



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director

January 11, 2011

TO: Pat Modugno, Chair
Esther L. Valadez, Vice Chair
Leslie G. Bellamy, Commissioner
Harold V. Helsley, Commissioner

FROM: Susana Franco-Rogan, Acting Supervising Regional Planner
Community Studies I Section

**SUBJECT: January 26, 2011 – AGENDA ITEM # 7
FLORENCE-FIRESTONE COMMUNITY PLAN**

BACKGROUND

In 2008 the Zoning Enforcement Section I was awarded a Compass Blueprint Demonstration project grant from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in support of the Florence-Firestone Vision. Compass Blueprint grants support projects that improve livability, mobility, prosperity, and sustainability by providing free consultant services. The intent of the visioning program was to identify community priorities and provide direction for future planning, development and physical enhancements within Florence Firestone over the long term. On May 26, 2009, staff presented your Commission a summary of the Vision Plan, which was completed in June 2009.

Building on the direction provided through the visioning process, the Community Studies I Section obtained a subsequent Compass Blueprint grant to complete technical studies and a Caltrans Community-Based Transportation Planning grant to conduct community outreach and develop a Community Plan. The technical reports were completed in 2010, and community outreach in support of the Community Plan will begin in January 2011.

LOCATION

Florence-Firestone is an unincorporated community of 3.6 square miles located approximately 6 miles south of Downtown Los Angeles. Comprised mainly of single-family residential neighborhoods, the community was home to an estimated 63,000 people in 2008 (US Census, American Community Survey). The community is surrounded on the north, south, and west by the City of Los Angeles, and on the east by the Cities of Huntington Park and South Gate and the unincorporated community of Walnut Park.

BACKGROUND AND TECHNICAL REPORTS

Since the completion of the Vision Plan in 2009, several County Departments have continued to collaborate to put some of the Plan's key recommendations into action. Specifically, the Vision Plan recommends that the County "should develop a detailed Community Plan for the Florence-Firestone community that provides a detailed land use, transportation, urban design, and overall community vision" (*Florence-Firestone Vision Plan*, p. 62). The Department of Regional Planning has completed background and technical studies to help inform the development of the Community Plan. The Department of Parks and Recreation has completed a Draft Community Parks and Recreation Plan, which will inform the Open Space and Recreation Element of the Community Plan.

Supported by a SCAG Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project Grant, the Department of Regional Planning hired URS, Inc. consultants to prepare three technical reports, which include: retail and industrial market analysis, transit-oriented development analysis, and sustainable land use analysis. The topics of these reports were identified as areas in need of additional study in the Florence-Firestone Vision Plan. Summaries of the three reports follow:

- **Market Feasibility Analysis:** developed an industrial and retail business development and attraction plan; identified retail opportunities for specific industries, for example Latino foods or automotive accessories; concluded that industrial markets are weak and there is little potential to attract new investment; and, recommended supporting existing businesses through business assistance and workforce development, and potentially marketing the area as a green or recycling zone.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** analyzed the existing transit-oriented district (TOD) ordinance and recommended strategies to enhance the TOD and station areas; found that existing stations lack amenities and pose pedestrian safety issues and that the ordinance could be improved; included several community design recommendations, such as addressing landscaping, safety, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and station areas; and, recommended specific amendments to the transit-oriented district ordinance, such as modifying parking and development standards to further enhance transit-oriented development.
- **Land Use and Sustainability:** evaluated current development patterns and recommended strategies to increase sustainability within the community; found that, when compared to a series of sustainability criteria, the community has great access to transit and a good mix of land uses; identified areas in need of improvement, such as bike lanes, open space, and safety; and, recommended implementing land use changes to achieve greater long-term sustainability.

A more detailed summary of these technical reports and recent planning efforts can be found in the Florence-Firestone Community Plan Background Report, completed by the Department of Regional Planning in 2010. This report also provides relevant

information on housing, demographics, population projections, and services. The technical and background reports can be found on the project website at <http://planning.lacounty.gov/ffvp> and are attached here.

In addition to these reports, and building on recommendations in the Vision Plan, the Department of Parks and Recreation completed a draft Community Parks and Recreation Plan in 2010. The Parks and Recreation Plan includes an assessment of existing parks and programs. Specifically, the Plan indicates that Florence-Firestone had a deficit of 245 acres of local parkland and 343 acres of regional parkland in 2007. The Plan includes recommendations for filling this gap, including expanding diverse types of park uses to utility corridors, school facilities, and vacant parcels. The Community Parks and Recreation Plan also contains goals, policies, and implementation actions to address park and recreation needs in the community. These components will inform the Open Space and Recreation Element of the Community Plan.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Public participation is at the heart of the community planning process. The Florence-Firestone Community Plan seeks to engage community residents and stakeholders at every opportunity, to ensure that the resulting plan addresses their needs today and into the future. This approach builds on extensive outreach already conducted in the community for the preparation of the Vision Plan, technical studies, and Draft Parks and Recreation Plan.

The Florence-Firestone Vision Plan was prepared based on the results of three workshops. During the workshops, participants developed a vision for each area of the community, created a list of potential changes, and prioritized actions to improve overall quality of life. The technical reports were prepared with the input of the Florence-Firestone Community Leaders and the Florence-Firestone Chamber of Commerce. At two meetings, staff presented the approach and scope of the reports and obtained feedback on the most relevant information to include. Finally, development of the Draft Parks and Recreation Plan included stakeholder interviews, community workshops, activities with youth and seniors, questionnaires, surveys, and collaboration with other public agencies.

The Community Plan public participation process will include four community-wide workshops. All workshops will be held on Saturdays from 10:30AM to noon at the recently renovated Florence-Firestone Service Center. The workshop dates and topics are:

- **Workshop 1: Kickoff (1/29/11).** Presentation of findings from technical reports, introduction to the Community Plan purpose and content, development of Plan outline.
- **Workshop 2: From Vision to Action (2/26/11).** Translating the Vision Plan into goals and policies for the Community Plan, prioritizing goals and policies.

- **Workshop 3: Mapping Your Plan (3/26/11).** Explanation of land use and zoning, including how they implement the vision, goals, and policies, and an interactive mapping exercise to develop land use scenarios.
- **Workshop 4: Previewing Your Plan (4/30/11).** Presentation of draft poster plan, land use and zoning maps, and critique of the draft Plan components.

In addition to these four workshops, the participation program may include specific outreach to school students and an informational summit for County service providers, based on interest and availability of participants.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Per the requirements of the Caltrans grant contract, the Florence-Firestone Community Plan is scheduled for completion by February 2012. The anticipated release date for the Draft Community Plan is summer 2011, following the completion of the community workshops in April 2011. The Plan will be before your Commission for consideration in winter 2011; however, the public hearing to consider Plan adoption may be later, pending the results of the environmental review.

The initiation of the Florence-Firestone Community Plan is a direct outgrowth of the community's wishes, as expressed in the Vision Plan. The participation process will provide an opportunity for those who live, learn, work, and play in Florence-Firestone to help develop actionable goals, policies, and implementation strategies to achieve their shared vision for the future. It will also bring County Departments together to collaborate on identifying ways to allocate resources to best respond to community needs. Once adopted, the Community Plan will serve as a codified version of the community's aspirations that will guide future development while improving quality of life.

Attached please find a copy of the technical and background reports prepared to inform the planning process, as well as a project timeline outlining broad milestones. For additional project materials, please visit <http://planning.lacounty.gov/ffvp>. Should you have any questions, please contact Veronica Siranosian, AICP, LEED GA or Lisbeth Sinclair at commplan@planning.lacounty.gov or (213) 974-6425.

SFR:VS:LKS

CC: Richard J. Bruckner, Director
Jon Sanabria, Chief Deputy Director

Attachments:
Market Feasibility Report
Transit-Oriented Development Report
Land Use and Sustainability Report
Background Report
Project Timeline