



Agenda Report

21-1244

Agenda Date: 9/8/2021

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Joint Study Session with the City Council, Planning Commission and Downtown Community Task Force (DCTF) on Form Based Zoning Codes.

COUNCIL PILLAR

Promote and Enhance Economic, Housing and Transportation Development

BACKGROUND

Zoning Codes are a key land-use policy implementation tool that establish specific regulations for allowed land uses and development of private property. Zoning Codes are traditionally considered to address three topic areas: land use, building form and performance standards. While a Zoning Code likely includes elements of all three areas, since the 1930s, greater emphasis has been given to the regulation of uses, with the establishment of separate zones for single-family, multi-family, commercial and industrial land uses. Conventional codes also normally include regulations for building form, such as height limitations and setback requirements.

Beginning in the 1980s, Form Based Codes began emerging as an alternative approach, particularly for application to areas where a pedestrian-oriented environment and more traditional “Main Street” types of development were a priority. Form Based Codes may omit much of the land use regulations found in conventional zoning codes, thereby allowing for a mix of uses (e.g., residential above commercial) that would have been seen in a traditional Downtown environment, while also establishing very precise regulations for architectural form, such as specifications for minimum and maximum setbacks, location and size of building entries, allowable building materials and other architectural elements critical to the creation of a successful pedestrian environment.

An early and well publicized example of a community developed with a Form Based Code is Seaside, Florida, which provided the setting for the movie “The Truman Show.” Seaside is essentially a modern development with a traditional town character. Proponents of Form Based Codes emphasize that they allow for a much more diverse mix of land uses while also giving much needed attention to the architectural form of new development.

The Downtown Community Task Force (DCTF) has determined that the preparation of a Form Based Code should be a key component of the Downtown Precise Plan. The Planning Commission has also recently expressed an interest to broaden the Commission and the community’s understanding of contemporary planning practices and specifically requested a citywide training on the topic of Form Based Codes. As familiarity with Form Based Codes will be useful to the City Council in its future decision making on land use policies, it will be beneficial for the City Council to gain more familiarity with Form Based Codes and their use as a land use regulatory tool.

The City has engaged a consultant, David Sargent, with Sargent Town Planning to present information about form-based codes, and to discuss the potential for such a code to contribute to the implementation of the Downtown Precise Plan. The Study Session will be conducted in two parts with the first hour an overview of Form Based Codes and the second hour focused on the potential use of Form Based Codes as part of the Downtown Precise Plan now under preparation. The first hour presentation will include an overview of form-based code structure and techniques for shaping, regulating, and unifying active, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use environments.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This study session does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5) in that it is a informational session that does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potential significant impact on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds were utilized from the FY 2020/21 Planning Commission Budget for this training in a not to exceed amount of \$2,000.

COORDINATION

This report was coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City’s official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City’s website and in the City Clerk’s Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk’s Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>>.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no staff recommendation.

Reviewed by: Andrew Crabtree, Director, Community Development Department

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager