

July 9, 2018

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Continued discussion of initiation of the Neighborhood Area Planning Program.

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POLICY ISSUES

The Council has identified the strategic implementation of the neighborhood planning process as one of its 3-year priorities for 2018 – 2020.

Initiation of the neighborhood area planning program is consistent with Comprehensive Plan guidance as described in the Neighborhoods Element, which includes policy guidance for the preparation of neighborhood area plans.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



Direction being requested from Council tonight includes:

1. Whether to move forward with initiation of the proposed neighborhood planning program presented at the May 29 Council study session and refined based on comments provided by the Council on May 29 and by neighborhood leaders at the June 12 neighborhood leaders forum; and
2. Whether to bring forward at a future study session options for an approach to sequencing future neighborhood area plans, including potential evaluation criteria.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

At the Council's May 29 study session staff presented a high-level introduction to the proposed neighborhood area planning program, including a description of the proposed work program, public engagement process, plan contents, and framework provided by the vision, goals and policies in the City's Comprehensive Plan. As described, major features of the proposed planning process include:

- One-year planning process, with the majority of the public engagement process organized around the traditional school year;
- Preparation of two plans per year;
- An organic planning process shaped by the interests, priorities and ideas identified by those who live and work in the neighborhood area;

- Engagement methods that are inclusive, accessible and welcoming – including formal and informal activities at times and days that work for participants, intentional outreach to those who have been historically under-represented, activities in schools, an interactive website and use of storytelling, photography and other creative measures to engage people; and
- Plans that are action-oriented and strategically focused on neighborhood priorities.

During the study session discussion, Councilmembers generally spoke in support of launching the neighborhood area planning program and identified comments and questions for staff follow-up. Comments were focused around three major topic areas – public engagement, plan content and planning process. Responses to all comments are included in Attachment A and briefly summarized below.

Public engagement. Council comments addressed the following themes: (1) be as inclusive as possible; (2) document and use contact information to ensure that participants are informed throughout the process; (3) engage with local businesses as well as residents; (4) recognize that interests and issues may cross neighborhood boundaries; and (5) promote leadership skills throughout the process.

Staff response: Guidance provided in the comments will be incorporated into the public engagement process for neighborhood area planning.

Plan content. Council comments addressed inclusion of (1) a qualitative identity statement as part of the community profile; (2) one or more vision statements depending on the diversity of perspectives in the neighborhood area; (3) flexibility to consider follow-up actions in the Comprehensive Plan or Land Use Code; and (4) possible issues that could be considered in the neighborhood plans.

Staff response: Identity and vision statements will be included in each neighborhood plan and diverse perspectives will be recognized and incorporated into both. Issue identification in each neighborhood area will be informed by the neighborhood input, neighborhood data, and goals and policies in the existing plan. Each neighborhood will identify the highest priority issues for further consideration.

With respect to comprehensive plan and regulatory flexibility, the City's fundamental vision and direction as expressed in the City Council's vision and the Comprehensive Plan provide a framework and guide that should not vary between neighborhood areas. This includes:

- *Values of stewardship, innovation, and integrity;*
- *Vision: we welcome the world, diversity is our strength, we embrace the future while respecting our past;*
- *Comprehensive Plan vision, including the following themes: diverse and vibrant neighborhoods, meeting the housing needs of a diverse population, reliable and predictable transportation system, hub for global business and innovation, stewardship of the environment, active and engaged citizenry; a community that cares; "city in a park";*
- *Citywide growth strategy as established in the Comprehensive Plan; and*
- *Standards for provision of basic City services, such as for transportation, parks, utilities, police, fire and other basic City services.*

Within this framework, potential plan or regulatory changes may be appropriate. An example of this type of change could include a plan amendment to reflect a neighborhood area decision

related to detached accessory dwelling units, environmental stewardship or other similar neighborhood-focused topic.

Planning process. Council comments addressed (1) whether to combine areas or issues so that needs can be addressed more quickly; and (2) whether to invite City Council and Planning Commission members to outreach events.

Staff response: The proposed schedule of two plans per year is intended to provide a balance that allows for inclusive and meaningful participation while moving as quickly and efficiently as possible.

On average, neighborhood areas have a population of about 9,000, rising to 17,000 persons in the largest area. Combining neighborhood areas with relatively large population or geographic area would likely require additional time to allow for full engagement and to address a larger range of interests.

There will also continue to be multiple ways for neighborhoods to engage with the City as neighborhood planning is proceeding – including programs through Community Development, Parks and Human Services, Transportation, and other departments. The neighborhood planning program will work with all City departments in an integrated manner to support responsiveness to neighborhood needs whether through neighborhood area planning or other programs.

Regarding City Council and Planning Commission participation in outreach events, the Council discussion noted that the presence of elected or appointed officials can change the character of the discussion and may distract from the organic neighborhood-based process that is proposed. For these reasons, staff recommends regular briefings to share status and progress, direction and issues to the Council and Commission rather than direct participation in events. Specific meetings that would be most informative and conducive for Council or Commission participation could also be identified.

June 12 Neighborhood Leaders Forum

On June 12, a neighborhood leaders' forum was held at City Hall. This meeting was publicized through the City's email list of neighborhood leaders (defined as anyone who is interested in the future of their neighborhood), NextDoor, Its Your City newsletter, Neighborhood News, a City press release, and the project website. About 40 people attended this forum, providing comments and feedback on neighborhood issues, the proposed neighborhood planning process, public engagement and other suggestions and words of advice.

Participants used neighborhood area posters to write and illustrate the distinctive and emerging issues in their neighborhood areas and to share their observations with the whole group. Following a presentation that provided an overview of the proposed neighborhood area planning process, participants engaged in wide-ranging discussion that include suggestions, questions and advice for the proposed process. The conversation was positive, with many suggestions and ideas for enhancing the process. Major themes included:

- **Public engagement** – reach out to youth through schools (public and private), meet at schools, provide a variety of venues and times for meetings, reach out to neighborhood associations and faith-based organizations, be inclusive in outreach (people and languages), provide childcare at meetings, invite people to share their stories, jump-start the process through community events through the summer, use social media and other methods for outreach, make sure that time and effort by participants is meaningful
- **Planning process** – distill down comprehensive plan and investments in each neighborhood area, create a kick-off packet, put together information from existing plans, remember that existing plans provide a good foundation to build from, consider opportunities for shared training around common issues
- **Sequence of neighborhood areas** – consider selecting two neighborhood areas with a shared boundary, consider selecting two neighborhood areas that are inherently dependent on each other, consider which neighborhood area is facing the most urgent issues, don't lose distinct character of neighborhood area by grouping together and forcing solutions that don't fit the neighborhood

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to move forward with initiating the neighborhood planning program and to bring back to Council options for an approach to sequencing future neighborhood area plans, including potential evaluation criteria
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

RECOMMENDATION

Option 1

ATTACHMENT(S)

A. Council Comments

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N/A