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Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, February 13, 2018

Workshop

SUBJECT:

JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION REGARDING THE CARSON 2040 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

I. SUMMARY

City’s General Plan consultant Dyett & Bhatia (D&B) has completed the first major step in the General Plan update process. The attached Existing Conditions Report (Report) is the result of this first step and provides a baseline of information to the City that will be used throughout the General Plan update process, Exhibit 1. This Report will assist the City in establishing the vision, goals and priorities for the General Plan. The staff report summarizes the key findings of this Report. During the workshop D&B will present these findings in more detail to facilitate the discussion and obtain input from the City Council and the Planning Commission. The Report was presented to the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) on February 5, 2018.

II. RECOMMENDATION

1. CONDUCT the joint workshop; and
2. PROVIDE additional input on the General Plan Update

1.

III. ALTERNATIVES

None.

IV. BACKGROUND

Purpose

The purpose of the Joint Session is for City Council and Planning Commission to jointly discuss key findings of the Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Challenges Assessment, Community Outreach, and the Vision, Goals and Priorities for the General Plan Update.

Based on input from this meeting, staff and the consultant team will prepare a Community Vision and Guiding Principles document. The Vision will be aspirational and the Guiding Principles will confirm existing goals or outline how these will be modified, drawing on the goals that precede policies in the current General Plan, and tailored to reflect the specific issues of this update.

Key Findings - Land Use and Development

- **There are many potential opportunity areas within the Planning Area that could be developed or redeveloped to meet commercial, industrial, or residential needs.**

There are substantial opportunities for new development in the Planning Area. Initial analysis suggests that 1,830 acres of land, or 13 percent of the Planning Area, is either vacant or underutilized.

- **Many vacant sites within the Planning Area are brownfields or have some degree of environmental contamination that would require remediation before development.**

The extent of contamination and required remediation could affect the development potential of some of these sites. Uses such as residential or retail might require a higher degree of remediation than industrial or warehousing uses.

Key Findings - Community Character

- **City form is predominantly defined by key corridors that divide the City into residential, industrial, and commercial clusters.**

The predominance of residential and industrial land uses in shaping City form suggest that both are equally important to the identity of Carson. Therefore, when considering urban design improvements, design (street trees, streetscape, building scale, etc.) should be appropriate to both industrial and residential uses.

- **With corridors providing some of the principal reuse and redevelopment potential, Carson has the opportunity to shape a new identity for many of its key corridors.**

Many of the key corridors throughout the City, including Main Street and Avalon Boulevard, have vacant or underutilized sites that can accommodate new development. Large opportunity sites near the Planning Area's major freeways can accommodate regional-serving commercial, while smaller opportunity sites further away from the freeway can accommodate redevelopment that will serve the local market. Redevelopment along Main Street, Avalon Boulevard, and the eastern part of Carson Street can continue the momentum of new development along Carson Street to other parts of the City, or take on an entirely new character.

Key Findings - Economics and Demographics

- **Changing demographics may result in new land use demands.**

Carson's population is projected to grow by 16 percent between 2015 and 2040. The General Plan should consider providing sufficient housing, jobs, schools, and amenities to meet the needs of an increased population. More residents will also put a strain on existing infrastructure, including roads, public transit, parks, and utilities. Additionally, between 2010 to 2015, Carson's senior population has grown and the number of children and young adults has decreased.

- **Promote workforce opportunities through land use decisions.**

Unemployment in Carson has decreased from 15.8 percent in 2010 to 6.3 percent in 2017. The majority of jobs within the Planning Area are in manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and trade, which have experienced job losses in recent years that are projected to continue through 2040. Additionally, the City currently experiences a job surplus compared to its employed population. The number of jobs within Carson is projected to increase by 24 percent between 2015 and 2040, which will further increase its job surplus.

Key Findings - Circulation

- **Carson does not enjoy a comprehensive local or regional transportation system.**

Carson lacks sufficient access to high quality regional mass transit. The Del Amo Blue line station is outside the eastern edge of the City away from residential uses. Planning work continues on the extension of the Green Line from its current terminus at Redondo Beach Station to a new transit center in Torrance. However, there are no other extensions planned through Carson to connect to significant regional attractions such as the StubHub Center and the upcoming Fashion Outlets Los Angeles. The City should play a more active role in connecting the extension of the Green Line from Torrance to the Blue Line east of the City.

More localized transit is provided by several agencies that lack comprehensive coordination. The Carson Circuit routes are currently under evaluation by the City. The SouthBay Pavilion Transit Center, located in the center of Carson, acts as the hub for the Carson Circuit and other transit providers that serve the City. However, this “transit center” is merely a bus stop along the road. Carson lacks a true transit center. The City should ensure residents are provided with reliable and convenient access to transportation

- **With a large share of the land in the Planning Area devoted to industrial uses, main corridors in the City are frequently used to transport goods.**

The impact of goods movement on streets is of particular concern to the City, and resulted in the City Council passing a temporary moratorium on industrial and warehouse facilities in 2017. Heavy truck traffic creates wear and tear on roadways impacting the experiences of people who also use these roads to drive or travel via bicycle. As part of this General Plan update, the City may consider reevaluating truck routes to reduce damage to roads, adjusting the funding mechanisms used to pay for road upkeep, or some other alternatives. The 2016 Pavement Management Program identified a \$92.9 million in street repair backlogs. The City is currently exploring alternative funding sources to address this shortfall, Exhibit 2.

Key Findings - Environmental Constraints and Opportunities

- **Due to its location within the South Coast Air Basin, proximity to major roadways, and prevalence of heavy industry Carson is in non-attainment status for several air quality attainment standards.**

Despite having significant stationary sources of air pollution, Carson lacks an AQMD air monitoring station within City Limits. This issue alone raises significant environmental justice issues. According to 2012 through 2016 monitoring data for the South Los Angeles County Coastal area, in which the City is located, the area exceeded the State 8-hour ozone standard in 2014, the State 24-hour PM10 standard in 2016, and the State 24-hour PM2.5 standard in 2012. In addition, due to emissions from diesel engines, mobile sources, and stationary sources, the estimated cancer risk in Carson is between 1,100 to 1,400 cancers per million. When considering future land use planning, the City should focus on compatibility of industrial and residential uses in order to reduce residential exposure to mobile- and stationary- source emissions associated with highways and industrial uses. In addition, the City should work with transportation authorities to encourage alternatives to automobile travel to reduce harmful emissions.

- **Environmental hazards are present throughout the Planning Area, including storage and transportation of hazardous materials that should be mitigated in order to prevent fires, exposure to toxic chemicals, and pollution due to the transportation of hazardous materials.**

Minimize the threat to public health and safety and the environment through strict enforcement of rules and regulations and by working closely with first responders. Minimize the threat of a release of hazardous materials through strict enforcement of rules and regulations, monitoring business operations which handle hazardous materials through the permitting process, and identifying emergency procedures and evacuation routes.

Key Findings - Public Facilities and Services

- **Parks, recreational facilities, and community facilities should reflect the needs of a growing and changing population.**

The City should continually assess whether existing parks, recreational facilities, and community facilities suit resident needs as demographics and community priorities change over time.

- **Major opportunity sites can be developed as new parks and community facilities.**

Some of the vacant and underutilized sites can be redeveloped as parks, open spaces, recreational areas, or community facilities. In addition, the right-of-way along the Dominguez Channel can potentially become a transportation corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists. Furthermore, there are several existing community facilities that can be redeveloped to better serve the future population.

Key Findings - Environmental Justice and Public Health

- **Carson's industrial history has led to public health and environmental justice challenges. The City must prioritize minimizing existing exposure and clean industrial growth in the future.**

Local industry, manufacturing, and refineries, as well as trucks going through Carson to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, contribute to air pollution that can compromise the health of its residents. The industrial economy is a cornerstone of Carson's land use and history, and the General Plan should address how it can continue in a way that decreases health impacts. Some options to consider include mitigation and clean-up measures, buffers between industrial and residential areas, and encouraging cleaner technologies and modern facilities that minimize emissions. Carson should pursue programs to monitor air pollution in real time. Carson should also consider obtaining assistance with public health programs.

- **Carson has the opportunity to create an urban environment that is walkable and well served by public transit.**

Currently, most of Carson is within walking distance to transit, which improves access to schools, parks, retail areas, and more. As new, denser development continues, and Carson's population grows, maintaining walkability and access to, as well as service levels of, transit is key. One area where Carson is currently lacking citywide access is neighborhood retail, especially grocery stores. Neighborhoods in the eastern portion of the Planning Area are mostly served by neighborhood markets and lack a full-service grocery store, while the northern part of the Planning Area, including the CSU Dominguez Hills area, lacks both. Attracting grocery stores, neighborhood markets, and other types of neighborhood-serving retail to new developments can increase walkability and accessibility, improving public health.

Next Steps

The General Plan project team is continuing to implement the community outreach program as well as develop the Community Vision and Guiding Principles document.

- The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) met on September 27, 2017 and February 5, 2018. The next GPAC meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2018.
- The first community workshop was held on November 9th to solicit input on the community vision. The next community workshop is planned in May.
- Numerous pop-up events are planned at larger community events to inform the public about the project and solicit input.

Staff and the consultant team will continue to seek and receive input from the community on General Plan Update and work to complete the project by May 2019.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

VI. EXHIBITS

1. Executive Summary Existing Conditions Report (pgs. 7-30)
2. Update on Grant Funding for Truck Impacted Streets (pgs. 31-34)

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