



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

August 20, 2020
Agenda Item No. 3

SUBJECT: Planning Commission Involvement with the Circulation Element Update (PA2017-141)

PLANNER: Jim Campbell, Deputy Community Development Director
jcampbell@newportbeachca.gov
949-644-3210

SUMMARY

The City is currently processing an update to its General Plan. Initially it was to be a comprehensive update with the entire General Plan being evaluated and updated as necessary. However, due to an October 2021 deadline for adoption of the Housing Element for the next 8-year planning cycle (2021-2029), the effort shifted focus to the Housing, Land Use, and Circulation Elements. Incorporating Environmental Justice policies is also a priority due to newer requirements of State General Plan law. The remainder of the elements would be taken up on a delayed and parallel track or they would be completed after the Housing Element.

In order to provide a public forum for this effort, the City Council created a ten-member Housing Element Update Advisory Committee (HEUAC). Given the centralized focus of the HEUAC on the Housing Element, the City intends to use the Planning Commission as the deliberative body to guide the Circulation Element update. When placed on an agenda, the meetings will serve as one of several ways the public can participate in the discussion of community transportation and circulation issues.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Review and provide input to staff; and
- 2) Determine this activity is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3 because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

INTENTIONALLY BLANK PAGE

DISCUSSION

In early 2019, the City Council initiated a comprehensive General Plan update. The City also created a General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC) to guide the effort. Kearns & West was the consultant selected to assist the City in conducting meaningful outreach to the community. The City conducted a community launch event in the fall of 2019, and then followed up with seven community workshops, one in each Council district. During the process, the City received its draft Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). The high draft RHNA of 4,832 units immediately changed the focus of the outreach effort toward housing. The City supports legislative changes to ease the process and is preparing an appeal of the allocation. Despite these efforts, the City must move ahead and plan for the RHNA allocation.

In recognition of the mandate to plan for the RHNA allocation through the Housing by the October 2021 deadline, the City Council reduced the scope of the comprehensive update to focus on housing, land use, circulation and environment justice policies. To that end, the City Council appointed a Housing Element Update Advisory Committee (HEUAC) to carry on the effort started by the GPUSC. Upon formation of the HEUAC, the GPUSC was dissolved.

The HEUAC's responsibility is to ensure sufficient public outreach, guide the selection of necessary consultants and provide guidance on goals and policies related to the update of the Housing, Land Use, Circulation Elements, and any other Elements deemed necessary by the Committee or City Council. While the Circulation Element is within HEUAC's responsibility, the Committee was formed with members of the community who have specialized and extensive knowledge of housing. In addition, given the expedited timeline for compliance with the State's mandated October 2021 deadline, the focus of the HEUAC needs to be narrowed to housing issues.

Current Status

At this time, the HEUAC is focusing on identifying an adequate number of qualified sites for the required Housing Opportunity Sites Inventory. This inventory is of utmost importance, as it demonstrates compliance with planning for the requisite RHNA allocation. Four subcommittees have been formed to help identify sites, to help shape the outreach program, and to discuss the intricacies and feasibility of affordable housing development.

In order to facilitate an efficient parallel track for the Circulation Element update, the City intends to use the Planning Commission (Commission) to assist and guide the update effort. The HEUAC will create a unified approach for outreach and public engagement. When the HEUAC approves the outreach plan, Staff will transmit it to the Commission for review. The Commission will be tasked with discussing and guiding policy changes related to transportation and circulation within a public forum, after reviewing the feedback

from the community through outreach effort. Kearns & West will facilitate the community outreach with staff with oversight from the HEUAC. The hope is that we can reach broad segments of the community and solicit meaningful feedback.

Circulation Element Overview and Update

As put best by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), "the circulation element is not simply a transportation plan, but rather a strategy addressing infrastructure needs for the circulation of people, goods, energy, water, sewage, storm drainage, and communications." State law requires the circulation element to correlate with the land use element hence the Planning Commission is an appropriate body to guide the update.

The City's Circulation Element was last updated in 2006. Much has changed since then not only with state law, but with mobility in general. By way of example, there is an emerging use of alternative transportation solutions such as carshare, rideshare, and bikeshare services, as well as increasing planning for future autonomous vehicles.

On the legislative front, the City must prepare updates to comply with the Complete Streets Act, which helps to ensure circulation systems are all-inclusive and thoughtfully planned for all modes of transit. Other considerations for the update include the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32), SB 32, and the Sustainable Community and Climate Protection Act (SB 375) with completion of Sustainable Communities Strategies, CEQA streamlining for infill projects (SB 226), and the shift in CEQA transportation metric away from level-of-service (LOS) to vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) (SB 743). As part of the Circulation Element, the City Master Plan of Streets and Highways will be reviewed for consistency with the County Master Plan of Arterial Highways.

As the City moves towards the update, the Commission will help guide the discussion and deliberate with the community on what goals and policies should or should not be included. The work of the HEUAC will help to shape the outreach plan that supplements the work at future Planning Commission meetings.

The City has retained a consultant team consisting of Kimley-Horn & Associates, LSA, and Urban Crossroads to prepare the Circulation Element update. They will also be involved in the traffic and transportation analysis prepared for an environmental impact report (EIR) for the entire update. Anthony Petros, a Principal and transportation planner with LSA and Tony Brine, City Traffic Engineer, will be the Circulation Element project managers but will remain in close coordination with Community Development staff. Mr. Petros has prepared a draft "white paper" that provides an outline of possible topics and issues for inclusion in an updated Circulation Element (Attachment No. PC 1). The document is a draft and it does not limit the issues that might be examined within the update. The City intends to hold a series of virtual workshops and surveys over the next few months to collect information to guide the update.

Environmental Review

No action is required by the Planning Commission regarding this agenda item and as a result, it is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

The City has contracted with Kimley-Horn to prepare an EIR in accordance with the CEQA for the focused update of the Housing, Land Use, Circulation Elements including environmental justice policies.

Public Notice

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Planning Commission considers the item). Additionally, staff sent an email alert to those individuals who have signed up for the service.

Prepared and Submitted by:



Jim Campbell
Deputy Community Development Director

ATTACHMENTS

PC 1 Draft Circulation Element Update Issues White Paper