



CITY OF
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CITY COUNCIL

Special Meeting

Monday, December 02, 2024

Council Chambers & Hybrid

5:30 PM

Agenda Item

20. Appointment of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) for Downtown Housing Plan.
CEQA Status – Not a Project.



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City Council Staff Report

From: City Manager

Report Type: INFORMATION REPORTS

Lead Department: Planning and Development Services

Meeting Date: December 2, 2024

Report #:2411-3740

TITLE

Appointment of the Community Advisory Group (CAG) for Downtown Housing Plan. CEQA Status – Not a Project.

RECOMMENDATION

No action requested.

BACKGROUND

On February 26, 2024¹ the City Council approved a contract with Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC (WRT) to provide planning and consulting services for the development of a Downtown Housing Plan, with additional project management support from Good City Company. The Downtown Housing Plan study area² covers approximately 90 acres and is a sub-area of the Downtown Palo Alto Priority Development Area (PDA).

The Downtown Housing Plan requires extensive community outreach and participation. A critical component is the Community Advisory Group (CAG) which will serve an advisory role and provide feedback at key junctures of the project. Staff suggested a list of stakeholder categories that would be required to provide input on the planning initiative. The Housing Ad Hoc Committee provided input in May 2024 on representative stakeholder categories for the Downtown Housing Plan CAG (listed below). The City Council received an Informational Report³ on June 17, 2024, outlining the process for the appointment of CAG members by the City Manager (or designee) with input from the Housing Ad Hoc Committee.

An online application process allowed residents to apply for the CAG. Staff received a total of 25 applications through the online application process. Some of the representative categories did not have any or enough applicants for staff to make a recommendation. In August 2024,

¹https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/planning-amp-development-services/long-range-planning/area-plans-and-studies/council-2.26.24_item9.pdf

²https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/planning-amp-development-services/long-range-planning/area-plans-and-studies/council-9.23_item5.pdf

³https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/v/1/planning-amp-development-services/long-range-planning/area-plans-and-studies/council-6.17.24_item34.pdf

following consultation with the Housing Ad Hoc Committee staff proceeded with seeking additional applicants for those categories. A total of 14 applicants were appointed to the CAG with input from the Housing Ad Hoc Committee.

ANALYSIS

Community Advisory Group Purpose

The CAG will play an important role in providing feedback to the project team throughout the Downtown Housing Plan's development. Their work is expected to include:

- Discussing the broad vision and guiding principles for the plan.
- Providing input on the community engagement strategy.
- Reviewing and responding to baseline data, analyses, recommendations, summaries of community engagement activities, and presentations.
- Providing feedback on goals and policies related to housing, land use, and transportation; and
- Considering key issues and trade-offs and offering insights on the draft Plan.

The following is the list of categories staff sought representation from to form the Downtown Housing Plan CAG:

1. Resident (Renter) – 1
2. Resident (Homeowner) – 1
3. Resident (Homeowner – lives outside the project area) – 1
4. Business Owner/Employed by a business in the project area – 2
5. Housing/Mixed-use Developer/Designer – 1
6. Affordable Housing/ Non-Profit Housing Group Representative – 1
7. Commercial Property Owner/Manager/Broker – 2
8. Community Interest Group Representative/Senior Housing Advocate – 1
9. Planning and Transportation Commissioner – 1
10. Architectural Review Board/Human Relations Commission – 1
11. Chamber of Commerce – 1
12. Educational Institution Representative – 1

Staff prioritized residents of the City of Palo Alto unless the category didn't receive an application from a resident and/or required specific expertise that best suited the project's goals and objectives.

Next Steps

The project team seeks to schedule the first CAG meeting in mid-December. If a member from the final list of appointees can no longer participate in the planning process, the City Manager may appoint a replacement.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

The costs associated with the recruitment and convention of the CAG and facilitation of the CAG meetings are included in the project budget.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is an important part of the Downtown Housing Plan development. In addition to the Community Advisory Group, the community will be engaged through workshops, pop-up events, online surveys, stakeholder interviews, and a developer round table facilitated by the project team. The project webpage, [Downtown Housing Plan – City of Palo Alto, CA](#), launched in early May, is regularly updated to ensure that the community has access to up-to-date information about the planning process.

The project team organized the first Downtown Housing Plan Community Open House on October 10, 2024, at the City Hall Community Meeting Room. The Open House was attended by approximately 30 community members. The goal of the Open House was to provide attendees with an opportunity to learn about the project and offer feedback on the critical issues related to housing in downtown Palo Alto. The content focused on preliminary information from the existing conditions assessment.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Council action on this Informational Report is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in that establishing the CAG is an administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment. CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5). Staff will undertake the appropriate CEQA review for the Downtown Housing Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Downtown Housing Plan Community Advisory Group Appointees

APPROVED BY:

Jonathan Lait, Planning and Development Services Director

Downtown Housing Plan Community Advisory Group Appointees

Resident (Renter) – 1

Sudha Fatima

Resident (Homeowner near project area): Downtown North resident

Additional Categories Represented:

- Renter Organization Representative
- Affordable Housing/Non-Profit Housing Group Representative: Palo Alto Forward

Resident (Homeowner) – 1

Donald Barr

Resident (Homeowner near project area): University South resident

Additional Categories Represented:

- HRC Commissioner
- Affordable Housing/Non-Profit Housing Group Representative: Avenidas (Board of Directors)
- Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate:
 - Community Working Group
 - 501c (3) Foundation

Resident (Homeowner – Lives outside the project area) – 1

Jennifer Buenrostro

Resident (Homeowner: lives outside the project area): Palo Alto resident

Additional Categories Represented:

- Business Owner/Employed by a business in the project area: Realtor with Compass, Palo Alto.
- Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate:
 - Neighbors Abroad of Palo Alto (Board Member)
 - Woman's Club of Palo Alto representative

Business Owner/Employed by a business in the project area – 2

Stephanie Wansek

Business Owner/Employed by a business in the project area: The Cardinal Hotel

Prior Community Involvement: Has extensive experience managing large-scale historic renovation projects, overseeing property management and improvements, and was involved in the creation of the Palo Alto Downtown BID and the Palo Alto Hotel Council.

Nancy Coupal

Business Owner/ Employed by a business in the project area: Coupa Cafe (President)

Additional Categories represented:

- Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate:
 - Chamber of Commerce (Board of Directors)
 - La Comida de California

- Silicon Valley Committee of Human Rights Watch
- Sponsor of the United Nations Association Film Festival (UNAFF)

Prior Community Involvement: Has been involved with multiple committees for outdoor dining and pedestrian-friendly streets and the use of parklets.

Housing/ Mixed-use Developer/ Designer – 1

Ken Hayes

Housing/ Mixed-use Developer/ Designer: Hayes Group Architects (Founder and Principal)

Additional Categories represented:

- Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate:
 - 501c (3) Foundation
 - Rotary Club Woodside Portola Valley

Prior Community Involvement: Served on the Advisory Group of the SOFA 2.

Affordable Housing/ Non-Profit Housing Group Representative – 1

Aubrey Merriman

Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate: LifeMoves (CEO)

Additional Categories Represented:

- Non-resident.
- Affordable Housing/ Non-Profit Housing Group Representative: SV@Homes (Vice Chair)

Prior Community Involvement: Partnered with the City of Pal Alto on Project Homekey.

Commercial Property Owner/ Manager/ Broker – 2

John Shenk

Commercial Property Owner/ Manager/ Broker: Property Manager

Additional Categories Represented:

- Business Owner/ Employed by a business in the project area: Thoits Bros. Inc. (CEO)

Brad Ehikian

Commercial Property Owner/ Manager/ Broker: Broker and Property Manager

Additional Categories Represented:

- Business Owner/ Employed by a business in the project area: Premier Properties.

Prior Community Involvement: Former Board Chair of the Downtown Palo Alto Business and Professional Association (PAD) and former Board Chair and current Board Member of the Palo Alto Transportation Managing Association.

Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate – 1

Yadira Aldana

Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate: Conscious Touch Teams (Board Member)

Additional Categories Represented:

- Non-resident.

- Affordable Housing/ Non-Profit Housing Group Representative: Avenidas (Vice President of Programs)

Planning and Transportation Commissioner – 1

Allen Akin

Planning and Transportation Commission: Commissioner

Prior Community Involvement: Participated actively in the Downtown Transportation and Parking studies and the Residential Preferential Parking Program and served on the Professorville Historic Design Guidelines Committee.

Architectural Review Board/ Human Relations Commission – 1

Kendra Rosenberg

Architectural Review Board (ARB)/ Human Relations Commission (HRC): ARB Chair

Additional Categories represented:

- Housing/ Mixed-use Developer/ Designer

Chamber of Commerce – 1

Charlie Weidanz

Chamber of Commerce: Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce (President and CEO)

Educational Institution Representative – 1

Lee Pfab

Educational Institution Representative: Palo Alto Community Child Care (CEO)

Additional Categories Represented:

- Non-resident
- Community Interest Group Representative/ Senior Housing Advocate:
 - Palo Alto Advisory Council for Early Childhood Education
 - Stanford Children's Health Community Benefits Council
 - Santa Clara Build the Future
 - Chamber of Commerce (Board of Directors)