



Report on the Hacienda Heights Community Plan Update Committee Members Meeting July 30, 2009



MEETING OBJECTIVE

To preview "Part B" of the draft HHCPU, including the land use map and land use report, and get preliminary feedback from committee members.

EVENT DESCRIPTION

On the evening of Thursday, July 30, 2009, 18 participants from the Hacienda Heights community, most of who served on one of the committees during the public participation phase, attended the meeting at the Steinmetz Senior Center, located within the LA County-operated William Steinmetz Memorial Park. The 90-minute meeting was designed to get early input on the land use analyses and proposed draft land use map, which was developed by Department of Regional Planning (DRP) staff and, after being revised per community input, will be incorporated into the Draft Community Plan. This convening was designed for a small group of community members with a demonstrated commitment to the community planning process. Four newcomers joined in the conversation and were a welcomed addition. The meeting was facilitated by Lisbeth Sinclair, Veronica Siranosian and Susana Franco-Rogan representing the DRP.

MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting opened with a welcome from Ms. Sinclair and a short update on how the draft plan has been evolving since components of the Draft Plan (Part A) were released in late August 2008. Ms. Sinclair gave a brief presentation on the topic of land use that included the definition, purpose, components, and reasons for completing a land use update, which are to: reflect recent changes; anticipate future changes; ensure adequate resources will be available; direct development to the most suitable areas; preserve community character and values; and, be consistent with other plans.

The presentation promoted a balanced and equitable approach to making land use designations on a parcel-by-parcel basis as well as for the community overall and the neighborhoods within it. Some of the factors discussed include: physical features, constraints, and potential of the land; contextual characteristics; and, the community vision for how (or if) the land should develop. Ms. Sinclair also gave a brief overview of the methodology used to develop the Draft Land Use Report which, in its final form, will be an appendix to the Draft Community Plan Background Report. The 5-step methodology was: assessment of existing conditions; land use legend conversion; population and housing needs analysis; suitability analysis; and, recommended land use plan/map.

Next, Ms. Siranosian presented an overview of the draft land use map proposal, developed by DRP staff, as well as a "layer-by-layer" breakdown of the components, or land uses, contained in the map. Ms. Siranosian called out the most important changes to the proposed land use map, compared with the existing map, including:

- Maintenance of stable single- and multi-family residential areas
- Additional protection of rural areas
- Additional options for housing types in select areas suitable for development or redevelopment
- Addition of new Public Land Use designation for existing schools, educational facilities and utility easements
- Expansion of Open Space designations, including:

- Proposed for existing and planned parks, active and passive recreation areas
- Some rural areas (cemetery and part of landfill) added
- Habitat preservation areas added
- Maintenance of existing commercial and light industrial

Next, staff facilitated a breakout activity to evaluate the draft map by working in teams on an interactive exercise designed to evaluate whether the proposed map corresponds with the community's shared vision. Specifically, participants were asked to consider:

- Is the proposed map in line with what you expected?
- Is information intuitive and easy to digest?
- Are there any concerns?
- Did staff miss anything?

Participants were divided into 3 teams. Each team had a copy of the Draft Land Use Report, individual copies (11 x 17) of the proposed draft land use map, and a large copy of the same map to mark and comment upon. Participants reviewed the draft materials on their own; shared their thoughts with each other and discussed the implications, including pros and cons, of the proposed changes; and, reported out their recommendations to the entire group.

Overall, responses to the proposed map were positive, and feedback was consistent among the three groups. The comments addressed a few key areas participants asked staff to consider:

- Churches were not identified on the map, an oversight that no one missed and will promptly be corrected. One group discussed whether churches should be residential or commercial, and they decided they should be left as residential so that residential uses could go there in the future. Participants raised a question about churches with schools, and noted that these uses should require a conditional use permit (CUP) and not be allowed by-right.
- One participant voiced concern over the possibility that placing the highest density near the freeway, which includes many of the community's lower-income families, would drive lower-income individuals out of the community. Another participant countered that those areas are the best place to allow higher density because they are near transit routes and commercial centers. He also noted that those are the oldest homes and therefore the most likely homes in need of upgrading.
- Some participants raised concerns about land use in foothills, where they want low density or, in the case of one participant, open space.
- School sites and churches should be considered individually rather than uniformly. More dialogue is needed with the School District on the properties they are planning to sell.

Overall, the group indicated that the land use map is good, and the majority of people answered "yes" to the questions on the exercise. There was also a brief discussion as a large group about how the goals and policies will address other aspects of the community vision that convey their strong desire to enhance, or "spruce up", what they have now.

The recommendations will be considered by the DRP in preparing the Draft Plan for public review and comment. Participants were offered more time to consider and comment on the report and map with a deadline for feedback set for August 10, 2009.

Participants were reminded that the next step in the plan evolution is for the DRP staff to finalize a Draft Plan, which will be released to the community in the fall or winter of 2009. Additional upcoming milestones include: environmental review; public review and comment; public hearings and approvals; dissemination; and, implementation.

CONCLUSION

The small format workshop was a successful strategy for reconnecting with community members in a focused way and ensuring that DRP staff is on target with the land use plan. Enthusiasm for the Plan remains among veteran participants, and newcomers continue to be drawn into the process. Meeting participants gained an understanding of the “balancing act” that is required for preparing a comprehensive, long-range community plan, and the DRP staff gained further insight into the wishes and expectations of committed community members.

NEXT STEPS

- Meeting summary with Next Steps
- Organize and analyze results from exercise
- Field check areas identified as concerns by community members
- Coordinate with Hacienda-La Puente Unified School District on land use designations for schools
- Revise map based on feedback, as needed
- Update project website with new information
- Follow-up mailing to all meeting participants