



FULTON CORRIDOR SPECIFIC PLAN COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 2010 - 7:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Members Present

Joyce Aiken, Alan Allen, Rosemarie Amaral, Suzanne Bertz-Rosa, Donovan Byrn, James J. Connell, Raul DeAlba, Morgan Doizaki, Beth Eckloff, Victoria Gonzales, James Haron, Eric A. Kalkowski, Sandra King, Gary LanFranco, Nancy Marquez, Jan Minami, Roger Palomino, Polly Parenti, Timothy Schulz, Maribel Vera-Anaya, Brent Weiner, Allysun Williams

Members Absent

Evan Hammer, Jr., Patrick Hammond

Consultants Present

Stefanos Polyzoides, David Sargent, Juan Gomez-Novy

Staff Present

Department Directors John Dugan and Craig Scharton

Senior Deputy City Attorney John Fox

Elliott Balch, Sandra Berney, Cynthia Dondero, Amy Huerta, Wilma Quan, Elaine Robles, Dawn Steele, George Smith, Kelly Trevino, Angela Vasquez, Alex Villa, Joann Zuniga

2. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Opening remarks were given by Downtown and Community Revitalization Department Director Craig Scharton; introduced staff and stated Downtown Revitalization Manager Elliott Balch was the key staff person for the Fulton Corridor Specific Plan; introduced the consultant team from Moule and Polyzoides; introduced Councilmember Sterling of Council District 3, who represented the Fulton Corridor area.

Councilmember Sterling thanked everyone for being present at the meeting; thanked the members of the committee for their service; stated each committee member was appointed for a purpose and that each either lived or worked in the area, had projects in the area, were contributing partners, or were stakeholders in the community; stated funding and consultant team were in place to assist the City of Fresno in revitalizing downtown; stated Mayor Swearengin had a vision and commitment for the betterment and growth of downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods, and she had the ability to make it happen.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Saundra King, Interim Chair, requested all members sign the attendance sheet.

Elliott Balch stated there would be approximately 25 minutes at the end of the meeting for public comment; requested a show of hands by the public in attendance who wished to speak under Public Input on the agenda.

a. Agenda Approval for March 9, 2010

Elliott Balch called for approval of the March 9, 2010, meeting agenda; Committee member Saundra King moved for approval of the agenda, second by Rosemarie Amaral; the meeting agenda was unanimously approved (M/S/C, 22 yes, 0 no, 2 absent).

b. Approval of Minutes for the September 29, 2009, Regular Meeting

Elliott Balch called for approval of the minutes of the September 29, 2009, regular meeting; Committee member Saundra King moved for approval of the minutes, second by Timothy Schultz; meeting minutes of September 29, 2009, were unanimously approved (M/S/C, 22 yes, 0 no, 2 absent).

c. Consideration of appointment of Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Elliott Balch stated Saundra King and Alan Allen currently served as the interim chair and vice chair, respectively; called for nominations of committee chair and vice chair. Saundra King stated she would be willing to continue to serve as the chair; the committee nominated Saundra King as chair and Alan Allen as vice chair. Committee member James Haron moved for approval, second by Raul DeAlba; motion carried (M/S/C, 22 yes, 0 no, 2 absent).

4 BROWN ACT SUMMARY

Senior Deputy City Attorney John Fox refreshed the committee on the legal issues associated with the work of the committee [a lengthier presentation was given at the September 29, 2009, committee meeting]; gave a PowerPoint presentation of committee logistics, bylaws, conflicts, and the Brown Act, which is attached and made a part of the meeting minutes.

5. CONSULTANT TEAM'S APPROACH TO PLANNING AND DESIGN

Stefanos Polyzoides, lead member of the team, walked the Community Advisory Committee through the expectations and outcomes and scope of work of the plan with a PowerPoint presentation [attached and made a part of the minutes]; explained the process of discovery/outreach, vision/charrette, unpacking charrette with staff and committee, implementation, sustainability, code and General Plan policy adjustments, environmental review; stated the importance of reaching out, listening, educating, listening, evaluating; discussed the charrette process, developing policies, formulating design and community development strategies, ensuring two-way learning with the community, and building political support for implementation; stated importance of the five critical issues of continuity, multi-modal, compact development, diversity of types, investment in infrastructure; discussed form based code, key issues, and

environmental review process; stated there was an enormous advantage to having the infrastructure and buildings in place, which were the core ingredient of the plan, and to capitalize on that; encouraged community participation and stated the community advisory committee members were the ambassadors of the neighborhoods; stated the consultants depended on the committee to point out what were the key issues, and stated the importance of the committee in this process, which would ensure greater agreement and greater success.

6. ROLE OF COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Craig Scharton stated staff wanted to ensure that there were opportunities for committee members to express thoughts, ideas, or talk about particular projects, and those comments be included in the creation of the plan.

7. CONSULTANT TEAM'S INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Consultant team's initial impressions were explained by Consultant Polyzoides in a PowerPoint presentation, which is attached and made a part of the meeting minutes.

8. SCHEDULE AND NEXT STEPS

The schedule and next steps of the committee and consultant team were explained by Consultant Polyzoides in a PowerPoint presentation, which is attached and made a part of the meeting minutes.

9. COMMITTEE INPUT ON ISSUES, PRIORITIES, CONCERNS, PUBLIC OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Saundra King called on the committee for comments to the consultant team.

- James Connell requested a copy of the slide presentation be made available to the committee.
- Nancy Marquez stated she would like to see the consultants continue to move forward on the cultural arts district in light of the recent loss of the Fresno Metropolitan Museum.
- Alan Allen asked would the ongoing issue of the Fulton Mall reverting back to a street or remaining a pedestrian mall be discussed and resolved during this process. Consultant Polyzoides responded that they would proceed deliberately, carefully, and through the discovery phase of the process hear collectively from the committee regarding this issue and then proceed in providing alternatives and decision. Consultant Sargent stated there would be information developed in different subdisciplines such as economic vitality, retail viability, transportation connectivity to the high speed rail, and transportation through the area to the rest of the city in every direction, which would factor into the decision of the infrastructure in the plan area especially the center.
- Brent Weiner stated there currently was a request for State Historic Landmark designation for the Fulton Mall and how would that factor into this plan process. Consultant Polyzoides stated from the consultants' point of view they would concentrate on resolution to the issue and all its complexity; stated it was not a singular cause for downtown not being able to redevelop, but a significant contributor, it was a single value and problem at the same time and needed to address it with utter seriousness because it may be the most important dimension of what was needed to be done downtown one way or the other to move forward. Craig Scharton stated the issue would

be going to the Historic Preservation Commission on April 5, 2010; stated at that meeting there would be an opportunity for input and the Historic Preservation Commission would make a recommendation to the Administration and Mayor. Elliott Balch stated there was a meeting of the Fulton Mall property owners scheduled for March 24, 2010, to give its input; stated expectation of City staff was to come to resolution, direction, consensus on what will happen to Fulton; stated the City of Fresno could not revitalize its downtown without revitalizing its historic core and would be a crucial part of the outcome. Consultant Polyzoides stated there were many key issues downtown such as the configuration of streets, potential mix of uses, rehabilitation policies and applications, alternative building codes, parking reform, etc.

- Roger Palomino expressed concern that there might not be enough outreach with the public entities in the various areas of the plan who would be impacted to find out what their concerns were and to allow them an opportunity for input in the discussion on how their livelihood would be impacted and changed; asked how would this committee be able to work closer with the people to avoid the element of threat and intimidation that accompany these kinds of efforts. Consultant Polyzoides stated there was a commitment to the discovery process specifically to the neighborhoods, to go out into the community to talk to the community, to take evidence of where the people lived, not where the charrettes would be taking place; stated one of the reasons for dividing the design and planning process of the charrette was to pay exclusive attention to the issues of the neighborhood, the physical and demographic components of the neighborhood.

- Eric Kalkowski asked the consultant to reiterate comments about the zoning ordinance and building codes and how versatile the City would be once the plan was presented. Consultant Sargent stated there would be one component of work focused on development of standards and guidelines for adaptive reuse of historic buildings particularly focused on mixed use and historic buildings in the core; stated the specific plan work would be more focused on zoning regulation and adaptive reuse standards would connect that to the level of building code regulation. John Dugan replied the City would build on the form based code, which would be the foundation for the new zoning system for the entire city; stated staff would be working closely with Moule and Polyzoides in putting together the new form based code for the downtown and neighborhoods around it; stated in the interim there would be proposed interim zoning codes, green field based codes, making it more urban making it easier to develop while the planning process was underway; stated it would be integrated with the overall city plan.

10. PUBLIC INPUT ON ISSUES, PRIORITIES, CONCERNS, PUBLIC OUTREACH STRATEGIES

COMMENTS FROM GENERAL PUBLIC

Sandra King called for community comments and questions.

Dennis Manning stated in the past he had worked with a group called Downtown Improvement, which worked through same issues; stated what appeared to be exciting about this planning process was the ability to change the rules, change the zoning.

Lee Ayres stated he served on the Downtown Neighborhoods Community Advisory Committee and asked the committee to consider addressing the issue of the one way streets and how it impacted the function and livability of the area and to seriously reconsider returning streets to two-way system; asked that the committee look at the element of regional trails and Fresno's downtown core become the intersection of a regional trails system; invited the committee to come together with the Downtown Neighborhoods CAC to look at such issues; requested the committee set standards high for design, no more ugly buildings, design be complementary to what existed; talked of geotourism, and hoped that within the downtown that Fresno celebrate its proximity to the national parks, agriculture, and immigrant history; stated a concern with what the High Speed Rail Authority was proposing, which could have an adverse affect on downtown, and for the committee to look at what proposed to ensure it served the community.

Arthur Servin stated he understood there would be community outreach and comment from the public in the charrettes and workshops and asked would the consultants be the microcosm of the community; asked who would make the final decision of what was placed in the specific plan. Elliott Balch stated the plan would be formulated over the course of this year, environmental review work completed next year [2011], and adoption of the plan approximately mid-2012; stated major issues would be brought forward at the scheduled meetings of this committee this year; stated the major work of the design and how it all worked together would come together at the charrettes conducted in May and September; stated the role of the committee was to make a recommendation on the plan contents to the Fresno City Planning Commission and City Council. Craig Scharton interjected that the City Council was the final decision maker and would be the legislative body that adopted the plan.

Heather ? stated an important aspect of the plan would be to identify what would make Fresno and the Fulton area unique, stand out from other city centers; recommended to look at arts, entertainment, and to focus on cultural diversity that Fresno offered.

Orlando Viloria, a restaurateur, Michael's Catering at 860 Fulton, stated he was excited to be doing business in downtown Fresno, he liked everything about the proposed specific plan, Fresno was a beautiful city; challenged the committee to continue the process; stated workshops were scheduled in September of this year and asked what could be done today on the Fulton Mall such as design, artwork in empty windows, redo plantings so people could see there was a directional change taking place; stated he was an outsider motivated to make the change; asked the committee to get the Police Department involved; city was safe downtown; asked that the Fulton Mall be cleaned. Elliott Balch stated the specific plan was critical for the future of downtown; stated the plan was long term; mentioned in the short term, work was being done to host events, festivals, on April 25 at the Warnor's Theatre "Downtown Comes Alive" would be presented; stated potential of getting Valley's agricultural industry tied into downtown events and businesses, potential new businesses locating in downtown; stated focus was both short and long term.

Joe Moore asked Consultant Polyzoides to explain new urbanism and how it applied to downtown Fresno and this plan; asked the consultant to explain the economic challenges and how it fit into the plan for Fresno, which was languishing in double digit unemployment. Consultant Polyzoides stated the most important issue for the future of downtown was to accept that it had a very traditional urban form and its future belonged within the development framework with respect to urban form, which meant a system of streets and blocks and buildings that behave in synergistic way within a classic urban environment; stated to the extent that can happen would be by redirecting the function of streets, open spaces, and revamp buildings and build new buildings;

stated every major and minor city in California had undergone such a process and pulled itself up economically, socially, and from a physical design point of view; regarding economics, stated they see the relationship as iterative measured against the consequences, working within a margin of reality that allowed planning to move forward in a conclusive, powerful economic way; stated trying to establish balance with visioning but with both feet on the ground and being patient. Consultant Sargent stated an economic summit was planned for May 4 and 5 that would bring in a series of speakers from other cities dealing with similar sets of issues and discussing economic development possibilities for neighborhoods; stated in August the focus would be downtown and sequence of use infusions and experts who understood this would be in Fresno to help the committee envision the possibilities.

Paul Fontaine, owner of Fulton Street Project, which booked events, stated trying to bring entertainment to Fresno that people wanted to attend; stated sometimes the economics did not fit with a city the size of Fresno; asked everyone to keep an eye on the marquee and on the website to see what they were doing to try to bring people downtown and enjoy what was already here; asked everyone to get the word out.

Don Simmons, chair of Historic Preservation Commission, stated he was appreciative of resources allotted for the historic surveys necessary for historic preservation; stated historic preservation was still separated out and not listed as a sustainability or environmental factor and historic preservation was one of the most environmentally sensitive things to do; stated he would like to see more emphasis on historic preservation as an environmental factor, not just a stand alone historic, nostalgic piece; stated the need to begin to think about the historic fabric in Fresno as historic and cultural tourism because people tour cities to see old buildings; stated the need to think of that from the aspect of the noted architects and designers who built in the downtown; reminded the committee of the April 5, 2010, Historic Preservation Commission meeting which would be discussing the Fulton Mall's designation as a State Historic Landmark; reminded the committee that according to the Secretary of the Interior standards, "an historic building is a building at least 50 years old," and asked committee not to discount buildings built mid-20th Century, the 1950s and 1960s, because there were numerous great examples of buildings that were built at that time; encouraged the committee to think about historic preservation as an environmental issue, not just a nostalgia issue.

11. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Elliott Balch stated if there were other comments, questions, there were green comment cards to complete; encouraged the public to bring forward questions or comments that staff would respond to on an individual basis. Craig Scharton thanked everyone for attending the meeting and engaging in the revitalization of downtown Fresno; thanked the Commission for coming; thanked the community for participating in the process; thanked staff.

12. NEXT MEETING

April 20, 2010.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.