



RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

Board Memorandum

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

DATE: SEPTEMBER 11, 2017

ITEM NO: 10

SUBJECT: **NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD AND PELLISSIER RANCH INTER-JURISDICTIONAL SPECIFIC PLAN AND PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT – PROJECT UPDATE**

ISSUES:

Receive an update on the status and progress of the Northside Neighborhood and Pellissier Ranch Inter-Jurisdictional Specific Plan and Program Environmental Impact Report, with emphasis on comments received at two community workshops, held on June 7 and 10, 2017.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Public Utilities receive and file this presentation on the Northside Neighborhood and Pellissier Ranch Inter-Jurisdictional Specific Plan update.

BACKGROUND:

On April 28, 2015, Community & Economic Development Department (CEDD) staff provided the City Council a summary of the status and history of City-owned properties within the Northside Neighborhood, including the former Riverside Golf Course and Ab Brown Sports Complex. During deliberations, the City Council directed staff to pursue a specific plan for the Northside Neighborhood. The Council also directed staff to engage the public prior to soliciting a Specific Plan consultant.

On March 23, 2016, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and Proposals (RFP) was released by CEDD. The RFQ/RFP outlined the need for a multi-disciplinary consultant team who would work with the community and city staff to create the Northside Neighborhood and Pellissier Ranch Inter-Jurisdictional Specific Plan (Northside Specific Plan) and accompanying Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR). The RFQ/RFP was developed with input from various community stakeholders groups, including the Northside Improvement Association, the Springbrook Heritage Alliance, the Spanish Town Heritage Foundation, and the Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce's Hunter Park Business Council, in addition to business organizations and other interested parties. CEDD also hosted a pre-RFQ community meeting on November 4, 2015 to introduce the project, identify community driven issues, and seek input on what should be included in the RFQ/RFP. The Northside Specific Plan RFQ/RFP clearly outlined the desired approach and goals for the development of the specific plan, and identified the desired qualifications for the selection of a consultant. On April 25, 2016, CEDD staff presented a status report on the Specific Plan process to the Board of Public Utilities outlining the assets held by RPU in the Northside area and policy issues associated therewith.

On June 27, 2016, the Board of Public Utilities with all members present unanimously approved to forward a recommendation to the City Council to: 1) Amend the Riverside Public Utilities adopted two-year FY 2016-18 budget in an amount not to exceed \$813,000, to fund Riverside Public Utilities share of the Northside Specific Plan planning effort, an amount commensurate with the proportion of land under Riverside Public Utilities ownership that will receive a benefit from the Specific Plan, subject to the approval of a final Scope of Work and budget; and 2) Approve appropriations including \$683,000 from the Public Utilities Water Fund Water Professional Services Account 6210000-4210000, and \$130,000 from the Public Utilities Electric Fund Electric Professional Services Account 6100000-4210000.

On September 20, 2016, the City Council selected Glenn A. Rick Engineering and Development Company (Rick Engineering) for the preparation of the Northside Specific and PEIR, and authorize the City Manager or designee to negotiate a Professional Services Agreement. The Council's actions included an amendment to the Riverside Public Utilities budget to contribute funds toward the preparation of the Northside Specific Plan and PEIR. The Council also provided direction to prepare a reimbursement fee program concurrent with the preparation of the Northside Specific Plan and PEIR, for consideration by Council following the adoption of the Specific Plan.

On December 20, 2016, the City Council approved a Professional Consultant Services Agreement with Rick Engineering for the preparation of the Northside Specific Plan and PEIR that included a reduction in the monies needed from the Public Utilities Water Fund Water Professional Services Account 6210000-4210000 (from \$683,000 to \$512,032) and from the Public Utilities Electric Fund Electric Professional Services Account 6100000-4210000 (from \$130,000 to \$93,097).

The selected consultant is currently in the process of creating the Northside Specific Plan. A combination of community visioning workshops and meetings, an evaluation of site-specific strengths and weaknesses, technical economic analyses are the first steps being implemented to create this plan. The intended outcome is a regulatory document that encourages the use of vacant and underutilized properties in a manner that reflects a community-based vision while remaining cognizant of the economic realities and opportunities in the area. This document will also be instrumental in guiding the future of properties owned by the City of Riverside, including properties that may be deemed surplus or underutilized by Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) or the City of Riverside.

DISCUSSION:

Since the contract commenced, CEDD staff has been administering the contract with Rick Engineering and managing the Specific Plan effort, working closely with the consulting team, City of Colton staff, RPU staff and other stakeholders to insure completion of the Specific Plan and Program EIR by mid-2018. During the first few months of the Specific Plan process, a strong focus has been placed on community visioning and involvement. For example, pop-up stations staffed by members of the consultant team were placed at various community events and members of the consultant team and City staff have attended meetings with specific community organizations to explain the specific plan process and solicit input from citizens. Most notably, two public workshops were held on June 7 and 10, 2017 and a "Meet the Planners" session was held on June 12, 2017 to allow community members an opportunity to provide input in the formation of the Specific Plan.

Major Input Themes

Major themes represent big ideas and input that have been repeatedly mentioned and discussed in various settings during the Specific Plan visioning process so far. The consultant team has identified six overarching themes, listed in alphabetical order below, that strongly represent participant input.

1. Amenities, Services, and Infrastructure Improvements

Many comments have been received highlighting the need for improved amenities, services, and infrastructure in the Northside neighborhood. The commenters have specifically indicated the need

for a neighborhood-scale retail center, anchored by a supermarket, while other comments included the desire for flower markets, food hubs, and other local shopping opportunities and services. Farmers markets were a common theme of discussion, and many suggested that these markets could sell locally farmed and produced food. Other comments highlighted the need for improved sewer connections in some parts of the Northside Neighborhood. Homeless services were another popular theme, and some attendees suggested that there were areas in the neighborhood that would be conducive to hosting homeless housing or services. Other comments highlighted the need to build a new middle school and high school to serve the neighborhood.

2. History of Riverside and the Northside Riverside

The Trujillo Adobe and related sites were focal points of discussions around historical assets in the Northside neighborhood. Attendees suggested that development around this area should include appropriately themed uses, such as uses that would facilitate educational opportunities, preservation, and celebration of historic settlements. Other historic sites discussed include the former power plant site in Highgrove, Roquet Ranch and Pellissier Ranch. There was also discussion of the Northside's roots as one of Riverside's first neighborhoods, and how this can play a role in defining local character and culture, as well as establishing a unique, recognizable identity for the neighborhood.

3. Maintaining a Strong Recreation Component

Many attendees highlighted the importance of existing and future recreational opportunities in the Northside area, including activities at Reid Park, the Ab Brown Soccer Complex and the Santa Ana River Trail, among others. There were many suggestions to include hiking and biking trails both for recreation within the neighborhood and for connections with the Santa Ana River and other neighborhoods. The opportunity for continued use of portions of the former golf course to host cross country running events was also highly suggested. Other suggestions included development of a skate park, horseback riding trails, rock climbing facilities, and a dog park.

4. Open Space and Visual Character

Many attendees viewed open spaces and visual character of the neighborhood as a significant part of community pride, and emphasized that the low-density visual character of the neighborhood was a priority. A major focus was on the Springbrook Wash, including proposals to return it to its natural state and path. Other points of interests were community gardens and agricultural uses. Some attendees commented that trees and existing vegetation in the golf course area needed nourishment and care, while others suggested that the former golf course in its entirety, be left as open space. A number of attendees, however, mentioned that the absence of activity at the former golf course detracted from community cohesion. There was concern about the flood plain of the Santa Ana River, which extends into the neighborhood, and how to address land uses to accommodate the risk of flooding.

5. Safer streets and improved transportation options

Improved mobility for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, was a common theme. Many attendees proposed limiting truck travel in the neighborhood, especially along Columbia Avenue, due to congestion, safety, noise and air quality concerns. Some highlighted the need for improved access to Interstate 215. Others asserted that improved sidewalks and traffic calming measures were needed to safely connect schools to residential areas. Connectivity to the Santa Ana River was also a popular topic of discussion. In this vein, it was suggested that a Metrolink station in the Highgrove area could provide improved regional connections.

6. Safety

A number of attendees expressed concern about neighborhood safety, and some suggested ways that it could be improved. Some recommended a potential site for a new police headquarters, and highlighted the need for improved lighting and other solutions to address the existence of homelessness and related crime in the area. Comments also addressed neighborhood safety and security concerns generated by some activities on La Cadena Drive.

A Baseline Analysis report of current conditions, which was released to the public on June 27, 2017, is also available under the “News & Documents” tab on the project website www.NorthsidePlan.com.

The consultant team is currently in the process of creating three alternative land use plans that incorporate the major themes mentioned during the visioning and the public outreach process so far. These land use concepts also take into consideration existing conditions presented in a baseline analysis report issued in late June, 2017. The next round of community workshops, which will be held on October 11 and 14, 2017, will focus on how the comments received during the June community workshops have been incorporated into the three alternative land use plans.

Following the next round of community workshops, a public workshop will be scheduled for the RPU Board to review, evaluate, provide comments and make recommendations relative to the three alternative land use plans presented at the October 11 and 14, 2017 workshops. Staff anticipates that the RPU Board workshop will occur at board meeting of October 23, 2017.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to the recommended Board action.

Prepared by: Kevin S. Milligan, Utilities Deputy General Manager
Approved by: Girish Balachandran, Utilities General Manager
Approved by: John A. Russo, City Manager
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Certifies availability
of funds: Laura Chavez-Nomura, Utilities Assistant General Manager/Finance

Attachments:

1. Community Involvement Summary, Round 1, June 16, 2017
2. Presentation

