



REPORT TO COUNCIL

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City of Sacramento
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STAFF REPORT
March 21, 2006

Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

Subject: Pilot Project on Form Based Codes (M05-021)

Location/Council District: City-wide

Recommendation:

Review and approve the components of a pilot project to apply form based codes in specific contexts in the City. Direct staff to solicit applications from interested neighborhood and community groups and land owners to participate in the pilot and ongoing application of form based codes.

Contacts: Gary Stonehouse, Consultant, 808-5567; Jim McDonald, Senior Planner, 808-2023

Presenters: Gary Stonehouse

Department: Development Services

Division: Planning

Organization No. 4821

Summary:

Staff is recommending a pilot project to test the application of form based zoning in a variety of contexts. Staff is recommending a process that would allow interested groups to petition the council to participate in the pilot or ongoing form based zoning programs.

Committee/Commission Action:

None. An informational report on form based codes was presented to the Planning Commission last year.

Background Information:

Last summer, at the Mayor's request, we arranged for Paul Crawford from the planning consulting firm of Crawford, Multari, and Clark to give a presentation on Form Based Codes. The Council and the City Manager have encouraged us to propose how we might use form based zoning in the City of Sacramento. On September 24th, Planning

staff hosted a community meeting to discuss the next steps in the program we are recommending.

Form based zoning differs from conventional zoning (use based zoning) in that it emphasizes the form, character and shapes of the buildings as they relate to streets and public spaces. Part of the form based code program is to involve stakeholders in the creation of the code through public workshops and charrettes. Form based codes use drawings and other graphics to show the scale, location and character of a development.

Our expert consultants (Paul Crawford and Laura Hall of Fischer Hall) have advised us that form based zoning can be applied and implemented differently in different contexts. It is easier to implement form based zoning in an area where there is consensus about the future plan for the area. It is often easier to implement form based zoning in a green field context (because there may be fewer stakeholders) than for infill projects.

Form based zoning can be used to transition an area from one development type to another (e.g. from a commercial corridor to a mixed use corridor). Form based codes can be used to stop the transition from one type of development to another (e.g. to preserve the essential qualities of our classic neighborhoods).

We anticipate form based coding as one tool in implementing the new General Plan now in preparation, both as a transition tool and as a preservation tool. We think it will be useful in achieving the General Plan goals of implementing the SACOG Blueprint and being "the most livable city in the nation." Other tools that may be available to implement the General Plan include: a comprehensive development code update, policies on urban form, and direction for new street, park, and utility design standards.

Currently, the City has included form based code products in work being done for the Swanston Station Area Plan, the Docks, and for the Midtown Transition area.

The Pilot Program

Context

We are recommending a pilot program to test form based zoning in a variety of contexts. The program has four objectives:

1. Test form based zoning in several contexts and to develop the City's template for form based zoning. It is important that the City become experienced with form based codes and establish a common template and vocabulary so that the future application and administration of the codes can be efficient and effective.
2. Develop city-wide contexts for the General Plan.
3. To consider changes to the existing Zoning Code based upon lessons from form based processes.
4. To establish connections between form based zoning and the Matrix project.

Pilot Area Criteria

Staff and Paul Crawford suggest the following types of areas for pilot program application.

- Traditional Neighborhoods
- Sub Urban Neighborhoods
- Greenfields
- Commercial corridors
- Transit Station Areas
- Downtown
- Brownfields

Additionally the following factors should be considered when selecting pilot sites:

- Community Support
- Diversity of locations
- Cost/resources (does a vision exist for this location or does it have to be developed as part of the pilot project?)
- Urgency
- Uncomplicated site
- Adjacent conditions

In several cases, (infill, commercial corridors, and preservation areas) the success of a possible pilot project might depend on the interest and objectives of the local neighbors and other stakeholders. We are recommending, therefore, that the Council direct staff to solicit applications from neighborhood areas that might want to participate in either the pilot or subsequent follow up programs.

Our model for this is the City's traffic calming program with an application process, a stakeholder process and a determination of consensus at the end. As part of the application process, the Council can determine which areas to select based upon the willingness and ability of the area to participate and the objectives they hope to achieve.

Our experts tell us that a pilot area might be as small as two blocks long on both sides of the street.

Financial Considerations:

Our consultant has informally advised us that a typical small-scale application of form based codes, including the stakeholder participation phase, would cost approximately \$60,000. Smaller scale efforts or efforts where staff and citizens perform some of the work could be less expensive. Initial funding for the current fiscal year in the amount of \$60,000 has been identified and will come from Administrative Contingency in the General Fund.

Environmental Considerations:

This program is not a project under CEQA. The adoption of new codes created by this program will undergo environmental review.

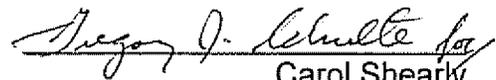
Policy Considerations:

The City would like to test the application of form based codes in a variety of situations. This proposal is consistent with adopted smart growth principles including: promote distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place, foster walkable, close-knit neighborhoods, encourage citizen and stakeholder participation, and make development decision predictable, fair and cost effective.

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD):

None

Respectfully Submitted by:


Carol Shearly
Director of Planning

Recommendation Approved


RAY KERRIDGE
City Manager

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