



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

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CC - (1) Update on COVID-19's Impacts on the General Plan Update Community Engagement Plan; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.

Meeting Date: July 13, 2020

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Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒ **General Fund:** Yes ☐ No ☐

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☐ **Attachments:** ☒

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council 06/18/2020); Stay Informed - General Plan Update (06/12/2020)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (06/12/2020)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) receive an update on COVID-19's impacts on the General Plan Update Community Engagement Plan; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND

On May 19, 2020, City Council directed staff to provide an update on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the General Plan Update's (GPU) engagement plan, and how future activities will be modified. This staff report provides an overview of the GPU outreach activities completed to date and the future plans for engagement related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The GPU kicked off in September of 2019, and a significant amount of work has occurred as part of the GPU's Community Engagement Plan (Attachment 1), including:

- A City Council study session to discuss the vision and objectives of the GPU;
- Stakeholder interviews with approximately two dozen community leaders and organizations

(Attachment 2);

- Development of project branding, fact sheets, background information, and an interactive project website (www.pictureculvercity.com);
- Formation of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), with four meetings held to date;
- A “vision festival” public workshop attended by approximately 150 people (Attachment 3);
- An online “issues and opportunities” survey that has garnered over 250 responses;
- “Pop-up” workshops throughout the city at community events;
- Development of existing conditions reports by the consultant team; and
- Continuation of the speaker series.

DISCUSSION

The GPU outreach process to date has been well received by the community. Community members have been overwhelmingly supportive of the GPU process and very willing to express their ideas. The broad consensus that has emerged is that Culver City is unique and special - notable for its quality neighborhoods, sense of community, commitment to diversity and sustainability, and booming economy. The conversations have also identified significant challenges facing the community now and in the future, including the level of growth and fear of change, traffic congestion, housing affordability, sustainability, and equity. There are many shared values, but also significant differences in values among community members.

Approach to Engagement

In response to shelter-in-place orders resulting from the pandemic issued in mid-March, all in-person engagement related to the GPU stopped. City staff and the consultant team have revised the GPU engagement plan to include more online engagement activities.. The proposed approach for the remainder of 2020 is as follows:

- **Re-initiate engagement activities.** Renewed engagement activities will take place starting late June and continue into the fall.
- **Shift from in-person to online engagement and capitalize on new interactive tools.** While challenging, the COVID-19 pandemic is allowing the consultant to quickly develop a new toolbox of interactive online engagement activities that may reach broader and more diverse groups of Culver City residents. This may include use of short videos, more use of e-conferencing and e-forums.
- **Expand focus on critical topics.** The consultant team will focus on topics such as re-envisioning public spaces; transitioning older retail areas to a diverse mix of uses; addressing health, equity, social justice, and public safety; building quality housing for all income levels; and exploring issues more deeply related to the interaction of governance and equity.
- **Begin in-person engagement where feasible.** When appropriate, the consultant team will resume in-person activities starting with the GPAC, meeting with stakeholder groups, and pop-up workshops in the community.
- **Continue Culver City’s commitment to leadership and innovation.** The pandemic has presented the City with the opportunity to pursue innovative ways engage with its diverse community by re-envisioning the use of public spaces, building community resiliency, using the

General Plan as a tool to create new solutions to help the local economy rebound, and exploring new ways to address systemic issues of racial inequity.

Engagement Activities

Listening and Sharing (now through July 2020)

Over the next month, the GPU team will complete a phase of listening and sharing, designed to collect background information on opinions of residents includes the following:

- **Close the “issues and opportunities” (vision) survey.** The survey has been open since February to develop a preliminary vision and guiding principles.
- **Re-initiate the GPAC.** This will begin with virtual meetings on June 30th and July 9th. The June 30th meeting will include a discussion on housing and ways to address equity, policing, and public safety. The July 9th meeting will focus on economic development and arts and culture. GPAC meeting materials and summaries can be found at www.pictureculvercity.com/advisory-bodies.
- **Create topic-specific educational videos and micro-surveys.** This educational video series will present the community, the GPAC, and decision-makers background information about existing conditions in Culver City. These focused virtual presentations led by the consultant team will highlight existing conditions in Culver City and policy questions related to each topic. Videos will be released weekly throughout the summer, paired with micro-surveys related to each topic. The videos are a summary of existing conditions reports on various topics prepared by the consultant team. The first video concerns the topic of existing Culver City economic conditions, based on the findings of the Socio-economic Profile and Market Analysis Existing Conditions Report (Attachment 4). The video, micro-survey, and report on existing economic conditions are available at www.pictureculvercity.com/existing-conditions. Upcoming videos include housing, arts and culture, and mobility, among others.
- **Release existing conditions reports.** These reports are being prepared by the consultant team to develop a baseline understanding of the existing conditions in Culver City. The baseline information presented in these reports, and in the accompanying video series, will be used to develop land use and policy alternatives for the GPU. The existing conditions reports will be posted online, as they are completed, at www.pictureculvercity.com/resources and www.pictureculvercity.com/existing-conditions.
- **Share a planning library.** The GPU team pulled together videos, articles, podcasts, and other media as a resource to help the community learn more about different types of ideas and strategies that the field of city planning touches on. Some of these present ideas that can be incorporated into the GPU, and others present ideas that can be implemented through policies and programs. The library is at www.pictureculvercity.com/planning-library.
- **Continue Speaker Series.** The project team plans to restart the Speaker Series virtually in July. The July event is planned to feature a representative from Gehl who will provide a virtual talk on public spaces and how we can enjoy them safely in a time of physical distancing. Until then, videos and summaries of past events are at www.culvercity.org/speakerseries. Most of the new Speaker Series events will be at little or no cost to address the City’s budgetary constraints.

On June 12, 2020, a notice went out to inform the community of the upcoming engagement opportunities during this period (Attachment 5).

Visioning (July through September 2020)

Based on input from the visioning festival held in February, the “issues and opportunities” survey, the work of the GPAC, the GPU team will draft a draft vision statement and guiding principles for review by the public. The team will also start work on identifying areas where new development may occur in the future. The following activities will occur:

- **Vision, core values, and guiding principles survey.** The GPU team will launch an online survey to obtain feedback on the vision and guiding principles and ask participants to prioritize issues in the community.
- **Online interactive mapping exercise.** An online map-based survey will focus on identifying locations for future change or improvement and areas to be preserved. This will help the team develop alternatives for the General Plan.
- **(re)Vision post COVID-19 contest.** The GPU team will tap into the creativity of the Culver City community by soliciting an open call for bold ideas for a post-COVID future. The activity will be called “(re)Vision Post COVID-19.” In addition to conversations with the GPAC, there will be two discrete activities. The first involves brainstorming with the design community to share their ideas. The second will be a community “competition” to generate ideas about how the Culver City could be transformed because of the pandemic. This “competition” will be an open call for submissions from people of all ages and backgrounds. Participants can submit ideas in their preferred form of media, including drawings, collages, photos, diagrams, poems, narrative text, digital content, videos, or any other form of media. When it is safe to host large gatherings, the City can host an “Ideas Festival” that brings together the participants and the community to share ideas.
- **Virtual attendance at neighborhood/organization meetings.** City staff will attend meetings of Culver City neighborhood groups and organizations as requested and per availability.
- **Begin virtual Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings.** In keeping with the schedule and scope of work, the consultant will initiate the TAC process to bring together experts on topics of critical importance. TAC members will be drawn from the GPAC, names provided by the City Council and others identified through the engagement process. It is expected there will be five TACs, which will be topic-specific and meet approximately three times each during the GPU process. To address the urgent topic of equity, one upcoming TAC will concern how to best address policing and equity in the General Plan.

Alternatives Development (September through December 2020)

The engagement for this phase is less developed due to unknowns related to holding in-person meetings. The purpose of this phase will be to create draft alternatives for land use and development, building design and character, circulation, and the public realm. This phase will close with a joint City Council and Planning Commission study session to give direction for a preferred alternative. Activities will likely include:

- Area-specific interactive design charrettes to develop alternatives;
- Webinars and online videos to review the alternatives;
- Virtual meetings with neighborhood groups and organizations in the community;
- Continued meetings with the GPAC to develop, analyze and review the alternatives; and

- Online surveys to obtain feedback from the public on the alternatives.

GPU engagement during uncertain times

Now more the ever is the right time to plan for the future and change and there is enormous potential to create tangible change in Culver City through the GPU. Continuing the GPU process now presents many opportunities and benefits, including:

- Planning for a robust economic recovery from the pandemic;
- Continuing project momentum and building public buy-in of the General Plan;
- Trying innovative methods of community engagement to reach stakeholders that may not have otherwise been reached;
- Daylighting planning work that would not otherwise be widely viewed by the public, such as existing conditions reports; and
- Engaging the community on critical questions that have arisen from these crises.

Equitable engagement

Canceling or postponing in-person engagement leads to critical questions. How is it possible to ensure participation is representative of Culver City's diversity? How can we reach traditionally hard to reach populations, such as youth, non-English speaking residents and lower wage earners? The engagement plan includes the following key activities, among others, to ensure inclusive participation:

- Creation of a communications network of critical stakeholders in traditionally marginalized communities who will help the GPU team spread the word about the project;
- Distribution of paper surveys and General Plan materials to local service organizations to engage people who have little to no access to online tools; and
- Hosting virtual meetings with neighborhood and community-based organizations.

Questions for City Council

The consultant team asks Council Members to consider the following important questions in preparation for the City Council meeting on June 22, 2020:

- Do you have any suggestions for the engagement strategy?
- What is the best way to reach the community during this time?
- How can the City leverage the General Plan to address the most critical issues facing the City that have evolved over the past several months?

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact associated with the discussion of this item. All engagement activities contemplated in this report are included in the GPU approved budget.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2020-07-13_ATT_Existing GPU Community Engagement Plan
2. 2020-07-13_ATT_Stakeholder Interviews Summary
3. 2020-07-13_ATT_Community Visioning Workshop Summary
4. 2020-07-13_ATT_Socio-economic Profile and Market Analysis Existing Conditions Report
5. 2020-07-13_ATT_GovDelivery GPU Engagement Notice

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Receive an update on and discuss COVID-19's impacts on the General Plan Update Community Engagement Plan; and
2. Provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.