



Memorandum

TO: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Rosalynn Hughey

SUBJECT: DOWNTOWN VISION UPDATE

DATE: May 7, 2018

Approved

Date

May 10, 2018

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3 & 6

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the informational report on the development of the Downtown Vision document.

OUTCOME

The Committee will receive an overview of the Downtown Vision document, including the purpose, anticipated components, engagement activities, and project schedule.

BACKGROUND

In May 2017, the City received a \$150,000 Knight Cities Challenge grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to hire a City Designer with urban design, planning and transit-oriented development expertise to initiate a long-term Urban Design Agenda—starting with a Downtown Vision and implementation of the Diridon Station Area Plan. This funding, along with City matching funds, allowed the creation of a new Principal Planner position, which was filled by Tim Rood in May 2017.

Grant Objectives

The Knight Foundation grant lists the following objectives for the City Designer grant:

- The designer will ensure that the \$8 billion planned investment around the Diridon Station Area Plan achieves its transformative potential for station design, private development, and public space-making.
- The designer will work collaboratively to refine existing Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan policies focusing on Urban Design, the public realm, and opportunities for a downtown tech-enabled experience.

- The position is the first step in a larger effort to build the City's urban design expertise, envisioned as leading to a team of design professionals who would provide interdepartmental leadership on design issues as well as advance a "Public Life" plan – a sustained citywide effort to build a more robust public life by improving the quality, use, and connectivity of public spaces.

With the scale of growth and development anticipated in Downtown, anchored by the major transit investment plans moving, it is important for the City to develop a document that encapsulates the vision for Downtown—one that describes the aspirations for central San Jose integrating new urban districts with the existing rich neighborhood and business fabric. A vision document has also been a longtime priority for stakeholder groups, such as the San Jose Downtown Association, the Silicon Valley Organization and SPUR. Working with these and other partners, the time is ripe to move forward with this vision document.

ANALYSIS

Vision Document Components

The Vision document is meant to serve a variety of audiences, including existing and new residents, investors, developers, businesses, arts and cultural entities, and philanthropic foundations. The goal is to visually and succinctly articulate an overall vision, as well as aspirations for individual districts, existing assets and conditions, and opportunities for new investment. Additionally, the document will convey what individuals and organizations currently appreciate and celebrate about Downtown. The Downtown Vision effort will also provide a basis for the spatial coordination of several related projects that affect Downtown and are either underway or expected to soon begin:

- Public Life Strategy
- Downtown Retail Study
- Downtown Transportation Study
- Update of the Downtown/Diridon Station Area Design Guidelines
- Update of the 2000 Downtown Strategy & Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
- Park and public space improvement planning for St. James Park, Plaza de Cesar Chavez, and trail connections
- Park Paseo planning for Park Avenue
- Transit-Oriented Development Strategy for BART Station Areas
- Diridon Integrated Station Concept
- Diridon Station Area Planning
- Guadalupe River Park visioning effort

The outcomes and recommendations from these varied planning projects, as appropriate, will be incorporated into the emerging Downtown Vision. An interdepartmental Downtown working group began meeting regularly in April 2018 to share information and coordinate these efforts.

Proposed Scope of Work

Staff has initiated an approach for developing the Downtown Vision document, which draws upon existing adopted plans and other City documents as well as recommendations from stakeholders, including SPUR and the San Jose Downtown Association. A major focus will be linking the various areas of Downtown, broadening the “concept” of Downtown, and developing a new vernacular—in essence, creating a “new reality” for Downtown. The proposed scope includes the following tasks:

- Urban design base mapping, including existing, approved and proposed development projects; building footprints, active frontages, public spaces and public life elements
- Analysis of existing Downtown-related goals, policies, and strategies from the Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan and other City plans and studies, as well as other relevant documents, such as SPUR’s “The Future of Downtown San Jose” and SJDA’s Downtown Street Life Plan
- Draft vision statement
- Refined vision statement
- Refined vision map
- Summary publication

Community Engagement

A community engagement and communications strategy will be developed to obtain input from stakeholders. Additionally, staff will partner with a variety of entities to host activities to inform residents and stakeholders and obtain testimonials. The following is a list of resident/stakeholders; others will be added as they are identified:

- Downtown Residents Association and other neighborhood groups
- Station Area Advisory Group
- San Jose Downtown Association
- Silicon Valley Organization
- SPUR
- Council Districts 3 and 6
- Knight Foundation
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- San José State University
- Preservation Action Council of San José
- American Institute of Architects
- SAP Center
- Developers and Construction Industry
- Design Professionals

Schedule

Staff has already begun outreach efforts and will finalize the engagement and communications strategy in June 2018. Outreach will continue throughout the summer and fall 2018. A draft document is anticipated by October 2018, with completion by December 2018.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the May 21, 2018 Community and Economic Development Committee meeting.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the Office of Economic Development.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009. Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/
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Planning, Building and Code Enforcement

For questions please contact Tim Rood, Principal City Designer, at (408) 535-8122.