



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 1, 2009

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Joint Council And Planning Commission Work Session: Planning Division Work Program Activities

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council hold a joint work session with the Planning Commission to receive status reports and discuss major work program activities in the Planning Division, including the *Plan Santa Barbara - General Plan Update*, special assignments such as ordinance amendments, and possible implications on workload priorities, ideas for process changes, and other measures due to budget adjustments being considered for Fiscal Year 2011.

DISCUSSION:

Joint work sessions with the Council and Planning Commission are scheduled every six months. The Chairs of the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) and Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) are also invited. A primary goal of the work session is for staff to communicate with the Council and Planning Commission and share a broad understanding of the multiple priorities and status of other important work that is active, pending, or on a back burner. Adjustments in priorities occur when issues heat up and efforts are made to adjust a program. The feedback received from Council and Planning Commission received at these work sessions is valuable for staying on track or making changes as necessary.

The focus of discussion at this work session will be:

1. *Plan Santa Barbara Phase III Work Program*

Staff will review what has been accomplished over the last six months with regard to the following project components. Staff has worked closely with the Planning Commission at regular work sessions since May to review the majority of these efforts:

- **Policy Preferences Report** – revised report to reflect December 2008 Council direction; provides the project description for EIR
- **Building Height Ordinance** - assisted Ordinance Committee in investigating interim development control measures and/or a draft ordinance

- **Economic Study** – worked with consultant to produce affordable housing feasibility study and EIR growth scenario assessments
- **Density & Unit Size Workshops** – conducted two panel discussions on economic feasibility of market driven affordable housing
- **Draft Environmental Impact Report** – conducted scoping meeting and initiated formal review of Policy Preferences report
- **Adaptive Management Program** – worked with Planning Commission Subcommittee to draft first year pilot program
- **Land Use Element** – analyzed existing policies for integration with *PlanSB* policies
- **Land Use Map** – digitized old map; analyzed map for inconsistencies; worked w/PC subcommittee to identify major policy issues
- **Housing Element** – completed review of existing policies and programs; analyzed existing policies for integration with *PlanSB* policies
- **General Plan Document** - completed outline; drafted introduction

Staff will outline critical path items for the proposed work program over the next nine months so Council and Planning Commission may discuss and provide feedback on the identified priorities.

Recognizing that staff reductions for Fiscal Year 2011 will impact *PlanSB*, priority implementation efforts following adoption should also be considered. Some of these efforts include: the replacement Development Plan Ordinance, also known as Measure E (current ordinance extended to January 2013), a new variable density ordinance; the Adaptive Management Plan; changes to Zoning to reflect land use map changes; Floor Area Ratios; and Sustainable Neighborhood Plans. In addition, more effort on the General Plan document as a whole, including the remaining elements such as Historic Resources & Community Design, and Environmental Resources will be required.

2. Special Assignments

The Planning Division is working on a number of ordinance amendments, guidelines, and other special assignments. Three special assignments this fiscal year include working with other departments, including an Assistant Planner working 20 hours a week with the Creeks Division for the next 6 months; and two Project Planners and one Assistant Planner working the equivalent of 0.5 FTE on two projects with the Water Resources Division of Public Works. Progress on longer-term special projects is often a challenge as day-to-day planning responsibilities dominate staff attention. However, we do progress on these special assignments and this worksession is a good opportunity to review active and pending items.

The following is a list of active projects that staff will continue to work on through this fiscal year:

- Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance (NPO) Review and Ordinance Amendments
- Landscape Ordinance
- Mills Act Implementation
- Medical Marijuana Amendments

- We also anticipate that an ordinance amendment for the definition of Building Height may be proposed in the event that the pending Charter Amendment is passed, and that a set of Code Amendments may be proposed to address budget reduction changes in some planning processes (see next section).

The following list includes pending items that staff believes we will not be able to address this fiscal year, and which will further be delayed due to staff reduction and budget adjustments for FY 2011.

- New Variable Front Yard Setback in Commercial Zones
 - Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) ordinance to allow vacation rentals
 - Historic District Plan and Guidelines
 - Zoning Amendments - a variety of needed clarifications
 - Hedge Ordinance
 - Condominium Conversion Ordinance & Tenant Displacement Assistance
 - Upper State Street Study Implementation, SD-2 Amendments
 - Neighborhood Surveys
 - Historic Incentives
 - ABR Guidelines
 - Sign Ordinance Amendments & Guidelines
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- Also as noted above, related to PlanSB implementation, we expect that ordinance amendments to move forward with the policies of the Land Use Element, Housing Element and Adaptive Management (e.g., the replacement Measure E ordinance) will become new priorities in this work effort, as well.

3. Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Adjustments & Possible Implication

On September 8, 2009, the Council held a worksession to begin to discuss possible budget reductions throughout the City as we begin to prepare for next fiscal year. In the next several months more discussion of changes needed to meet these budget challenges will be further considered.

The goals and responsibilities for the City's programs in Zoning & Enforcement, Design Review & Historic Preservation, Development Review, Staff Hearing Officer, Environmental Review & Training, and Long Range Planning are established in the City Charter, General Plan and various policy documents, State and Federal laws, and of course are implemented through regulations contained in the Municipal Code.

Staying true to the planning goals established in these policy documents is very important. The challenge is to consider different ways to do so with fewer resources, achieve acceptable outcomes and not undermine the intended goals.

In many respects, our planning process has evolved to high levels of review and we believe that, in these difficult economic times, it is necessary to operate at an appropriate, basic level. Staff intends to work with representatives of our Board and Commissions to consider options. To date, we have had the following thoughts on potential effects on service levels and process changes.

- Through amendments to the NPO, reduce the type and number of projects reviewed by the Single Family Design Board (SFDB)
- Return to every-other-week Consent Calendar at the SFDB as the number of fire rebuild projects declines
- Adopt a new program for pre-plan check screening, including a higher cost recovery fee
- Adopt a new program for staff research of property permit history, to expand use of current Property Profile with a higher cost recovery fee
- Temporarily suspend the functions of the Sign Committee and transfer those responsibilities to the ABR and HLC. Also, amend ordinance and procedures to increase the use of conforming sign reviews
- Consider ordinance amendments to transfer more projects from the Planning Commission to the Staff Hearing Officer and/or to be ministerial
- Reduce staff at the public counter
- Significantly change content of Board and Commission minutes to action-only motions
- Ordinance amendments to clarify and simplify requirements that could reduce the amount of staff research and modifications
- Significant reduction in training, and policies and procedures program
- Fee increases towards a 50% recovery and new appeal fees
- Use of interns and volunteers

This meeting is not intended as a budget worksession, however, work on potential changes in response to budget adjustments will be a workload priority in the next several months and this is a good opportunity to begin to discuss these issues.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

This is an information work session. Council policy direction or funding decisions, if any, would be presented for action at future Council meetings.

PREPARED BY: Bettie Weiss, City Planner

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Casey, Community Development Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office