

**MINUTES**  
**SAN MARCOS CREEK SPECIFIC PLAN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING**  
VALLEY OF DISCOVERY ROOM  
CITY HALL, 1 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE  
SAN MARCOS, CALIFORNIA  
**MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017 – 6:00 PM**

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**CALL TO ORDER:** Steve Kildoo (Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

**PRESENT: COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Arnold, Caltabiano, Engert, Harris, Hayes, Hyde, Kildoo, Morelos, Smith, Tilton, Zahl

**ABSENT: COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Crews, Garcia, Russo, Simmons

**PRESENT: CITY STAFF:** City Manager Griffin, Development Services Director Lynch, Planning Manager Brindley, Sr. Management Analyst Herzog, Office Specialist III Kiss.

**CITY CONSULTANTS:** Michael Baker International (MBI); Dan Wery, Howard Blackson

**OTHERS:** Jim Hernandez, Ash Hayes

**1. Welcome – Handouts, Meeting Overview**

Kildoo: Spoke briefly about the Developer Focus Group meeting that was held 5/31/17. Several Committee members attended and received input from developers regarding what the project needs to be successful from their perspective. Stated he wanted to get everyone's input for the 6/27/17 City Council meeting prior to close of this meeting.

Wery: Distributed PowerPoint and Developer Focus Group notes.

**2. Approval of Minutes – 5/22/17**

Lynch: Pointed out a correction, a typo on page 9, ... City only receives **.07** cents for every \$1.00 property tax, not .70 cents.

Kildoo: Explained that the rate varies throughout the County, with San Marcos receiving the least and Coronado the highest at .46 cents.

***MOTION: HARRIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED, WITH CORRECTION ON PAGE 9 ("... City only receives **0.07** ~~0.70~~ cents for every \$1.00 property tax, ..."); SECONDED BY ZAHL AND CARRIED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE WITH HAYES ABSTAINING DUE TO HER ABSENCE.***



### **3. Developer Focus Group – Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations**

Wery: PowerPoint presentation shown. Five committee members attended the meeting: Kildoo, Simmons, Crews, Harris and Tilton. The minutes/notes call out the main items. He felt it was a good session and they received a lot of information.

Blackson: Indicated they had a diverse mix with both small and large developers in attendance.

Wery: Items discussed at the meeting included infrastructure and constraints. They stated very clearly that no developer would go into the floodplain. They wouldn't be able to get financing and would just go elsewhere. It's better to fix it. Comments included the need to leverage the strengths of the area – the housing market, and to use that to pay for infrastructure and amenities and overcome the challenges. The urban/rural link and Creek Promenade has tremendous potential. They recommended starting small; expanding later, and to not give up on it.

Blackson: Added that the City needs to get started on something, the first corner, something out of the ground.

Wery: Explained that retail and commercial follow the rooftops. It's clear the plan must be flexible, as you can't judge the market and it must allow conversion of ground floor uses. Don't need to get into standards based on type of ownerships, rental vs. ownership. Need to streamline approvals. Commercial nodes are key. The group discussed individual uses and talked about Croce's in GasLamp District and how initial tenants are important to set the tone for the whole area. Need business types that are not competing with Amazon. Parking requirements are expected to go down as more people are driven using ride shares. They talked about enhancing San Marcos Blvd. and the Complete Street multi-way design: Four lanes plus two frontage roads, which provide access to on-street parking, allow for bike lanes and pedestrians. It would add a little capacity and right-of-way, but impacts property owners. The prior plan was to make it six lanes, more of a highway. It would fill up and go to LOS E or F.

Blackson: Commented the developers also said don't count on it as a two-sided retail street. It's too big and fast.

Harris: The developers specifically asked how many owners there are. There are about 75 and it will affect things. Will the existing businesses flow with the new? A large developer needs certainty they can get it all, or a minimum of about four blocks.

Kildoo: Developers want larger areas now, where in the past it was smaller.

Wery: Some indicated they can do a smaller parcel as long as they know they have the infrastructure and roads and the neighbors will build to the plan. Property lines are all over the place. They need overall coordination.



Tilton: The answer to the idea of too many owners was that piecemeal development isn't bad, but we'd have to allow it to happen. The master vision is more important than the master plan. Someone said you need 10 blocks to allow for a critical mass. He feels the undevelopable gap isn't going to work and they need a solution for that.

Wery: There was a debate of whether it's 4 blocks, or more. The critical mass doesn't have to be all commercial - they want to see continuity.

Kildoo: Pointed out that there was not unanimous agreement on any point. There were three strong opinions from developers, who have different styles and processes for what they do. The flexibility discussion was critical and they helped Committee see what is most critical for them as developers.

Hyde: Commented on #8 – Tech transformation. Ride share vs. parking. You can remove parking, but it's hard to add later. Uber and Lyft are having problems. Right now people are getting cheap rides. They'll become more expensive when OSHA, etc., get involved and if they increase close to taxi rates, then their business will go down. If people can't park, they won't come.

Kildoo: Agreed, rideshare filled a need, but they didn't have a working business model. At some time, the need for parking may change, but the City can't assume it will happen and have no idea when.

Hyde: Inquired about the City shuttle?

Griffin: Indicated they're still collecting money for it and that it builds very slowly.

Blackson: Must decide who you prefer telling you how much parking, government or the market?

Hyde: Replied the market, but enough parking must be provided. Perhaps it could be designed with the ability to turn into something else later?

Kildoo: Suggested starting with today's standards, and modify them later if there is a change in the way people live and park.

Smith: Expressed that he's not sure what the goal is now. It was clear in the beginning. He'd like to see some renderings. He believes in building to the strengths and no other area will have the draw of the creek.

Harris: Added that one developer was all about the vision, while others said to get it going.

Kildoo: Mentioned the projects off of Grand Ave. The plan needs more exposure.

Morelos: Asked how enhancement of San Marcos Blvd. coincides?



Kildoo: Indicated the developers didn't agree on it. Alternative to Complete Streets is six lanes. Traffic is heavier now than when they did original plan. The Committee will need to talk about mitigating traffic and explain how they're not going to make it worse with this development.

Caltabiano: Asked if another group is addressing traffic?

Griffin: Suggested a question for everyone is what level of service or congestion in the long run are they willing to accept? If it's impacted now, it will be more so with additional development.

Caltabiano: He's hoping traffic is addressed way before project completion.

Griffin: Addressing the traffic is a challenge for all of us. Explained that adding capacity for more pass-through traffic isn't necessarily supporting the development they're trying to create. Businesses need the traffic, but at 50 mph it's not that helpful. There are other streets, Discovery, Twin Oaks Valley, and private properties in University District SP, that will help solve San Marcos Blvd. Currently there is no east-west alternative.

Kildoo: Widening of SR-78 is also part of the long-term solution.

Griffin: Added that there's an argument to be made for making it worse. If pass-through's become tired of it and find an alternate path, the destination directed traffic comes through, but it's a painful discussion to have. Some downtown areas do this.

Wery: Mentioned that Discovery Street is a huge piece of the network to making the whole area work.

Hayes: Asked if it's worthwhile to look at past information?

Kildoo: Replied, going forward yes, he believes at some point the public will comment regarding traffic. They didn't get much input in '07. They don't want people stuck in traffic to the point where they don't want to return.

Blackson: Pointed out the development they're talking about now is less than what the EIR allows for. Traffic was already studied and there is less of an impact now.

Wery: Indicated its 30% of the traffic that was originally approved.

Lynch: Stated that technically, that's a really good thing, but the political reality is that there have been changes in the context.

Hayes: Inquired about the walk-over bridge?

Kildoo: Responded it was no longer part of the plan.



Smith: Recalled that Horton Plaza didn't hit the ground running. Back then it was unsafe downtown and Croce's really helped the area.

Harris: Commented it was redevelopment money that transformed downtown San Diego.

Kildoo: Petco Park changed the face and allowed for residential.

Blackson: Reminded group to be mindful of that first restaurant or business that comes in because it sets the tone.

#### **4. Preliminary Specific Plan Alternatives**

Wery: Continued with PowerPoint. Reviewed existing conditions, flood plain, park promenade, pink area (what's available in foreseeable future), existing buildings, ownership, boundaries, flood limits and San Marcos Blvd. Complete Street Multi-way.

Blackson: Provided three alternatives: #1: North-South Perpendicular blocks, #2: Parallel Paseo, #3: Urban to Nature Transition. Discussed #1: Idea is more urban along San Marcos Blvd., more rural along creek. Each side of block would be a different character and building type. Both sides of Via Vera Cruz could have retail. Juanita had a great idea to put something special, a hidden gem along the creek, in the improvement area where there will be a berm and walkway, (pointed out) maybe a hotel, resort or civic center.

Lynch: Asked if the gem is outside the floodplain?

Blackson: The gem is within the floodplain and within berm that is built up. When you bring in the floodplain, the long blocks get obliterated. You'll end up with cul-de-sacs/fingers until you get to the 100% corner. Pointed out area where you can't get insurance for buildings.

Kildoo: Added that in the short term, the creek won't be improved west of Via Vera Cruz.

Blackson: Asked staff if they've broken ground on Creek Improvement Plan? (Pointed out).

Griffin: Indicated late this year.

Blackson: Continued to discuss #1. Some areas will be hard to fill in later and it's not really a downtown.

Caltabiano: Inquired what happens to plan if drainage issue is fixed at SR-78?

Blackson: Indicated it would fill in. Discussed #2: Parallel Paseo, stepping down to creek: They added a slip lane along berm. Higher intensity along San Marcos Blvd., then steps down to creek with housing. The main road gets lost; it becomes a trail, then a road again. It loses the flow and is not a main street. He's



heard that one-sided retail never works. Discussed #3: Urban to Nature Transition, stepping up to creek. It's a hybrid of the two. Longer blocks with paseo in the middle where you can build today. Uses a system of streets and trails. Pointed out area where you don't have sewer or water. Area's outside of plan become sub-districts. Asked for Committee input, if choosing #3, do they prefer building up, or down to the creek? Asked if they want the highest number of people living near the creek? It's the same number of people either way.

Morelos: Commented she's leaning towards #3 and build up towards creek.

Harris: Prefers #3 and build up. More could enjoy it and it creates a better visual from San Marcos Blvd. If you step down, you're only visible by number of floors above.

Hyde: Feels #3 is most feasible and build up to creek. If building down, no one on lower levels would see the creek; they'll see roofs and hills.

Caltabiano: Commented he prefers #3 and build up, but really likes the flow of #2 and the small lane.

Smith: Indicated #3 and build down to creek. He'd like to see a couple more elevations to view the differences.

Arnold: Likes the flow of #2, but doesn't see major differences. Maybe #3, with more focuses on vehicle flow towards creek. He likes building up to creek, with parkway setting to soften it.

Kildoo: Introduced Edgar Engert who replaced Betty Ferguson.

Engert: Commented that he recently visited Vail, CO, where downtown traffic was eliminated except for deliveries. People park, walk and enjoy good restaurants and music. He'd like to see a paseo to the creek. San Antonio River Walk has restaurants and shops on both sides that bring people back and forth, and is always busy. The big department stores are going away due to online shopping. Plan needs boutique and souvenir shops.

Tilton: The developers said pedestrian environment is key and he's struggling to envision that. Asked if they'll insist on elevator-served buildings or townhomes with garages under?

Kildoo: Believes elevators are code.

Blackson: Indicated plan would allow two-six stories, so it doesn't dictate elevators, unless you dictate it by maxing out the FAR or height. No elevator, except where you say four-six stories. They've specified that along a couple sub-districts.

Kildoo: Feel they need to max the height in core area.

Blackson: Indicated they'll have to shift the sub-districts around.



Wery: Pointed out the existing plan had two ranges, two-six and three-seven stories. Minimum was two or three stories depending on location. There's a lot of flexibility.

Tilton: Commented that without all the amenities and great design, he's concerned it will be just another housing project and not special. Doesn't think building up or down towards creek is important because of all the factors of construction. Will there be parking underneath? Another part is the reality of the cost of development. Each place must have the hope where the current owner will get money and be able to move on. They shouldn't limit any particular area. He understands the plan is rudimentary, but he's not seeing the paths or how people can enjoy the creek. It's not that sophisticated and it scares him to see the blocks of housing.

Kildoo: Agreed, it's not just a housing development. It's a one-time opportunity to take advantage of the natural amenities of the area, the open space, creek and try to make it more urban and walkable. It's a more constrained layout now.

Wery: Stated that the plan will get refined and some details have to change.

Blackson: Commented that there are small interconnected blocks, surrounding inner core or parking areas; the same pattern as University District. The issue here is they can't guarantee cross streets after a certain level when you get into floodplain. That's the big issue with walkability.

Wery: Pointed out North City is five blocks deep. The natural variation adds character.

Tilton: Prefers combination of #2 and #3, and would like to see a connection through.

Blackson: Indicated it might be possible.

Zahl: Prefers #3, but would like it modified for the walkability flow. Agree the up/down doesn't matter, it should naturally evolve.

Hayes: Commented that when Committee started, they wanted to make plan livable and walkable. Downtown San Diego is a mess, you could be eating outside with a bus sitting right there. She'd like to see more creativity. You don't want to look into someone's window. Affordable housing element is okay, but need to attract people to an interesting element. She's not fond of cars going through.

Harris: Asked for clarification on #2/3 hybrid. Asked if drive is two lanes for cars, or for walking only?

Blackson: First plan was to park in the blocks and walk, but, it could be two lanes for cars in some parts but not others.

Harris: Commented he'd use the lane to circumvent San Marcos Blvd.





Blackson: Agreed that will happen, asked if that is what they'd want?

Group continued to discuss traffic, access and connections.

## **5. Draft Progress Report Presentation for June 27, 2017 City Council**

Kildoo: Stated the Committee will go to Council with a general direction of where they're headed, what's wrong with current plan and how to modify it to make it viable. It won't be a final plan.

Wery: MBI will provide progress to date with goal to bring Council and public up to speed.

Lynch: Suggested the focus be on where the Committee is at.

Wery: Commented that the poster board created for the Street Fair can give a good overview and update.

Kildoo: Explained it will be a brief presentation letting Council know the amount of retail that must be reduced, but also the desire of the Committee to retain as much of the original vision as possible. We don't want to make it into a residential development. Need to figure out a balance. It's important to discuss the change in the creek, part of it channelized but not from beginning to end, and remind them about the culvert and drainage under highway, how it impacts remaining floodplain areas and what pattern it has to develop. Need to create flexibility and reduce retail but keep the possibility that it can be added back in later if the marketplace dictates. It's important to streamline approval process too.

Harris: Concerned there won't be enough time to get through it all.

Griffin: Responded that it was the Council who got the Committee going again and authorized the funding for the consultant. They are getting briefed monthly and know about the floodplain issues and challenges. They want to hear where the Committee is, in terms of concepts and recognizing the real world scenario. They don't need the project history; they want to know what's coming.

Harris: Commented that Via Vera Cruz would be the commercial anchor and they're looking at residential development near the creek. It will still have a walkable, paseo-type concept, but it won't be one massive 10-block. Will start small and have flexibility in buildings.

Tilton: Feels they're making a mistake by not taking the gap more seriously.

Kildoo: Indicated that the flow from San Marcos Blvd., into the creek, where they're giving away four blocks, will be in his discussion.

Harris: Responded that it can be a two-tier, multi-stage process. The vision is it will get built, starting at Via Vera Cruz as the hub, with residential at creek side and when funding is available, the pieces would fill in.





Kildoo: His concern is the culvert could be 20-30 years away. Suggested there may be a deliberate path for the water that could become an amenity, and then build around that.

Blackson: Recommended putting it in a sub-district and look at it when it changes.

Tilton: He wishes it was a goal of the City for the Engineering Department to look into the industrial properties that flood and possibilities how to drain it. Feels blight is being allowed to happen.

Kildoo: Replied that ten years ago they had a plan, the Creek District, and now it has to be adjusted.

Lynch: Commented that the City is not at the big picture yet, the planning and feasibility analysis that he'd like to see, but is looking into the issue. Staff has met with MBI and City engineers and asked what it would take for a high level analysis, and also received a scope of work. The commitment to getting there and funding it is a long ways out. The City has to plan for what we know we can do, because we need to get the seeds planted to even get us there.

Engert: Suggested creek bed should be done first, and then develop.

Kildoo: Responded that the money isn't there, so they'll channelize the critical areas and whatever else they can afford.

Blackson: (Pointed out area of channelization).

Kildoo: Commented that the Council meeting discussion will include what is wrong with the plan, what has to change, flexibility with retail, and that Committee is heading towards Alternative #2 or #3, or a hybrid.

Blackson: Asked if they'd like to see more detail of the hybrid?

Lynch: She believes it would be valuable and they'll talk more about it.

Arnold: Inquired about Creekside Drive where it goes through the gap area?

Blackson: Indicated it has a zigzag pattern because of property lines.

Kildoo: He'd like it made clear to Council what the Committee is doing going forward and that this isn't the end of the process. Continued to discuss what will be included in Council presentation.

Hayes: Asked about costs?

Blackson: Beyond the \$70 million, they don't know.

Engert: Replied if they like the plan, then you move on to the financial part.



## **6. Next Steps**

Kildoo: Announced there would not be a committee meeting next week, but encouraged members to attend City Council meeting next Tuesday, 6/27, at 6 PM, if they're available. Thanked Committee and indicated it's been one of the best he's been on with everyone contributing. The committee will make sure the plan happens.

## **7. Public Input**

Jim Hernandez: Commented that it's important to maintain flexibility and let market dictate. The nodes for commercial make sense. Asked if ultimate plan would show the dedicated park and paseos?

Blackson: Replied yes.

Hernandez: Asked to see slide with parallel paseos and inquired if they know what it would take to connect? It would be good to get back to San Marcos Blvd.

Wery: Indicated they'd be looking at that. It can't impede the flow and may be similar to an Arizona crossing.

Hernandez: Indicated he'd like to see a graphic or data on what it really means to cut San Marcos Blvd. down, and forget about the pass-through traffic as discussed earlier. Let it be a long drive to I-5.

## **8. Adjournment / Next Meeting**

Lynch: Indicated staff will e-mail Committee regarding the next meeting dates.

Hyde: Suggested they stay with the fourth Monday as previously discussed.

Kildoo: Adjourned meeting at 7:58 p.m.

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Steve Kildoo, Chair  
San Marcos Creek SP Oversight Committee

ATTEST:

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Lisa Kiss  
Office Specialist III