

Wilson, Joyce A.

From: Wilson, Joyce A.
Sent: Wednesday, April 19, 2006 7:21 AM
To: 'mdeckert@pasodelnortegroup.org'
Cc: Adatao, Patricia D.; Hamlyn, Deborah G.; Lozano, Juliet; Firth, Sylvia B.
Subject: PDN/Downtown Plan Process
Importance: High

Myrna:

- 1 Per our discussion last Friday, here is a preliminary outline of those things I believe are critical to advancing the PDN Downtown Plan to the formal City Plan Commission/City Council plan amendment process. Without these items being addressed effectively, I believe it will be difficult to get this plan through the formal public process for approval without substantial changes and dilution of the purpose/intent.
- 2 I am rushing to get this to you this a.m. for your committee meeting, and have not had a chance to have Pat and/or Debbie comment and edit as they deem appropriate. Therefore we may be sending you an additional update later in the week. For now, these are the essential elements that need attention.
- 3 (1) This needs to become a City/PDN process - so there is a clearer partnership. Right now it is being driven by PDN and we are running behind it. Also, there need to be more voices in the community information/education process - as it is primarily a Bill Saunders/Myrna Deckert team - and I am concerned that folks will start focusing on individuals not the organization as the driver of the plan/changes. Need to enlarge the group/face of PDN for purposes of this plan.
- 4 (2) Communications. This is a clear weakness right now, as I discussed nearly two weeks ago. I've loaned our PIO for the short term to help you get this group organized and focused on a proactive messaging and information/public relations strategy. This is critical. You need to have resources devoted solely to this area for the next 60-90 days doing the following:
 - 5.1 -- What is the plan? Why this plan? Why is it good for El Paso? Why is the status quo not acceptable?
 - 5.2 -- Who are the key stakeholders? Who is most affected - pro and con? How to we engage those who are deemed to be losers so that they can see the win/win in this plan?
 - 5.3 -- How to we deal with the residential property owner/tenant and possible displacement? This is the most emotional aspect of the plan.
 - Rights and protections
 - Home ownership opportunities for tenants
 - No displacement until new housing in area available
 - Focus message on 'better' housing, not loss of housing. Get photos of marginal housing in this area and focus on the condition/availability of stock.
 - Create a vision of housing alternatives/options; mixed housing -- mixed income housing
 - Compare and contrast current v. proposed
 - Need an informational fact sheet for folks in this area (residents) as soon as possible. This will neutralize the rumors and folks preying on them and stirring up unnecessary anxiety and fear.
 - Need to get important leaders/stakeholders to the table to help. Bring in Carmen Felix and have her on the inside v. outside. Also La Fe and Housing Authority can help, as well as City housing staff.
 - Need to discern between stock worth salvaging v. that to be removed. We want to maintain some sort of identity/integrity of the original neighborhoods to the extent warranted and valuable.
 - 5.4 --Commercial impact. How do we deal with existing property owners and businesses? How do we address those businesses that are compatible with future plans and need to be maintained/sustained?
 - 5.4.1 Those that are not and need to be moved. What is the alternative/option to a buyout strategy only? How do we decipher strengths?
 - 5.4.2 -- Develop image of the type of business/retail environment we want. Make sure it is not sanitized so that there are no locals. How do we address the Korean merchants?

5.4.3

Other local merchants? Get them involved in the task force process. Get CBA to step up to the plate and help lead this effort. Need to figure out how to pacify these groups with options that are reasonably attractive.

5.5

-- Historic District. Focus on significant structures needing preservation. Get information on condition and status of some of the key architectural structures in the proposed district. Show folks how these buildings are being threatened by neglect. List owners. Put public pressure on these folks. Go into details/stories on each building - its history, how long it's been vacant, etc. etc. This will get positive attention from folks. The historic district should be about the El Paso story, heritage, etc. Preserving our past for the future generations to understand what El Paso was and is.

5.6

-- Redevelopment District. Similar focus to the Historic District above. Who are key property owners? What have they been doing with their properties over past 10 years or so. What is the current vacancy rate. Provide photos of conditions and make it graphic. Discuss incentives to encourage reinvestment/preservation/tear down and rebuild - whatever the alternatives are. Again, focus on the new vision but desanitize it so we don't get into the chain stores taking out the locals. Also, we may want to come up with a strategy for how we balance local business v. the national chains, i.e., San Antonio recently did something about this on the Riverwalk. May help us in the transition.

5.7

-- BiNational Art Walk. Not sure who is at the table on this, but you definitely need to have the right folks driving this, including SMG/Convention and Visitors Bureau, City Museum and Cultural Affairs staff, key leaders from the Art Foundation and Museum Advisory Boards, and representatives from Juarez and Mexican consulate who can help with the binational aspects. Also, I provided info on the arts district concept from Austin that may be useful here. This is possibly the most unifying aspect of the plan but also the most ambiguous in terms of definition. Get this as specific as possible as it can engage a segment that is likely critical to mobilizing support for the plan.

5.8

-- Convention Center/Arena. I'd downplay this as a longer term issue as it is probably the lightning rod for tax increases for folks. Need to have a coordinated analysis of this v. current convention center with a hotel needs assessment (which City is doing) for downtown. This will give us the strategy to figure out the public/private partnership for this aspect of the plan.

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As this moves to the City Plan Commission, we need to have the following issues clearly vetted and determined. The less ambiguity, the better.

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-- Need the formal, final boundaries for the TIRS with appropriate enabling legislation. I'm not sure why the TIRS is so limited right now; we may want to expand the boundaries. I'll discuss with Sylvia.

8

-- Need formal boundaries for Historic District and enabling legislation with appropriate overlay district and associated criteria and design standards.

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-- Need to have incentive package clearly articulated with ALL possible incentives available for specific investments and also clearly defined as to when certain incentives would be recommended/applied.

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-- Need to clearly define all City requirements/needs to support the plan implementation. Don't say there is no 'public' cost when in fact there likely is. (i.e., residential relocation assistance program, infrastructure requirements, use of city owned assets, etc.)

Other Issues:

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Plan amendment should include design standards recommended for the area, overlay district if needed, and zoning changes where they may be required. Also, if we want to add differentiating types of building standards for adaption of older buildings, those also should be incorporated.

12

Eliminate as much ambiguity as possible. Focus on how to neutralize and engage the losers. Get some of those stakeholders to the table now as part of the review process/task force efforts to help shape the outcomes.

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Follow up later to provide clarification if need be. Also, I'll forward to you a list of specific folks I think are critical to some of these work groups beyond those we've identified thus far.

Hope this helps.

PS Debbie/Pat/Sylvia/Julie - get with me re: your comments to the above.