

# Economic Development, Placemaking and Branding/ Marketing Committee

*City of Arts & Innovation*

**TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLACEMAKING AND BRANDING/MARKETING COMMITTEE**      **DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 2021**

**FROM: COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**      **WARDS: 1 AND 2**

**SUBJECT: REVIEW AND RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT THE PROPOSED MASTER PLAN AND ASSOCIATED ZONING FOR THE INNOVATION DISTRICT**

## **ISSUE:**

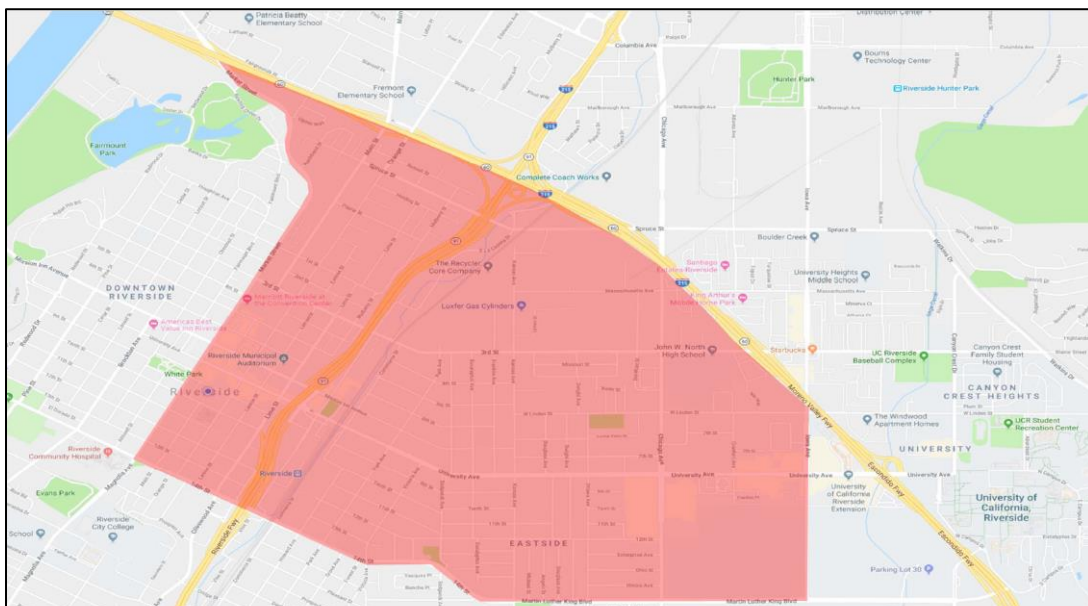
Review and recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning for the Innovation District.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Economic Development, Placemaking and Branding/Marketing Committee review and recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning for the Innovation District (Attachment 1).

## **BACKGROUND:**

On December 19, 2017, the City Council unanimously approved the concept of creating innovation districts across the City as a way to attract new investment, retain local talent, and create jobs. The City's first Innovation District encompasses Downtown and the geographic area between Downtown and the University of California Riverside (UCR), including portions of the Eastside and University Avenue neighborhoods (see map below).



The Innovation District is home to several under-utilized former packing houses and industrial buildings with the potential to serve a variety of needs ranging from business incubators/accelerators, co-working space for startup firms, to established companies looking to expand or relocate. Businesses focusing on research and bringing to the market various green transportation solutions could find ideal partnerships with the nearby UCR Center for Environmental Research & Technology, City's Innovation Corridor and the coming California Air Resources Board (CARB) campus, given the close proximity.

To facilitate implementation of the Innovation District, staff previously determined that a visioning charrette, a common technique to consult with community stakeholders early in a project, would help in identifying a shared vision. Charrettes involve intensive meetings, whereby stakeholders are invited to gather and discuss issues, challenges, and desires of a project and where differences are identified and resolved through a common understanding of the issues, opportunities, and challenges from different perspectives.

Several visioning charette sessions were held between August – October 2019. Attendees included the Mayor and City Councilmembers from Wards 1 & 2; representatives from UCR, Riverside Community College District, the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce; and City staff from the Community & Economic Development Department, Mayor's Office, and the City Manager's Office. The outcome of the visioning charette sessions is summarized in Attachment 1.

On February 25, 2020, the City Council received and filed an update on the Innovation District Visioning Charrette, which included, amongst other things, the creation of a "freestyle" zone in the 3rd Street industrial area. Given the District covers over 3-square miles, a phased approach was recommended. Phase 1 focusing on transit-supported, high density residential, flexible zoning regulations and development standards that lessen "red tape". Specifically, as detailed in the vision document, the area generally bounded by the 91 Freeway, 60 Freeway, 215 Freeway and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (Triangle), could be transformed into an area that encourages transit-supported, high density residential, using innovative "freestyle", flexible zoning regulations and development standards that lessen "red tape". This could allow for the most diverse development opportunities with a streamlined process. Like the revolutionary process employed in Detroit that implemented "pink zone" techniques, the City could redesign the current land use regulatory framework to provide a process that facilitates a wide mix of diverse and innovative uses. This allows for the most diverse development with a streamlined process. Like the revolutionary process employed in Detroit that implemented "pink zone" techniques, the City could redesign the current regulatory framework to provide a process that facilitates a wide mix of diverse and innovative uses.

On June 17, 2021, the Economic Development, Placemaking and Branding/Marketing Committee (Committee) received and filed an update from staff on the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning for the Innovation District and directed staff to return to the Committee with a final document for further review and potential recommendation to City Council.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The City recognizes that the development community is seeking a predictable, flexible, and streamlined permitting process, that also allows for creativity in the uses proposed and the design of the site. The City contracted with AVR Studio of San Diego led by Howard Blackson (AVR), to develop a Land Use Regulation Framework for the Innovation District. AVR's

ongoing scope of work includes identifying the best approach to facilitate development that meets the goals and initiatives illustrated in the City Council-approved vision document for the Innovation District.

The Innovation District, and specifically the Triangle, has also been identified as an area that can help the City meet its 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) obligations. AVRП has developed the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning that refines the visioning document. AVRП is also preparing preliminary regulations, in conjunction with the Planning Division, to help meet the RHNA needs as part of the Housing Element Update.

AVRП, as part of its due diligence, conducted research and data collection, in coordination with the City's Planning Division, to identify how other jurisdictions approach flexible and creative regulations. Jurisdictions researched include the cities of San Diego, Oklahoma City, and Fresno. In consultation with City staff, AVRП determined that an overlay zone is the best implementation tool for Innovation District regulations in the Triangle. An overlay zone is a regulatory tool that creates special zoning requirements that are placed over an existing base zone(s). These zoning requirements apply on top of those in the underlying base zone.

AVRП has prepared the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning for the Triangle that creates a walkable streets and blocks pattern; identifies center/edge and quarters as part of the open space/park network; designates use-emphasis areas based on specific site characteristics; calculates potential build out of land uses that result from the use-emphasis areas; proposes a permitting and administration process; and considers steps needed to create an Innovation District operation and maintenance authority.

Approval of the Master Plan and zoning for the Innovation District would be followed by branding that would focus on the City's Innovation story and concentrate on "clean and green tech" businesses that have a focus on clean air, alternative/adaptive transportation, water and sustainable technologies to leverage existing drivers like UCR's CE-CERT, City's Innovation Corridor, the California Air Resources Board campus and the UCR's planned OASIS.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This item contributes to the Envision Riverside 2025 City Council Strategic Priority 3 – Economic Opportunity and Goal 3.3 – Cultivate a business climate that welcomes innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment.

This item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – The proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning serves the public interest, benefits the City's diverse populations, and results in the greater public good. A strategy for clean businesses in the City illustrates that the City is committed to the future health of residents, while also targeting industries to bolster the City's economy.
2. **Equity** – The proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning provides equitable distribution of services to ensure every member of the community has equal access to share the benefits of community progress. Input from residents and businesses will provide opportunities to shape the strategy for clean businesses.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Riverside is a prudent steward of public funds and ensures

responsible management of the City's financial resources while providing quality public services to all as demonstrated by the use of legislative tools, like zoning amendments and master plan, to leverage innovative outcomes. Economic benefits of the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning will benefit all residents in the City.

4. **Innovation** – The proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning demonstrates that Riverside is inventive and timely in meeting the community's changing needs and prepares for the future through collaborative partnerships and adaptive processes. The City can be on the forefront with innovative strategies such as the proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The proposed Master Plan and Associated Zoning demonstrates that Riverside is committed to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future and ensuring the City's capacity to persevere, adapt and grow during good and difficult times alike. The City can be on the cutting edge with initiatives like the proposed Innovation District that contribute to a sustainable and resilient Riverside community given they will be focused on clean and green technologies.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommendations in this report.

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availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
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Approved as to form:	Phaedra A. Norton, City Attorney

#### **Attachments:**

1. Master Plan and Associated Zoning for the Innovation District
2. Presentation