

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES



Meeting No. 19
May 3, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, Clovis City Hall, 1033 5th Street, Clovis, California

Staff

Dwight Kroll
Connie Combs
John Holt
George Uc
Holly Owen

Committee

Brett Hedrick, Chair	Paul Hinkle
Robert Watts Jr., Vice-Chair	Ike Ikeda
Raj Brar	Goldie Lewis
Kevin Castanos	Christine Lingenfelter
Todd Cook	Patty Lippert
Diane Dickerson	Brent McCaffrey
Mike Dozier	Sayre Miller
Kim Grant	Grant Peterson
Jeff Harris	Shawn Stevenson
	Don Ulrich

1. Meeting called to order- 6:07 pm- Brett Hedrick welcomed everyone in attendance.
2. Roll call- Absentees- Robert Watts, Raj Brar-excused absence, Brent McCaffrey
3. Public comments on items not on the agenda

Arakel Arisian, P & R Farms- Updated the committee on the working progress with City staff. He added that the City Council and Planning Commission joint meeting went well and everyone is pleased with the GPAC's working progress. He addressed a conflict between the Auberry Road alignments; this was brought forward after the joint meeting.

Dwight Kroll- Welcomed everyone, he mentioned that the consultants are in attendance, from The Planning Center; Steve Gunnels and Colin Drukker. He updated the GPAC with the time frame and scope of work. Staff and the consultants are looking at June 2012, as a goal to complete the general plan update. The breakdown is about one GPAC meeting per month from here on out. Dwight asked the committee if the timeline goal is achievable.

Brett Hedrick- answered, it's a reasonable goal; the committee will continue to move forward with the current momentum in hopes to accomplish on time.

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Public Comments were closed.

4. Valleywide Blueprint Process Update

Presentation by Barbara Steck, AICP, Deputy Director of the Council of Fresno County Governments.

Barbara was introduced by Brett Hedrick. She thanked the committee for providing her the opportunity to present “The Valley Blueprint” which deals with development standards in the San Joaquin Valley.

She presented her PowerPoint presentation.

Higher density development provides the opportunity towards reducing the valley’s carbon footprint by 2020. Higher density communities improve air quality, less activities which require vehicle usage. Compact growth improves quality of life in the San Joaquin Valley.

Barbara mentioned that the Valley Blueprint was adopted in April of 2009. Overall, the density for the San Joaquin is 6.8 Units/ Acre; Fresno County has a higher number, 8 units/ acre.

Barbara hopes that valley communities strive to increase densities in the valley, and she recognized Clovis as an innovative city. Clovis has higher density neighborhoods per acre when compared to other cities throughout the valley.

There are 4 areas that Fresno County of Governments has focused on: 1) Memorialize the valley’s history, 2) Set a framework of work in the process 3) Blueprint 4) Multiply and develop multiple county COG Agencies in the San Joaquin Valley, ex. Madera, Stanislaus, and Kings County.

She recognized Valley Planners, who have participated over the years in trying to develop better planning for the valley. She recognized, John Wright and other attendees for their 3-4 years of volunteer service. The next Valley Blueprint meeting is set for sometime in June 2011.

Barbara introduced a website, “Planners’ Tool Kit”, which aims to help all local agencies with consultation questions. This website allows city planners update various situations that cities deal with during general plan updates, court cases, and legal matters. It’s more of an educational tool for planners to use.

Barbara concluded her presentation and opened the floor for any questions.

Jeff Harris- Complemented Barbara on her presentation and said that this will have economic and environmental benefits, as well as helping to preserve agricultural land. Job well done! He thanked the agency’s representatives for sharing valuable information.

Barbara and John Wright- appreciated Jeff’s comment on behalf of the Fresno Council of Governments.

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Don Ulrich- Asked, generally how does the agency function?

Barbara answered- it's all volunteer work. The blueprint is accomplished through volunteer service. COG works to improve better community planning.

John Wright- added that COG also helps local agencies be knowledgeable and develop a sustainable strategy with up to date information and new laws for example, new housing density requirements, AB32, and SB375 regulations.

Mike Dozier- added he would like to see more guidelines for future city development standards and sharing of strategies to preserve agricultural land.

5. Old Town Work Program Part One: Orientation

Staff presentation on Old Town: Old Town's Planning Framework objectives; how the adopted Planning Principles apply to this area; Success of Central Clovis Specific Plan and Project Area 1; Building on success, looking forward: "SoFi" (South of Fifth District), Festival District, Civic District, Gateway District, and the "Park Once" concepts.

Dwight Kroll- Reported that the joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting went well. He highlighted the Council's support for moving forward with the traffic and land use analysis for the Northwest Urban Village Land Use Diagram.

Dwight proceeded forward and presented his Old Town PowerPoint presentation.

Dwight began his presentation which was focused on Old Town Clovis. He covered the goals and policies that were developed specifically for Old Town Clovis.

The GPAC has also appointed a subcommittee that would address the best interests of Old Town.

Dwight added that Old Town Clovis is a unique area in the valley, so much that the committee needs to focus in ways to preserve its authenticity. The Old Town principles were mentioned (covered in the handout).

The Old Town polices have shown great success, and staff would like to build upon that momentum. Dwight added the concept of "park once and walk at Old Town." There is a need to bring additional activities, not only temporary ones. Permanent activities and a variety of commercial uses/attractions would attract a permanent stream of users. He used Old Town Pasadena as an example to illustrate a viable downtown which consists of various land uses.

Dwight credited the Memorial Veterans District, Clark Center, Rodeo, and all the businesses for the Old Town's success. He asked the committee to think about Old Town; most of us think of the area as an attraction but it's also a neighborhood for many local residents. The GPAC needs to think of Old Town as a walk-able community/attraction.

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Dwight showed an image of Pollasky Avenue pre 1970's and wanted to show the committee the power that investing in streetscapes/treescapes has with community appreciation. The streetscape is relatively new to Old Town; it was not always that way.

Jeff Harris- commented that at a previous downtown meeting he attended in Fresno, attendees shared positive opinions of Old Town Clovis. He added that Old Town is the outcome of hard work and money invested by the City to develop a vision for Old Town.

Sayre Miller- added that she was born in a hospital on Pollasky Avenue which closed in 1960. She also agreed that adding street trees transforms the streetscape in Old Town.

She added that during the 1960 through 1970's era there were mature trees in the cityscape which were removed. This was the main reason the town later needed landscape improvements. Her point across is that we should be the kind of community that cares for trees since they provide so much benefit.

Dwight Kroll- stated that people in the Old Town neighborhoods are re-investing in their properties. They are maintaining the residential authenticity, and making additional upgrades to their front yard/ picket fences. (Areas north of the Clovis civic center).

There was additional discussion about future land uses for Old Town.

Dwight Kroll- There are multiple attractions in Old Town such as the Memorial District, The Law School, Senior Center, and Schools. There is a need to expand attraction sites to the area, such as key restaurants and attractions to keep people entertained while visiting the area.

Shawn Stevenson- Asked staff about any information regarding the College of Law, is there a possibility for expansion? Have they shown interest to expand their facilities? Such as a library, etc.

Dwight- replied, the college has shown great success. It's very likely they can expand, but he was not 100% certain.

The Festival District, "Rodeo Grounds" is a huge attraction to Clovis. It generates lots of tourism, although it's primarily a drivers/ vehicle venue. The only way to access the rodeo facilities is by driving to the destination. The facility has poor signage along Clovis Avenue and it also lacks attention from the main street. People don't know it's there unless you are familiar with the area.

Dwight Kroll- described a vision that essentially connects Old Town Clovis to the rodeo grounds through introducing a plaza at the southeast corner of Clovis and 5th Avenues. Creating a plaza like environment can function as a pedestrian corridor linking the two land uses together.

Jeff Harris- Does not see how the proposed "plaza" concept would work in this particular intersection. The corner is too small to create a plaza-like environment; it's an existing gas station on a small property.

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Mike Dozier- replied, it's a vision for this particular intersection. It's not a set in-stone idea. It's not necessary to kill an idea before it's developed to a vision for this particular intersection.

Sayre Miller- Has noticed that Clovis Ave. is not the nicest street in the Old Town area, but there are a lot of commercial uses that the community depends on. Street design improvements make sense.

Dwight Kroll- liked the discussion but asked the committee members to hold personal comments for the end of the presentation; he moved forward to talk about the South of Fifth District.

Staff has noticed more residential improvements taking place in the So-Fi district area, although there has been a slower turn around in the general area.

Some examples of positive actions in the So-Fi area, the old Clovis Grammar School was converted to the #1 Fire Station on Pollasky, ideas are set out for the old DMV site, possibly a site for mixed use.

Dwight Kroll- Introduced the vision of the corner of Pollasky at Bullard Avenues being transformed to a café district which may include widening the sidewalks. Possibly, allowing 7th Street to be some type of gateway that merges into the commercial district.

Small homes are unique in the So-Fi district, personal gardens are assets to the area.

Dwight Kroll- Express the need for street improvements along Bullard Avenue, east of Villa Avenue. Bullard is the west- east gateway for Old Town Clovis, may be anchoring the street with traffic calming designs can make the area unique.

Jeff Harris- The median strip on Bullard and Minnewawa is unattractive, as well as the signaling.

Sayre Miller- added that the current Post Office location southeast corner of Bullard and Minnewawa is a horrible location. It is unattractive and the traffic patterns are not user-friendly.

Dwight Kroll- concluded his presentation and opened the floor to comments.

Discussion of the role of the GPAC Old Town subcommittee in future activities; description of Old Town Work Program Part Two (Outreach and data collection) and Part Three (Present findings and subcommittee report to the Committee for discussion and direction).

Public Comments

Dale Drozen- stated his interpretation or understanding of Old Town Clovis is located along Clovis Avenue.

He added that, improving the street with trees along Bullard Avenues would hide the existing Old Town view as drivers come from the 168. He indicated that it is hard to find Old Town and asked the committee to think before recommending anything to move forward.

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John Wright- Talked about the traffic flow, and how it moves through Old Town Clovis streets. He added that the key for a successful downtown is to have a variety of activities that promotes neighborhood activities. In addition, street improvements along Bullard Avenue would improve connectivity between Fresno State and Old Town.

Carol Cusumano- really liked the idea of possibly improving Clovis Avenue, she added that Old Town needs signage to identify the area to tourists that visit Clovis.

Public comments were closed 7:36 p.m.

Committee discussion and direction to staff

Patty Lippert- Would like to see additional senior housing to emerge in the Old Town area.

Paul Hinkle- sees the need to plan for a transitional land uses to mesh residential neighborhoods in commercial areas in Old Town.

Brett Hedrick- Asked, How would policies approach Old Town improvements? Would they address improvements to take place from inside the boundaries and work their way out; or begin from the outer boundaries and improvements would work inward?

Shawn Stevenson- would like to preserve Old Town as much as possible, he also asked committee members to think about the repercussions of improving Old Town. He would hate to see small business relocate because of high rent prices.

He added that car washes like the one on Clovis and Sierra Avenues are much needed uses that add character to the Old Town area.

Todd Cook- Agrees with Shawn's comment about the approach that the committee may take and its effects with existing Old Town merchants/tenants. He added that car wash facilities in Old Town are highly used by the community and it adds character to the area.

Sayre Miller- Clovis Avenue needs street improvements, it needs a balance between façade improvements and building preservation. Building improvements should preserve our Old Town authenticity.

Paul Hinkle- recently visited Downtown San Jose; he commented that this city re-designed their downtown into a major attraction. Is this the approach that Clovis can learn from?

Shawn Stevenson- the committee needs to find a better connection between Fresno State University and Old Town Clovis, additional activities are needed in the area.

Christine Lingenfelter- commented that Old Town needs more permanent entertainment as opposed to temporary entertainment like farmers' market and rodeo events. She would like to see some type of policies for incentives/ assistance for building improvements to be developed for Old Town business owners to take advantage of. She mentioned that there is a great market in the number of people who come to the Save Mart center for events.

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Mike Dozier and Shawn Stevenson- both agree that money is an issue for business owners to improve the Old Town area. Mike asked how long does the application process take to rent out a space in Old Town? And even if approved, ADA compliancy is an obstacle to any investment for a business. City should be business-friendly to applicants interested in Old Town commercial space.

Dwight Kroll- added that ADA compliancy is a major issue in the older parts of cities; ADA often times alters the authenticity of any building in downtown districts.

Grant Peterson- Agrees that adding trees to the streetscape can make a difference and improve store frontage.

Paul Hinkle- we need to include Clovis Unified, Old Town businesses, and major stakeholders in any discussion that would take place that would alter the future of old Town.

Don Ulrich- added that Clark Intermediate School may consider expanding the campus, although it's not certain how or where in the Old Town area.

Steve Gunnels- asked the committee to keep in mind that land uses change over time, market forces basically run low revenue businesses out of commercial areas. It's not that we are running them out of there personally or through improvements, it's the market that dictates rent prices.

The Planning Center has not looked into changing land uses along Clovis Avenue, although it has considered proposing various types of street improvements and recommendations to improve Clovis Avenue experience.

Barstow Avenue has also been considered to be a bicycle path that would link Old Town to Fresno State and beyond.

There was a discussion about street widths with traffic calming strategies in mind and the opportunity to fund collective improvements through assessment districts.

Paul Hinkle- added that the GPAC needs weigh-in on ways and ideas to improve activities that are hosted in Old Town.

6. Election of Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

Jeff Harris- complimented Brett Hedrick on a great job as a Chair and nominated him to stay as the GPAC chair.

Todd Cook- seconded the motion for Brett Hedrick to keep the GPAC chair position.

Brett Hedrick- thanked Jeff and Todd for the nomination.

Todd Cook- Took a moment to acknowledge Paul Hinkle as an important person and committee member. Todd admired Paul's great attendance record and hard working values. He nominated Paul Hinkle as the Vice Chair.

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The committee voted unanimously in favor of Paul Hinkle as Vice Chair.

The next GPAC meeting was not scheduled, although the second Tuesday in June was considered. June 7th would be the ideal next meeting; Sayre Miller mentioned she would not be able to make the next meeting if it's set for June 7th.

Todd Cook- added if it's possible for staff to email the entire GPAC committee regarding future Old Town subcommittee meetings. He would like to be informed of any future meetings.

7. Adjourn-8:12 pm.