PLANNING COMMISSION
INFILL INCENTIVE DISTRICT SUBCOMMITTEE
Monday June 17, 2013, 6:00 P.M.
Basement Room C
201 N. Stone Ave
Tucson, Arizona 85701

Legal Action Report

1. Roll Call

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Rex at 6:00 p.m.

Present:

Catherine Rex, Chairman	PC, Ward 5
Thomas Sayler-Brown	PC, Mayor's Office
Ruth Beeker	PC, Ward 6

Staff Members Present:

Jim Mazzocco, PDSD, Planning Administrator
Mark Castro, PDSD, Lead Planner
Joanne Hershenhorn, PDSD, Lead Planner
Belinda Flores-McCleese, PDSD, Administrative Assistant
Kristina Medina, PDSD, Administrative Assistant
Chris Kaselemis, City Manager's Office, Economic Initiatives Program Director
Anna Sanchez, HCD, Community Services Administrator

2. Proposed Downtown Gateway Redevelopment Plan (DGRP)

Anna Sanchez (COT Housing and Community Development Department) provided an overview of the Downtown Gateway Redevelopment Area (DGRA) and the Downtown Gateway Redevelopment Plan (DGRP). The Mayor and Council adopted the DGRA on April 17, 2012. Per state law, after a Redevelopment Area has been adopted, a Redevelopment Plan (i.e., the DGRP) must be drafted for that area. Staff is working on the DGRP, and estimates it will be completed in 2014.

Also on April 17, 2012, the Mayor and Council adopted a Central Business District within the DGRA. A Central Business District must lie within the boundaries of an approved Redevelopment Area. Designation of an area as a Central Business District enables the use of an economic development tool called the Government Property Lease Excise Tax (GPLET).

Chris Kaselemis said the GPLET is a powerful tool that allows property taxes to be abated for up to eight years, if the government takes over a property and leases it back to the developers. This allows developers time to establish a positive cash flow and build up reserves. Jim Mazzocco said the GPLET is an economic tool that will not affect the Infill Incentive District (IID) revision process.

No action was taken.

3. Streetcar Land Use Plan

Linda Morales with the Planning Center summarized key components of the Streetcar Land Use Plan, which The Planning Center, Poster-Frost-Mirto, and several sub-consultants are working on. The intent is to recommend strategies to prepare suitable areas within a quarter-mile of the streetcar route for transit-oriented development.

The corridor has been divided into distinct "character areas." Plan components include an assessment of existing features, and land use plans and conditions, including the IID, parking, and streetscapes, along the streetcar corridor. Land use, zoning, implementation and financing strategies will be recommended.

The Planning Center is also working on a separate but related document, the Streetscape Design Manual, which will provide a template for streetscape improvements in the right-of-way along the streetcar route. It should be completed within the next 3-4 months.

Corky Poster with Poster-Frost-Mirto discussed the Downtown Links Overlay District (DLD), a proposed optional hybrid form-based code that would apply to an area largely within the IID. He proposed expanding the DLD boundaries to address zoning issues that constrain infill development opportunities; and recommended placing greater emphasis on the DLD design review process. One possibility being discussed is to incorporate the DLD, which has not been adopted by Mayor and Council, into the IID as a third subdistrict (in addition to the Downtown Core Subdistrict and Greater Infill Incentive Subdistrict).

No action was taken.

4. Discussion of M&C Direction of March 19, 2013

At their March 19, 2013 study session, the Mayor and Council directed staff to work with a Planning Commission subcommittee to publicly review the IID Modification of Development Regulations (MDR) process, and return to Mayor and Council with any recommended adjustments. Based on the verbatim minutes, Jim Mazzocco identified the following parameters for the Subcommittee's work:

- Give more prominence to neighborhood protection
- Clarify the role of any formal commitments between the owners/developers and neighbors
- Ensure the IID stays an incentive
- Provide an enhanced design review element
- Eliminate redundancy with other overlay zones/plans in the area, as practical
- Work with the Streetcar Land Use Plan consultant team to ensure consistency with that effort

Subcommittee members agreed these would be guiding principles, and any additional focus areas would be clearly identified as such.

No action was taken.

5. Recent projects approved in the Infill Incentive District

Commissioner Beeker pointed out that The District (a recently completed student housing project at 550 N. 5th Ave. that has been problematic for neighbors) had taken advantage of all the regulatory modifications available. Mr. Mazzocco noted that the District was the first large IID-MDR project to be completed in an established residential neighborhood, and there have been "lessons learned". An enhanced design review process, including input from more groups, and codified design mitigation requirements might help improve the MDR process and future outcomes.

No action was taken.

6. General Discussion

Subcommittee members directed staff to include the parameters identified in Item 4 as future agenda items, for detailed discussion and possible action.

No formal action was taken.

7. Call to the audience

Bill Ford (Feldman's Neighborhood Association or NA) provided copies of proposed "Development Transition Standards" to subcommittee members and staff, for consideration. He said stronger standards are needed to mitigate neighborhood impacts, and that the transition standards should address impacts that occur further out from the project, i.e., say one block, rather than just at the project's edge.

Jan Cervelli (Dean, UA College or Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture) commented on the number of plans and overlay zones in the downtown area, and expressed concern about the "big picture", i.e. what is downtown, what should it be, and are existing planning tools consistent with achieving that vision. Comprehensive input by all stakeholders is needed at the start of the design development process, rather than after the design has been 75% completed. Based on her experience with the Main Gate District Design Review Committee, the design development committee needs to have authority, rather than being just advisory, in order to have meaningful input and achieve successful outcomes.

Chris Gans (West University NA) said that IID projects have had negative impacts on neighborhood character, and that changes are needed so that future IID projects will benefit the surrounding neighborhood as well as the community. Also, recent student housing projects have been architecturally bland, and therefore have been lost opportunities to create something exciting for the community.

Jim Campbell (developer, eastern downtown properties near N. 4th Ave.) said problems with the District seem to be the key impetus for revisiting the IID MDR process, and that the District's problems are mostly operational. Things could have been done differently that would have resulted in better outcomes. He said the IID was intended to be an incentive tool to focus development in areas where it should occur, and, it has, in fact, done that. Downtown today is very different than it was in 2010 when the provisions of the IID were adopted. He's concerned that this process – the Subcommittee review of the MDR for recommended revisions - may undermine the main purpose of the IID, which is to provide incentives for development in and around the downtown area.

No action was taken.

8. Future meeting and field trip

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 1, 2013 at 6pm. The location is to be determined.

9. Agenda items for next meeting

Jim Mazzocco will work with the Chair and subcommittee members to come up with an agenda.

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.

S:\IID Revisions\Agendas and LAR\PCSC LAR draft 6-17-13revised.doc