where they would like to see enhanced gateways.

Discussion ensued regarding the difference between a gateway and a district and whether specific districts need to be identified by a different gateway sign.

Break

There was a motion and a second to adjourn and continue discussion on the next meeting by GPAC Members. Discussion ensued about making the next meeting longer to accommodate the economic presentation and additional discussion about staying to finish the presentation at this meeting. **No vote was taken on the motion, so the motion died.** Associate Principal Grant confirmed the benefit of going through the presentation at this meeting is that they will be sending an activity via email to all the GPAC members. The group will be asked to determine what is important and the different ways landscaping can be funded.

Economic Development

- What is Economic Development
- How can the City Implement its Vision?
- Funding and Financing Tools
- Prioritization of High-level Actions

Next Steps

Chief Economist Gunnells, reviewed the Economic Development component of the

General Plan. Economic development was explained as growth in the local economy that leads to the community's desired goals or goal categories including: more jobs, higher wages and household income and wealth, improvement in the community's quality of life, and the expansion and diversification of the tax base that generates revenues to pay for public facilities.

A chart was displayed which illustrated people who live in Westminster, people who work in Westminster, and people who have jobs and live in Westminster, and median household income relative to Orange County as a whole. Techniques were described as to how to get more income and revenues into the City. The dissolution of redevelopment was discussed, as well as the prioritization of economic development related projects.

The need for a strategic action plan was discussed in terms of a list of objectives to be achieved, including the resources, facilities, expertise, money and timing, grant funding, the commitment of General Fund dollars, Development Impact Fees and development requirements and a greener environment City-wide.

Senior Associate Tropiano stated there would be two more GPAC meetings scheduled. The first one would be approximately in March depending on how quickly responses are received and the next one would be in April basically unveiling the General Plan. Planning Manager Bashmakian also reminded the members about the Community Open House will be held in May. He added that the General Plan Public Hearings will be scheduled between July and September, with a final decision by the Council in September 2016.

Planning Manager Bashmakian noted this was his last meeting with GPAC as he was leaving the City for another organization on February 19, 2016. He offered his gratitude to the group stating he has been impressed with the caliber of the members, adding that the work being done is going to help future staff members and Council members.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to come before the General Plan Advisory Committee, Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m. to a date to be determined.

Mayor Tri Ta
Chairperson

Prepared by:

Alexis Oropeza

Associate Planner