

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 1, 2019

FROM: Gregory Pfost, Director of Community Development
Wendy Jung, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Draft Downtown Specific Plan Update and Next Steps

From 2015-2018, the Planning Commission and public reviewed and discussed proposed amendments to the various sections of the existing Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) as part of a comprehensive update. Based upon the direction received from the Planning Commission and input from the public over the past three years, staff believes the attached Draft incorporates said direction, and with exception to the Implementation Chapter is ready for adoption. The Draft includes some significant policy changes from the prior version and will be of benefit to the residents, visitors, and business community. Specifically, as identified in the Draft Executive Summary, the Draft Specific Plan incorporates the following improvements:

- Allowing for changes in permitting requirements to occur on an as needed basis in order to incentivize or limit certain land uses in the downtown.
- Fostering opportunities and promoting diversity in housing type and affordability as part of mixed-use development and conversion of existing second-story buildings to help fulfill the need for downtown housing with access to services and transportation.
- Providing for greater flexibility in development standards such as increased building height and simplified parking requirements to meet future needs and growth.
- Establishing an urban design framework that identifies key opportunity sites and provides recommendations on pedestrian and streetscape improvements, such as pedestrian crossings, improved alleyways, and public parklets to make the area more vibrant, walkable and welcoming for residents and visitors.
- Revising urban design guidelines to provide further direction on elements such as site design, architecture and open space to property owners, developers, designers, City staff and appointed and elected officials involved in review of proposed development projects.
- Rebranding of the former Civic Art District as the Arts District to encourage a greater focus on art and cultural uses and to nurture a culture of creativity.
- Updating flexible criteria and development standards for proposed planned integrated developments that incorporate public amenities and/or benefits in special planning areas such as the Arts District and Central Bluffs District.

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A Draft DSP Update Document is being brought back to the Planning Commission for review at their August 21, 2019 meeting. The draft document is being released approximately three weeks in advance of the meeting to allow the Planning Commission and public additional time for review. Prior to the August 21, 2019 Planning Commission meeting, a staff report will be prepared and staff will be seeking Planning Commission and public comment on the document.

After the August 21, 2019 meeting, staff anticipates this item will return back to the Planning Commission at a regularly scheduled meeting in October for subsequent review of the final draft, including the environmental review (CEQA), and a Planning Commission recommendation of approval to the City Council. City Council review would then occur later in the fall.

Any questions regarding the Downtown Specific Plan Update project may be directed to: Wendy Jung, Senior Planner at (949) 497-0321 or wjung@lagunabeachcity.net.