



Planning Commission Report

Planning Commission Meeting: January 15, 2020

Agenda Item: 8-A

To: Planning Commission

From: Jing Yeo, AICP, City Planning Division Manager

Subject: Resolution of Intention of the Planning Commission of the City of Santa Monica declaring its intention to consider recommending to the City Council that the Council amend the text of the Downtown Community Plan to allow increased height for structures associated with public space programming and activities on the roof of City-owned parking structures in the Bayside Conservation and Transit Adjacent Districts and to amend the definition of “housing project” for the purposes of determining application thresholds.

Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt a Resolution declaring its intent to consider recommending to the City Council amendments to the Downtown Community Plan (DCP) to permit height increases for structures associated with public activities on the roof of City-owned parking structures and amendments to the definition of “housing project” in order to determine application thresholds.

Discussion

The Downtown Community Plan (DCP) was adopted by City Council on July 25, 2017. City-owned parking structures are located primarily in the Bayside Conservation (BC) and Transit Adjacent (TA) District. The DCP established a maximum height of 60 feet in the BC (2nd and 4th Streets) District and 84 feet in the TA District. The City has received interest from Downtown Santa Monica Inc. to explore activating the roofs of City-owned parking structures for public space programming and activities including a recent application for an outdoor rooftop cinema on Parking Structure #2 (19ENT-0367). Parking Structure #2 is approximately 77 feet high (96 feet high to the top of the elevator/stairs enclosure). The proposed improvements such as box offices, food/concession stands, shade structures, and bathrooms ranging in height between 9'-3" – 12'-4" high would increase the existing parking structure height. Considering some additional height for structures that facilitate public space programming and activities would be consistent with the intent of Goal LU1 and Policy LU1.2 of the DCP.

On December 10, 2019, City Council conducted a study session on housing policy in light of directives from the State and the upcoming release of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment methodology. During public testimony, an issue was raised with respect to the definition of “housing projects” in the DCP, within the context of application processing thresholds. In light of Council direction to explore all methods to for housing production,

particularly affordable housing, it would be appropriate to review the definition of “housing project” in order to maximize opportunities for housing production, specifically the production of deed-restricted affordable units.

The attached resolution represents the formal initiation of the process to consider recommending to the City Council amendments to the DCP to possibly accommodate additional public space programming and to support housing production. This resolution does not represent the final content of the proposed DCP amendments as draft amendments will need to be further studied and revised based on staff research, Planning Commission and community recommendations, and Council direction on the substantive provisions of this DCP amendment.

Prepared by: Jing Yeo, AICP, City Planning Division Manager

Attachments

A. Planning Commission Resolution of Intention 20-001, Downtown Community Plan

RESOLUTION NUMBER 20-001 (PCS)

(Planning Commission Series)

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SANTA MONICA DECLARING ITS INTENTION TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDING TO THE CITY COUNCIL THAT THE COUNCIL AMEND THE DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY PLAN TO ALLOW FOR INCREASED MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT ON CITY-OWNED PARKING STRUCTURES IN THE BAYSIDE CONSERVATION AND TRANSIT ADJACENT DISTRICTS AND REVISE THE DEFINITION OF HOUSING PROJECT

WHEREAS, on July 25, 2017, the City Council adopted the Downtown Community Plan (“DCP”) which sets forth the City’s vision of the Downtown as a high quality, mixed-use district offering opportunities for housing for people across the income spectrum, jobs, arts and culture, local serving retail and community and visitor gathering places; and

WHEREAS, the DCP encourages the development of uses that support a 17 hours a day/7 days a week environment that meets the needs of businesses and residents, including retail goods and services, food stores, restaurants and cafés, hotels, health clubs, entertainment and comparable uses; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Community Plan Area encompasses the Bayside Conservation District, which includes the largest concentration of public parking with municipal parking structures 1 through 6, and the Transit Adjacent District which includes two additional City-owned parking structures; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to encourage active uses on the underutilized roof decks of one or more of the parking structures to increase entertainment and visitor-serving uses in the Downtown; and

WHEREAS, accessory structures to support such active uses that would otherwise be permitted are currently prohibited as they would exceed the current maximum building height limitations in the DCP; and

WHEREAS, in the DCP, Downtown housing projects are encouraged to support a strong and economically diverse residential neighborhood component; and

WHEREAS, the DCP supports that encouragement by differentiating between “housing projects” and commercial projects and provides for various incentives for housing projects including increased process thresholds; and

WHEREAS, the DCP’s project requirements for housing projects are further intended to incentivize and place a priority on the development of housing in Downtown, implement affordable housing requirements that result in a greater number and more diverse unit mix, and ensue greater discretionary review for commercial projects; and

WHEREAS, on December 10, 2019, the City Council conducted a study session on housing policy in part to discuss options for increasing housing production throughout the City and considered whether increased flexibility in the definition of “Housing Project” for purposes of the incentives and priorities in the DCP would further encourage housing production over commercial development in the Downtown; and

WHEREAS, on January 15, 2020, the Planning Commission considered amendments to the Downtown Community Plan to increase the maximum height on City-owned parking structures and revise to the definition of "Housing Project", which are detailed in Exhibit A, and hereby declares its intention to consider such changes by adopting this resolution pursuant to Santa Monica Municipal Code Section 9.45.060(A).

NOW, THEREFORE, THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF SANTA MONICA DOES RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Pursuant to Santa Monica Municipal Code Section 9.45.060(A), the Planning Commission does hereby announce its intention to consider recommending to the City Council that the City Council amend the Downtown Community Plan, as set forth in Exhibit A, attached to this Resolution.

SECTION 2. The Director of Planning and Community Development shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution, and thenceforth and thereafter the same shall be in full force and effect.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

LANE DILG
City Attorney

Adopted this 15th day of January, 2020.

Chair, Planning Commission

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution of Intention was duly and regularly introduced and approved at a meeting of the Planning Commission on the 15th day of January, 2020 by the following vote:

Ayes:

Noes:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest:

Director of Planning and Community Development

EXHIBIT A

Potential Downtown Community Plan Amendments

TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	DCP SECTIONS TO BE REVIEWED AND/OR REVISED INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:
Maximum building height of City-owned parking structures	Consider amendments to increase the maximum height limitations for City-owned parking structures in the Bayside Conservation and Transit Adjacent Districts	9.10.060
Definition of "Housing Project"	Consider revising the definition of "Housing Project" to encourage housing production	9.10.050(A)