



FULTON CORRIDOR SPECIFIC PLAN COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Location: The Grand, 1401 Fulton Street, Fresno, California

MEETING MINUTES **TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2010 - 5:00 P.M.**

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Sandra King called the meeting to order at 5:14 p.m.

Members Present

Joyce Aiken, Alan Allen, Donavan Byrn, James Connell, Raul DeAlba, Morgan Doizaki, Victoria Gonzales, James Haron, Eric Kalkowski, Sandra King, Gary LanFranco, Nancy Marquez, Roger Palomino, Polly Parenti, Timothy Schulz, Maribel Vera-Anaya, Brent Weiner, Allysunn Williams

Members Absent

Rosemarie Amaral, Evan Hammer, Jr., Patrick Hammond,

Alternate Members

Nadar Ali, Suzanne Bertz-Rosa, Beth Eckloff, Jan Minami

Consultant Present

Stefanos Polyzoides

Staff Present

Craig Scharton, Elliott Balch, Elaine Robles, Wilma Quan, George Smith, Kelly Trevino, Angela Vasquez, Joann Zuniga

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcoming comments were given by Craig Scharton.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

A. Agenda Approval

B. Approval of Minutes for the June 8, 2010, Regular Meeting

Chair Sandra King called for approval of the June 8, 2010, meeting minutes. Motion to accept the meeting minutes was made by Morgan Doizaki, second by Donavan Bryn and Timothy Schulz, motion carried (m/s/c, 18 yes, 0 no, 3 absent). The meeting minutes of June 8, 2010, were filed as submitted.

4. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS TO DATE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARRETTE PROCESS

Consultant Stefanos Polyzoides gave a brief summary on the progress to date; stated the process involved interviews with department stakeholders, field investigation, and data collection; discussed what the next steps would be and outlined what would be happening at the upcoming charrette beginning September 25, 2010, and encouraged everyone's participation; stated the outcome of the charrette would link development vision with public investment; stated there was two-way learning between the consultants and the community and political support for implementation; stated after the charrette the consultants would proceed to drafting the plan document; stated the process would conclude with the framing of a comprehensive, integrated, and implementable plan.

Committee members asked questions of the consultants about the week-long charrette and the consultants' availability during the days of the charrette with public input sessions held during lunch and in the evenings; asked about market realities and how would this process be done without raising expectations too high in relation to current economic conditions; asked about mental preparation before the charrette; asked what could the Committee expect on the fifth day of the charrette; asked how were the consultants selected.

Consultant Stefanos Polyzoides stated the need to challenge current realities; stated the Fulton Mall was only operating at 6 percent and should be operating in extraordinary ways; stated economic consultant Deana Belzer would be assisting the team to identify and assess economic impacts and work within constraints of the city; stated the need to paint picture between vision and implementation and it be based on possibilities that have worked elsewhere; encouraged Committee members and community to remain optimistic, only upward 94 percent; recommended reading "Suburban Nation" to prepare for the charrette; stated the consultants would be listening to the community and its ideas, then frame those ideas and develop ideas by the end of the charrette; stated the consultants might not have all the details by the end of the September charrette, but they would be far enough along in the process to report to the Committee at the October 19 meeting on the issues of the Fulton Mall and how to deal with the Fulton Mall.

Craig Scharton explained to the Committee that the selection process for the plan consultant began one year ago; stated the City was looking for a consultant team with a proven track record of downtown development; stated 21 consultants responded to the city's Request for Proposal (RFP) and the top six consultant teams were interviewed by a panel of downtown stakeholders and department representatives; stated the consultant team of Moule and Polyzoides was the front runner.

David Wells stated he would like to know more about the impacts of the proposed high speed rail system in relation to the two proposed plans; stated Fresno was a tail of two cities and that the city was already divided east and west by the railroad; stated very little was known about the sociological divider and asked how would a 60-foot high bullet train through Fresno at 200 miles per hour be mitigated; asked the consultants to ask the hard questions to the City Mayor and Council to consider this issue and what problems would be created by the bullet train.

Craig Scharton stated the proposed high speed rail system was not in the scope of work created for the consultant team; stated the task of the consultant team was to help select the site for the high speed rail station and incorporate it into the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan; stated if the

Community Advisory Committee wanted to make suggestions regarding the high speed rail station it could do that but cautioned the CAC to not add to the work of the consultant team.

Chair Sandra King reiterated the importance of attending the September charrette and to let the consultants know the opinions of the committee members.

Betty Kelly, a resident of Southwest Fresno, stated the residents would like to see major department stores return to the downtown Fulton Mall; asked with the planned revitalization of the Fulton Mall was that being considered so that those living in Southwest Fresno would not have to continue to travel north to go shopping.

Consultant Stefanos Polyzoides replied that part of the planning effort was to understand the market forces; stated adoption of Form Based Code for the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan, which was part of the planning effort, would suggest kinds of buildings and uses to help stimulate the marketplace in downtown Fresno; stated a major economic effort would be to understand how public funding could help to revitalize downtown; stated the consultants would be examining issues and look at why very few vital businesses were located downtown and how to reverse that.

Roger Palomino commented that he was a lifelong community resident and stated the railroad track was a dividing line in Fresno and divided what opportunities there were for the city; stated when looking at the redesign of the downtown, need to look at those who have made downtown what it is today, they are participants today, and to ask those living in the downtown area what were their needs; stated the Community Advisory Committee needed more demographic information such as housing, income, number of people in adjacent neighborhood areas, and the high/low income levels, age of residents in the downtown; asked what the impact would be for those living on the periphery of downtown; stated West Fresno seemed to be disregarded and Chinatown nearly abandoned with all its vacant buildings; stated there needed to be a variety of shop venues; stated the need to ask what was it the people who lived in the downtown mostly likely needed.

Consultant Stefanos Polyzoides stated the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan was within the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan and there had been meetings with stakeholders and community advisory committee members, and an economic summit had been held that focused on these types of questions; stated as the process was unfolding to contact Elliott Balch for information on the plans.

Roger Palomino asked would information from the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Plan Community Advisory Committee (CAC) be shared with the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan CAC. Consultant Stefanos Polyzoides responded yes; stated the community plan policies and code change recommendations would be forthcoming and that the policy changes were necessary to make the future of downtown better; stated neighborhoods had very specific needs and as investment happened in downtown, neighborhoods would improve.

Elliott Balch stated the Community Advisory Committee members represented neighborhoods within the plan area; stated at the September charrette there would be topics identified within the plan area for discussion and community input.

A member of the public asked was there already a plan for retail and the return of major retail stores to downtown. Craig Scharton stated the charrette would help to create a plan and that it was important for the community to tell the consultants what they wanted, if that was retail, the consultants would emphasize that within the plan. Another member of the public asked what was being done to try to reach all segments of the community about the upcoming charrette so that there would be representation at the meeting. Craig Scharton replied that there was a big push to get as many people to attend the charrette and to capture as much community input and information as possible; explained the legal noticing procedures and that within the plan area 44,000 mailers were sent notifying the community of the charrette; stated there was a *Fresno Bee* advertisement announcing the week-long charrette, and there was information on the website, www.fresnodowntownplans.com announcing the upcoming charrette; stated it was important for the Community Advisory Committee to communicate with as many groups to encourage people to attend; stated it was up to the community to participate to assist in the formation of the plan and that engaging everyone will produce a 20-year "A" plan.

5. ROLE OF CAC MEMBERS AT THE CHARRETTE

Craig Scharton introduced City Manager Mark Scott who stated he was excited to be a part of the opportunity to do something great for the downtown and to help make an impact; stated he cared a great deal about people who cared about Fresno; stated he wanted to work with neighborhoods and was looking forward to the September charrette and working with the committee on this plan; stated he had worked with Moule and Polyzoides when he worked in Beverly Hills and had fun doing that and was looking forward to engaging in the fun of this planning process.

Craig Scharton talked about the September charrette activities; reported that the consultants were preparing alternatives for the Fulton Mall; stated the alternatives ranged from "do nothing, stay the course" to the opposite of "complete removal" of the mall; encouraged input from the Committee on what it would like to see happen to the Fulton Mall; stated the Committee would not be deciding at this meeting, but freely providing input as to what they would like to see considered; stated alternatives on how to fix the Fulton Mall would be presented to the public for its input on September 27, 2010, at the evening "Public Input Session" of the charrette; stated at the October 19, 2010, Committee meeting, the preferred alternative would be discussed; stated the preferred alternative would be studied as part of the Environmental Impact Report.

Committee members provided input for improvements to the downtown Fulton Mall as follows:

- Convert the Fulton Mall to a street and add new lighting, landscaping, artwork, and create an all new walking environment mixed with traffic; or keep all the existing art work, have a meandering street around works of art, and fix/repair what exists.
- Recreate the Fulton Mall design with new materials such as rubberized materials; cited the existing pebbled concrete that was crumbling and needed to be replaced; suggested the center two blocks of the Mall--Fresno Street to Tulare Street--have vendor booths for events; acknowledged that events happened on the mall and the need to make it easier for vendors; plugged events on the Fulton Mall.
- Focus effort on residency on the Fulton Mall; provide for mixed use/mixed income development that would provide residential uses that would support the commercial retail

uses; recommended more restaurants be located on the Fulton Mall; encouraged activities on the mall for children to do, which would attract families downtown.

- Pump life into the South Stadium and Chinatown, “spillover” areas located in close proximity to the Fulton Mall, and improve the connectivity between those areas and the Fulton Mall.
- Explore, from a building perspective, a mixed use building code; give more attention to mixed use projects with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential above; suggested ripping up the center of the mall and the fountains; earmark funds to go toward providing incentives for start-up small businesses wanting to occupy empty space on the Fulton Mall.
- Combine the best of all uses serving all the needs; create versatility on the Fulton Mall including all possible vehicle and pedestrian paths of travel; close the street to handle festivals; have mixed use retail and offices on the main floors, and residential housing above.
- Open mall all the way for vehicular traffic so people can see what’s going on; save what can be saved on the Mall such as the artwork, fountains; block streets to vehicular traffic on the days that events are held.
- Incorporate convenient public transportation, offer free public transportation within the business district, open up alleyways for bus transportation, bus stops, and bike paths.
- Deal with homelessness because of problems it was creating for downtown Fresno businesses; requested specific attention be given to Chinatown regarding the homeless drifting through the area.
- Provide better lighting at openings to the Fulton Mall; create dramatic expression zones of entertainment; establish functioning mixed use projects at all income levels, introduce student population, provide free transportation to/from colleges; provide a shelter for free speech, for concerts; incorporate markings.
- Market downtown art school and welcome student population downtown for art classes; offer more bookstores, make downtown a destination for jazz festivals; recommended pavement be made smoother, add more grass and ground cover, and there be canvas covered building overhangs to provide for more shading, and instead of surfaces absorbing heat make surfaces reflective.
- Restore existing public art and introduce new outdoor art and fountains on the Mall; install roof-top gardens, build brownstone residential dwellings, provide walkable connections from the various districts—Cultural Arts, South Stadium, Chinatown—with an eyeline to the Mall; provide play areas for children; push for establishment of new restaurants on the Mall that represent the community’s cultural ethnicity; provide wider sidewalks and plant more shade trees.
- Integrate into the plan a downtown that is distinctive and representative of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the community—don’t want another RiverPark; emphasize events, festivals, cultural arts happenings in downtown that people of all ages would want to gather together for and participate in.

- Incorporate green building, LEED certified development in downtown; create single lane traffic through Fulton Mall and close traffic lane whenever festivals are held.
- Provide landscaping with more flowers, blooming trees; mix old with new; preserve buildings; get rid of chain link fencing, cited wrought iron fencing with spikes.
- Consider three parts, opening the Mall, phasing in traffic, pierce the middle; asked what would a street through Fulton Mall do for businesses on the Mall and what would its impacts/benefits be to surrounding businesses; asked what was the cost, had consideration been given to the cost, where would the money come from, and where could that money be better used.
- Improve the façades of buildings on the Mall and incentives be given for aesthetics and visual impact; restore the Mall art work to what was first envisioned.
- Provide good design and provide good way-finding signage for access to the Mall.
- Ensure safety issues are addressed; replace methods of metering; provide parking validation with computerized kiosks that serves a larger metering area; provide interactive activities for children visiting the Mall.
- Plan a sustainable environment; install way-finding signs; create a permanent farmer's marketplace; add museums, an art school, and art incubator; market authentic Fresno goods, art.
- Ensure consistency with downtown parking; create a policy specifically/uniquely for downtown merchants that will help to draw customers to the downtown; create an artist village; allow wares created at the artist studio to be sold on site; locate a cigar shop downtown.
- Promote and market downtown; establish restaurants with outdoor patio dining.
- Assist businesses loyal to downtown; provide maintenance program to keep downtown clean and safe; create multiple-themed areas on the Mall--multi-ethnic, cultural, tribute dedicated to veterans, tribute to Valley agricultural industry--which would draw people, draw families to downtown.
- Locate a magnate school in downtown for the downtown business community, small business development, and assistance with incubators; explore, housing concepts representative of people regardless of ethnic income.
- Focus of promoting the core of the city written into the document.
- Create a clean environment; have evening/nights Police Department presence visible to everyone; Fulton Mall currently too long, concentrate on 2 to 3 blocks and open ends of Mall to traffic; key to downtown revitalization is economic revitalization, work on Mall being viable; offer free city bus service in the downtown.
- Work with Creative Fresno.

Committee member Alan Allen stated he had attended all the charrette sessions in May and found attendance at the charrette to be one of the most educational events; stated it was a thoroughly rewarding experience; stated there was the best educational range and broad experience found in the consultant team of Moule and Polyzoides.

David Wells requested that there be a map of downtown, which would help visualize the area under discussion.

Comments from the public were as follows:

- Requested the Community Advisory Committee think long and hard about what to do with the downtown; stated there were too many eyesores; stated beautiful buildings were sitting empty; stated there was much that could be done with downtown Fresno such as a cultural center on the Mall for the community.
- Many changes have occurred in the 28 years living in Fresno; stated the Fulton Mall represented a "historical" center of the city; stated a passion for the Mall and would like to see it have the best such as restaurants with great menus and was glad to see the public's interest in improving the Fulton Mall.
- Soon-to-be resident in a building on the Fulton Mall; stated interest in wanting to invest in the progress being made on the Fulton Mall; would like to be a mentor to motivate people to partner in this effort to improve downtown; complimented the Committee on being dynamic and for having an impact on downtown improvement.
- Delightful to hear ideas generated by the Committee and that those ideas expressed were inspiring; stated the Committee was honoring the integrity built into the Fulton Mall; stated there was already an openness to the Mall with it being a place for conversation and children playing.
- The Fulton Mall landscaping was not receiving water and the fountains were not working, which did not help the mall; recommended looking at the fundamentals before going too far; agreed with Chair Sandra King about the need for shading on the mall; stated the mall did not need to be removed and returned to a street.
- Homelessness was a problem for the downtown and its image; Police Department involvement was necessary and very helpful.
- Agreed that the plants were not receiving water and that the Fulton Mall was starting to look "shabby"; found out that the City was cutting back and not able to maintain upkeep of the Mall.

Chair Sandra King stated she was working with merchants on the mall to water plants and sweep in front of the shops; stated the Downtown Association would be financially helping with replanting the dead or missing plants.

6. ARE WE MISSING ANYTHING

Elliott Balch asked the Committee members what their ideas for art pieces were and how to treat the artwork on the Fulton Mall.

Joyce Aiken asked about infrastructure on the Mall, the repairs needed the required costs to maintain the Mall, and how much funding was needed for it to be feasible to open the Mall to traffic. Craig Scharton responded that the information was not yet available, it was being prepared in conjunction with the Mall alternatives; stated the age of the Mall and because of the wear and tear on the Mall, the useful life of the underground utilities were at the end, the fountains were shot, the electrical was shot.

Joyce Aiken stated the art on the Mall was 50 years old and still in good condition; stated Mark Rodriguez was maintaining the art and made it a point to keep it up; stated, however, that was not the case for the ponds and fountains.

Craig Scharton stated he loved the art, was concerned that some of the art might not be displayed as well if changes were made to the Mall; however, there were different ways to enhance and show the artwork.

Joyce Aiken stated she was okay with the relocation of some of the art; stated private funds by Mall vendors purchased the art and then donated the pieces of art to the City of Fresno; wanted to keep the people's art prominently displayed for everyone's enjoyment.

Donavan Byrn stated staff plans envisioned the incorporation of art and new art into whatever alternative was selected; stated the Committee needed to ensure the artwork was protected and enhanced by its location/relocation.

Alan Allen recommended the artwork be relocated to the Metropolitan Museum and return Fulton to a street.

Joyce Aiken responded no to Alan Allen's recommendation; stated the original reason was to enhance the central point of the city, the art relocated to the Met would dilute it; stated the art needed to stay in a central place, clustered in one location on the Fulton Mall.

David Wells stated the Committee would need to get militant, demanding in order to make positive things happen for the Fulton Corridor; stated this was not a "rubber stamp" Committee.

Morgan Doizaki requested that the homelessness issue associated with downtown be on an upcoming meeting agenda.

James Haron stated the gateway into the City of Fresno was not visually pleasant, it was the first impression of the city, and was a very important aspect of the city that needed attention.

7. UNSCHEDULED COMMUNICATION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Chair Sandra King stated the importance for all the Committee members to be involved in this process; reiterated that the September charrette would be focused on the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan and would be the opportunity to voice opinion on alternatives to the Fulton Mall.

8. NEXT MEETING

Sandra King stated the next meeting of the Community Advisory Committee would be on Tuesday, October 19, 2010, at The Bankers Ballroom (1060 Fulton Mall) from 5:15 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sandra King stated immediately preceding the CAC meeting would be the Downtown Neighborhoods CAC meeting from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and that the committee was invited to attend.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Approval Date: _____

CRAIG SCHARTON, Director
Downtown and Community Revitalization Department