



Staff Report

File #: REPORT 17-0616, Version: 1

**Honorable Mayor and Members of the Hermosa Beach City Council
Regular Meeting of October 10, 2017**

**UPDATE ON THE CITY COUNCIL'S DOWNTOWN SUBCOMMITTEE
AND "DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT PLAN"**

(Assistant to the City Manager Nico De Anda-Scaia)

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends that City Council:

1. Receive and file staff's update on the subcommittee's proposed "Downtown Enhancement Plan";
2. Discuss and provide general direction or affirmation on the subcommittee's approach, priorities and strategies for improving the general environment of - and enhancing City operations associated with - the downtown district; and
3. Affirm the Planning Commission's recommended modification to the Conditional Use Permit review process.

Background:

The City's downtown district has seen many changes throughout its history. Currently, the high concentration of several late-night alcohol establishments located on Pier Plaza brings large numbers of people to the area on a nightly basis. Weekends bring even larger crowds, creating a significant strain on City resources to maintain public safety and quality of life - including ensuring local ordinances such as "no smoking" and "no drinking in public" are consistently enforced.

The Downtown Subcommittee was established in November 2016 after a high profile incident occurred on the plaza that resulted in injury to three Hermosa Beach Police Officers. Following that incident, a security company was brought in to supplement the police presence on the plaza. The incident highlighted the finite number of City employees available to interact with and control the often rowdy and intoxicated patrons regularly found in the downtown area during late night hours. A more comprehensive solution needed to be developed, so the Subcommittee has embarked on a review of prior strategies employed downtown and is tasked with identifying and expanding what works, developing new ideas and strategies to enhance the environment and leveraging technology where appropriate to assist with enhancing safety and security.

The downtown district is the heart of Hermosa Beach and should be enhanced so that it becomes a more attractive, safe and welcoming focal point for all patrons. The area should be a place that allows a diversity of groups to mutually co-exist - not a place that is dominated by one group at the expense of another, and future development should maintain a seamless transition between daytime uses, family-oriented events and ensuring nighttime activities are enjoyed in a manner compatible with the area. It is the subcommittee's opinion that the betterment of the downtown *in all aspects* will

reflect positively on the quality of life in the community as a whole.

Analysis:

To achieve these qualities, the Downtown Subcommittee has drawn from the City's past Sociable City assessment (Responsible Hospitality Institute, 2014), Downtown Core Revitalization Strategy (Roma Design Group, 2014) and Late Night Action Plan (2012) in proposing a comprehensive four-pronged strategy for improving the downtown's overall environment and mitigating negative impacts of late night activities. The following is a summary of the subcommittee's initial strategies for the downtown (outlined herein as 'Tracks'), which include a combination of data collection, application of available legislative tools, smart deployment of resources, and public realm/environmental design improvements. To this end, the sections below list past and present efforts associated with improving the environment, safety and general ambiance of the City's downtown - seeking policy clarification and direction on key strategies as necessary.

TRACK 1: Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) (*Public Realm Design*)

This initiative centers on the importance of the built and maintained environment in shaping public attitudes and local behaviors. Through the enhancement of design components such as beautification elements, lighting, cleanliness and overall landscape of key areas, cities have shown the ability to curb negative behaviors of patrons (reduce opportunities for criminal activity) while creating an atmosphere that is inviting to a broader range of visitors and potential businesses.

As an example, in 2010, the City invested in improvements to upper Pier Avenue that have had significant benefits on the character, quality and business make-up of that corridor. In order to nurture positive change in our more central downtown core, the City should take a more targeted/deliberate approach to enhancing the public realm in the downtown core.

Lighting

The Subcommittee has identified the need for new lighting in the downtown area to increase safety and security, as well as to enhance the ambiance of the district in order to create a more inviting atmosphere and stimulate economic growth. A complete lighting overhaul of the existing downtown lighting scheme is necessary to correct for current deficiencies. Some of these strategies include:

- Enhanced and appropriate downtown lighting and visibility - safety/security (Pier Plaza, Downtown Parking Lots, Beach Drive, The Strand and Pier, Hermosa Avenue).
- Integration of aesthetic lighting (extension of string lights across Hermosa Ave.)
- Partnership with downtown businesses to ensure additional/adequate lighting behind private establishments.
- Automate safety/security lighting (e.g. Pier Plaza flood lighting on a timer).

Cleanliness

- Review of cleaning schedule/Athens contract (assess efficiencies, porter system w/ equitable pricing structure, etc.).
- Modify street sweeping cleaning schedules (2:30am cleaning of Pier Plaza).
- Increase power washing of Plaza, Strand and parking lots.
- Reinstitute porter service (parking lot compactor).
- Hiring additional 'ambiance ambassadors' for improving consistent cleanliness of downtown

areas.

Sustainability and Conservation

- Parking Lot D Improvement Project
- Healthy Air Hermosa: *maintaining high quality outdoor and public spaces in Hermosa Beach through the Healthy Air Hermosa program, and/or subsequent programs which aim to reducing cigarette smoke and litter.*

Parking

- Explore linking parking strategies being studied for Coastal Zone Parking Management Study and Downtown Revitalization with objectives of the Downtown Enhancement Plan.
- Implementation of Demand-based parking strategies (i.e. reduced rates in lots, increased night-time rates throughout downtown).
- Real-time parking supply signage added to major City lots/structures to improve circulation and access to the beach and The Strand.
- Phase 3 parking meter technology upgrades.

Additional Public Realm Improvements

- Increased way-finding signage for public restrooms in downtown.
- Coordination with rideshare companies; explore designated drop-off/pick-up locations similar to LAX.
- Downtown public restroom improvements.
- Plaza built-environment renewal (consider: artificial grass spaces/tiles, public art installations, fountain, mobile library, kiosks, child-friendly structures, outdoor seating, etc.).
- Continued downtown enhancements (i.e. trash bin receptacles, tree grates, light posts, way-finding signage, etc.).
- Special paving or painted crosswalk at the Pier Ave/Hermosa Ave Intersection.
- Repaving of parking lots A and B.

TRACK 2: Enhanced Enforcement Presence/Prevention through Education

Although enforcement alone has proven not to deter negative behaviors in the long-run, it remains a critical component of any effective strategy for setting acceptable standards of behavior, changing perceptions of community safety and promoting a welcoming atmosphere.

Public Safety

- Circulating designated HBPD officers more effectively throughout the downtown for proactive/targeted policing. PD bicycle patrols, training and deployment.
- PD to explore further operational/enforcement opportunities with multi-jurisdictional task forces.
- Contracting with neighboring/regional law enforcement agencies for additional downtown support such as coordination of regular DUI checkpoints.
- Utilization of smart surveillance technology and communication systems to improve crime prevention and inform the community regarding actions to take in case of an emergency.
- Renovation of office area in Municipal Parking Structure to serve as a downtown sub-station.
- 'Shoulder Tap' program/ABC grant (detection/deterrence of alcohol sales to minors).

- Set standard for consistent restaurant/bar security uniforms on the Plaza.
- Evaluate and modify private security plans for establishments (PD to create/provide a standard security plan for businesses who haven't implemented these).
- Tracking of 'over-serving', occupancy loads and other violations at downtown establishments.
- Crime reporting: tying incidents to establishments of origin.

Code Enforcement

- Ramped-up Enforcement: open containers, smoking, public intoxication, trash behind businesses, urination, noise and other violations.
- Explore expansion of CSO responsibilities (without reducing parking enforcement and other responsibilities).
- Enhanced cross-training for staff across departments (PC 832 Training).
- ABC training workshop for employees of alcohol-serving establishments.

Homelessness

- Mental Health Evaluation Team (Partnership between cities of HB, MB, RB).
- Regional PATH services funded through FY2017/18.
- Ongoing partnership with LA County on County Homeless Strategy, annual homeless counts and other programs.
- 'Home for Good' Homeless Prevention and Strategic Planning Grant.

TRACK 3: Land Use/Economic Vitality and Incentives

Diversifying Uses Downtown

As Hermosa Beach has matured as a community, the downtown has evolved as well. Still, the downtown businesses do not serve a broad cross-section of the population and provide less in the way of diverse retail and fine dining than would be expected, given the demographics of the community and the high quality assets of the area. Within the downtown as a whole as well as within the core, there is a need to increase the day-time population to add life and vitality that goes beyond the typical recreationally-oriented uses that have been historically attracted to the beach setting of Hermosa Beach (Downtown Core Revitalization Strategy, 2014). The Subcommittee recognizes the need to balance visitor-serving and local-serving uses as a key to preserving character and the economic vitality of the community.

- Fostering/encouraging retention and attraction of a greater diversity of business uses downtown (e.g. Updated parking standards/requirements,
- Develop plans and programs for underutilized spaces, such as vacant buildings, utility corridors, parkways, etc., for temporary retail, restaurant, and community-promoting uses (e.g. pop-up art gallery).
- Strategic community event scheduling to attract desired demographic. Arts and cultural activities focused in and around the Downtown, Farmer's Market, etc.
- Enhance the area's role as a visitor destination by facilitating catalyst projects, such as boutique hotels that provide specific benefits to the community.

Short Term Entertainment Permit (STEP)*

A need has been identified for incentivizing diverse entertainment options in the City that are both a desirable public benefit and present no-to-low impact on city resources, residents and the business

community. *THRIVE* Hermosa - a community based organization designed to utilize and activate local talent and resources - has approached City staff with a proposal for a six-month pilot program aimed at facilitating and simplifying the permitting process for desirable “low impact” entertainment options for local businesses in the downtown.

Via an affordable, easy-to-understand and streamlined permit - along with recommendations for improving the website and revising the HBMC - the ultimate goal of STEP is to help create a more vibrant downtown while attracting visitors during what are typically non-peak/”slow” hours. Attachment 8 of this report outlines STEP in detail.

**The City’s Community Development Department is in the process of vetting this proposal. If viable as presented, the recommendations will then need to be considered by the Planning Commission.*

TRACK 4: Compliance Mechanisms/Legislative Tools

Late night alcohol serving and live entertainment businesses are required to obtain a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), and to operate in compliance with the conditions of their CUP which are intended to ensure compatibility with the downtown district and mitigate adverse impacts. The Planning Commission conducts periodic reviews of all Late Night Establishment (LNE) CUPs, and based on review of crime, code enforcement and incident data, the Commission may hold hearings to consider modifying or revoking a CUP to resolve problems, based on evidence of violations of CUP conditions, violations of ABC law, violations of the HBMC, or evidence of adverse impacts indicative of a lack of adequate management and security. The Planning Commission established a bi-annual CUP review approach and policy, approved by City Council in 2011, and following its July 18th meeting is recommending increasing these periodic reviews from two to three times a year, and including more data collection and evaluation of responsible alcohol beverage service as an indicator in the CUP review process. Attachments 9 & 10 of this report delineate the modifications that are being recommended by the Planning Commission for the process and standards of review for on-sale alcoholic beverage Conditional Use Permits. Council is being asked to review these and affirm the recommended modifications.

Additional possible legislative tools and compliance approaches for curbing negative impacts in the downtown may include, but are not limited to:

- Setting interior illumination standards for LNEs.
- Holding problem LNEs accountable for added security demands (requiring establishments that are responsible for 'extraordinary policing' demands to absorb these costs).
- Requiring standard ‘Security Plan’ with PD approval for downtown restaurants/bars (incorporate in CUPs).

Looking Ahead:

While some observers note that our downtown has improved gradually over time and Pier Plaza is a safer/better/more-pleasant destination than just five years ago, addressing the diverse and evolving needs of our community while leveraging finite municipal resources continues to be a struggle and requires a comprehensive strategy along with a consistent vision among our policy leaders.

This draft plan is therefore intended as a living document with the expectation that it will evolve as issues change in both gravity and priority throughout our downtown. Furthermore, as the business community and other stakeholders are ultimately engaged in this process, the City’s role may also

adjust as partnerships are formed to tackle some of these issues. It is therefore the subcommittee's intent to receive general feedback and affirmation from the City Council body on the broader scope/direction of these initial strategies prior to moving forward. The subcommittee and/or staff expect to return to Council with periodic updates of this plan as needed.

Immediate Next Steps:

Over the coming months, staff will be returning to Council for adoption of a revised Athens Contract (more-closely reflecting Council's feedback and priorities as a result of this meeting), and approval of a lighting design plan for the downtown by Environ Architecture, Inc. Following Council's input on the downtown lighting design plan, staff will move forward with the purchase and installation of lighting systems/structures.

For a status update on other completed, in-progress and ongoing projects associated with general downtown enhancement, please refer to the tracking document included as 'Attachment 3' to this report.

Financial Implications:

No immediate fiscal implications associated with the downtown enhancement plan update. Staff will return to Council with detailed financial information on individual projects requiring formal direction and approval by the Council body.

Attachments:

1. Downtown District/Core Area Map
2. Strategic Plan Goal 1 with Actions (2016)
3. Downtown Enhancement-Related Project Tracking Document
4. 'Sociable City' Evaluation of Nighttime Social Activity Report (2014)
5. Downtown Core Revitalization Strategy (2014)
6. Late Night Action Plan (Revised, 2017)
7. HBPD Downtown Plaza Business Guidelines (2017)
8. Short Term Entertainment Permit - THRIVE Hermosa
9. Process and Standards for Review of On-Sale Alcoholic Beverage Conditional Use Permits
10. Planning Commission CUP Review Process Staff Report (7/18/2017)
11. Written Communication from Robert Reiss

Respectfully Submitted by: Nico De Anda-Scaia, Assistant to the City Manager

Concur: Sharon Papa, Police Chief

Concur: Ken Robertson, Community Development Director

Approved: Sergio Gonzalez, City Manager