



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: April 22, 2014
To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
From: David Lightner, Deputy City Manager
Susan Healy Keene, Director of Community Development
Subject: Southeast Task Force: Next Steps
Attachments: Robertson Diagonal Parking Study
August 2012 Final Report of the Southeast Task Force

INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Task Force completed their initial charge on August 7, 2012 when their Final Report of Recommendations for revitalization of the southeast area of the City was presented to the City Council. However, as an interested and engaged group of residents of the area they expressed subsequent interest in receiving notices of development projects proposed in the neighborhood and have continued to advocate for revitalization of the southeast. The group reconvened twice last December at the request of the then Mayor Mirisch: once on December 3rd in order to discuss the 8767 Wilshire project (without Councilmembers) and then again on December 12th as a full group, including the current ad hoc committee of the City Council (Bosse, Mirisch).

This report provides an update on the discussion at the December 12, 2013 full meeting of the Task Force, forwards a request from Task Force members to reconstitute the group and resume meeting, and provides options for advancing Task Force goals.

DISCUSSION

At the December 12th meeting, staff presented the following items to the Task Force:

- Robertson Diagonal Parking Study
- Analysis of Possible Hotel Shuttle Program
- Update on property acquisition for parking
- Addition of street trees
- Development projects in the southeast

Robertson Diagonal Parking Study

Staff reviewed the results of the traffic study commissioned to evaluate the feasibility of diagonal parking on one side of Robertson Boulevard. The consultant study is attached, but in summary the findings are that only one travel lane in each direction would be the

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result and that significant regional traffic impacts would be likely and would require further study to fully identify. The consensus of the Task Force Ad Hoc was that further pursuit of this initiative is not warranted due to the likely impacts and cost of environmental assessment. There may be other pedestrian oriented urban design improvements to the right of way that do not affect parking supply or traffic. The Task Force Ad Hoc supports exploration of these options.

Hotel Shuttle Program

Staff also reviewed the results of a Transportation Division test and analysis of a shuttle program intended to entice hotel guests in the City to visit Restaurant Row and other dining destinations in the southeast. The study showed that the commute time from the major hotels at the dinner hour is too long to make this concept feasible. The Task Force Ad Hoc concurred with the recommendation not to pursue this concept further.

Property Acquisition for Parking

Updates were provided regarding the City Council's budgeting of funds for the acquisition of property for construction of public parking and on the Council's significant efforts towards acquiring a specific piece of property on Robertson. It was noted that staff and the Council continue to seek out opportunities for southeast parking development as well as the potential expansion of La Cienega Park through purchase of the north-east corner of Olympic and La Cienega at the City gateway. The opportunity created by the proposed sale of the Fine Arts Theater was discussed and plans for consideration of a consortium of interested parties potentially including the Saban, Theater 40, the Producers Guild, the Annenberg and the City were discussed. Please note that subsequent to the Task Force meeting, the Fine Arts Theater owner was successful in entering escrow for sale to a private buyer who intends to maintain the theater use.

Other Updates

Further updates included: pending installation of new street trees on Robertson, South Beverly and La Cienega; a new restaurant coming to the former Pancake House location on Olympic; Vendome moving from Olympic to the former Blockbuster location on Robertson; Eatali recruitment efforts during the New York sales mission; and pending development of an entitled multi-family residential and ground floor retail project at Wilshire and Stanley.

Introduction of New Initiatives

New initiatives were proposed and discussed by the Task Force Ad Hoc included consideration of a pedestrian bridge from the La Cienega Tennis Center garage on the west side of the street to the remainder of the park on the east side of the street. It was noted that this idea has been considered before and the previous decision was not to construct. Councilmember Mirisch noted the potential benefits as a gateway statement in addition to the functionality of safely crossing the street at mid-block. Another suggestion was initiation of a Sunday food kiosk event to attract attention to the area and to create a family-friendly activity. The addition of more holiday lighting for the southeast was also recommended.

Request from Task Force Members

In order to pursue these ideas and to further implement the recommendations in the Task Force report, the group would like to reconstitute its membership and receive a further charge from the City Council to begin meeting monthly during an implementation phase. It has been noted that some members may no longer have the time available to

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devote to additional regular meetings of a task force and that the task force consists of school representatives and residents but does not include business representatives or commercial property owners.

If the City Council chooses to formalize the further involvement of the Task Force members, there may be a more appropriate alternate structure:

- Task Force: typically has a specific task (thus the name) and upon completion of the task is disbanded;
- Steering Committee: A motivated group of representatives, not necessarily comprising all stakeholders who oversee a specific task.

A Steering Committee might work directly with staff or might include an Ad Hoc Committee of the Council. In either scenario, the Steering Committee model appears more in line with the current objective of the group to see their recommendations implemented.

ANALYSIS

There are two broad categories of improvements that have been identified by the Task Force. One area includes objectives related to business recruitment and retention and property acquisition for parking development. The City Council has budgeted \$4,750,000 for property acquisition and an additional \$5,660,000 over the 5-year capital budgeting period for general southeast enhancements. This first set of objectives warrants the continued involvement of the Economic Sustainability Program in the City Manager's Office and the Capital Assets Department.

There are other identified objectives that span a range of issues from streetscape improvements, development of an in-lieu parking district, notice and review of proposed projects in the area, to community event planning. Some, but not all are closely aligned with the Community Development Department. Others fall under the purview of other city departments, including Public Works Services and Community Services.

While the Task Force initially created has completed the task of establishing goals for revitalization of the area, additional work is needed to address the identified goals. As progress is being made on these initiatives when opportunities arise, it is recommended that a concerted effort to plan and implement these initiatives might produce faster results.

The Community Development Department has partnered in the work with the Task Force to date and could take the lead to convene a group of representative staff to advance the items identified by the Task Force:

- Develop a Southeast In-lieu Parking District
- Encourage outdoor dining where feasible
- Introduce seasonal banners to identify the Southeast and its sub-districts
- Create bike routes that connect the Southeast to other areas and install bike racks in strategic locations
- Designate Robertson tree type and expedite ficus replacement along with other initiatives to make the area more pedestrian friendly

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The Capital Assets Department would continue to pursue the acquisition and development of parking sites and the Economic Sustainability team would continue to pursue targeted business recruitment and retention efforts in coordination with the Small Business Task Force.

As progress is made on each of these initiatives, it will be important to update and coordinate with the interested Southeast area stakeholders, especially those that have participated in the Task Force. If the Task Force is re-engaged, the Council may wish to determine whether all original members should be given the choice of whether to remain on an expanded Task Force or Steering Committee, or whether each councilmember should appoint a set number of members, potentially including original members among the new appointees and potentially expanding the membership to include property owner and business representatives.

The original members of the Task Force include: Former Mayor Mirisch, Chris Biehl, Don Creamer, Brian Goldberg, Howard Goldstein, Andrea Grossman, Isabel Hacker, Noah Margo, Susan Mishler, Dick Seff, and AJ Wilmer. At the beginning of his term, former Mayor Mirisch created an ad hoc committee for the Southeast Task Force (Mirisch, Bosse).

Staff recommends that the ongoing interest of the task force in seeing results from their efforts may be best supported by reconvening the task force, as a Steering Committee, on a quarterly basis for update and coordination meetings. Staff efforts would then be focused on implementation of the recommendations with a report out to the stakeholders on progress.

As noted, one of the Task Force requests is that they receive timely notice of projects in the area that are to be reviewed by the Planning Commission or the City Council so that they can effectively engage in those reviews to advocate for Task Force objectives. Staff has developed notice procedures that include the designated members of the Southeast Task Force in addition to all other regular posting and noticing of projects.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact at this time. As items are proposed for implementation, staff will return to the City Council for approval of individual items.

RECOMMENDATION

- Receive and file update report
- Determine if an on-going Task Force or Steering Committee should be established, and if so, determine:
 - Appointment of members
 - Quarterly or alternate frequency of meetings


David Lightner/Susan Healy Keene
Approved By
