

Draft

BRISBANE PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of April 30, 2009
Special Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Maturo called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Hunter, Lentz, Munir, Parker, and Chairperson Maturo
Staff Present: Community Development Director Prince, Senior Planner Tune, Associate
Planner Johnson

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Hunter moved to adopt the agenda as proposed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Munir and unanimously approved.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approval of Draft Minutes of April 9, 2009 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Hunter drew attention to the first line on Page 6 and recommended deleting the word "out."

Commissioner Munir moved to approve the April 9 minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hunter and unanimously approved.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

There were no members of the public who wished to address the Planning Commission.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chairperson Maturo acknowledged receipt of emails from D. J. Canepa and Michele Salmon.

STUDY SESSION

1. **Housing Element Update** -- Potential Zoning Alternatives in response to the Regional Housing Needs Allocation and changes in state law

Community Development Director Prince noted that in addition to updating the General Plan, which was on a ten year cycle, the City needs to update the Housing Element every five years to reflect population growth and accommodate new housing units. He said that staff developed a flyer and notified various agencies and housing groups about this meeting.

Director Prince gave a PowerPoint presentation about ways of addressing global warming in the City's General Plan. He discussed the problem of climate stabilization, governmental response to global warming, the concept of sustainability in the General Plan, and how these topics relate to the update of the Housing Element.

Director Prince described the community's vision in terms of maintaining Brisbane's small-town character, preserving open space, and ensuring sustainable development. He said social issues like globalization and emerging technologies will affect Brisbane's future, as will scientific developments in fields like geology and climate change. He advised that because of global warming, sea levels in California are projected to increase significantly over the next century unless steps are taken to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Director Prince added that unchecked global warming will cause more severe weather conditions, ocean toxicity, and the extinction of many kinds of plants and animals.

Director Prince reviewed Brisbane's progress in updating the General Plan and the environmental review of the proposed Baylands development. He advised that it typically takes a community five years and \$1 million to update its general plan, and Brisbane's General Plan is longer and more detailed than the average.

Director Prince noted that in response to scientific projections about global warming, the federal and state governments have adopted more stringent standards to reduce carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. He pointed out that the number vehicle miles traveled is growing as the nation's population increases and urban areas continue to sprawl, so reducing global warming is a difficult challenge. He talked about changing land use and transportation patterns as a way of reducing vehicle miles traveled and achieving long-term sustainability. Director Prince observed that if local governments are unable to meet regional targets for housing, more State intervention is inevitable. He identified characteristics of smart growth and sustainability, and noted that the City provided a series of guest speakers and panel discussions to educate the community on these topics.

Director Prince emphasized the need for Brisbane to deal with these issues in the Housing Element. He explained how Brisbane's housing needs allocation is determined relative to projected population growth in the Bay Area. He said the purpose of this study session was to ensure that Brisbane's zoning allows opportunities for enough affordable housing units to meet its share of the projected demand. He reviewed the contents of each chapter in the Housing Element.

Director Prince recommended that Brisbane consider higher density housing in order to help abate global warming. He noted that Brisbane has a tradition of affordable housing, and he displayed slides showing some examples. He acknowledged that many Americans are predisposed against density, but he advised that impacts of density can be mitigated by careful design and placement.

Director Prince reviewed recent state laws pertaining to affordable housing. He stated that Brisbane's regional housing needs allocation, approved by the City Council in 2008, is 401 units. He said that staff had determined that existing sites zoned for housing would accommodate a total of 359 units during the 2006-2014 Housing Element planning period. In order to provide sites for the required target of 401 affordable units, the City would need to rezone certain areas to accommodate higher density. Director Prince drew attention to the chart in the staff report showing the housing potential for each zoning district and the changes that would be needed.

Director Prince identified three alternatives to provide the required number of housing units in Brisbane. First, he said, the City could mix additional units into existing residential zones by changing the permitted density and lot dimensions; the second option would be to rezone three specific parcels in Crocker Industrial Park to allow residential and/or mixed-use development; and third, a combination approach, would entail rezoning just one parcel in Crocker Park and mixing additional units into existing neighborhoods by changing some of the current density and lot size restrictions. He discussed each alternative in more detail. Director Prince added that the City could also consider a fourth alternative, making the zoning changes in the residential district plus rezoning the three Crocker Park parcels identified, an approach that would maximize housing capacity.

Director Prince clarified that in order to meet its regional housing needs allocation target, the City must provide zoning to accommodate 401 housing units, but the 401 units do not actually have to be constructed. He observed that failure to meet the capacity target could impair the City's ability to obtain funds from the state for other purposes, and providing excess capacity encourages housing and gives developers a choice of possible sites. He pointed out that because housing is not a permitted use in the Baylands, the City should explore sites elsewhere in Brisbane that could provide the necessary capacity.

Commissioner Parker asked about creating incentives to provide more senior housing. Senior Planner Tune said the Housing Element will analyze all of the community's housing needs, including senior housing. He said there are policies and programs in the Housing Element to provide density bonuses and reduced parking requirements to encourage senior housing. He noted that the City itself had been involved in the construction of senior housing. Senior Planner Tune explained that the focus of the regional housing needs allocation is affordability. He commented that at some point, the City can identify particular areas that would be suitable for future senior housing projects.

Commissioner Munir asked about the meanings of the “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D” columns in the chart. Director Prince explained that the letters correspond to the number of units that could be provided under each category discussed previously. Commissioner Munir recommended adding a footnote to clarify the chart.

Commissioner Munir noted that reducing greenhouse gases should be the City’s ultimate goal, and facilities like the multi-modal transportation hub will help achieve that. He commented that the needs allocation formula should take these kinds of improvements into account as well as number of units. Director Prince said the environmental impact report for the Baylands will analyze cumulative impacts and eventual build-out potential, and this information will be incorporated in the General Plan. He added that more sophisticated software is being developed to evaluate different types of land uses based on factors like vehicle miles traveled, emission impacts, and job locations, so analytical capabilities will improve.

Commissioner Munir asked if the City had definitively decided that residential uses will not be permitted at the Baylands. Director Prince responded that one of the potential alternatives has residential uses in the northwest corner of the site, reflecting the desire of some members of the public not to rule out housing. He said it will be up to the City Council eventually to select the features that should be included in the community’s preferred alternative.

Commissioner Hunter observed that convenient access to transportation and the chance to reduce vehicle trips might create more support for residential uses in the future.

Commissioners thanked staff for the background presentation.

The Commission took brief recess. Chairperson Maturo reconvened the meeting and invited comments from the public and the Commission.

Terry O’Connell commented that density is not necessarily undesirable if a project is well designed. She noted that building on hillsides increases costs and vehicle trips, and she recommended keeping large projects in the lower parts of Brisbane for this reason. She expressed her opinion that the area around Crocker Park would be close to transit and appropriate for mixed-use housing. Ms. O’Connell recommended partnering with a not-for-profit builder as a way of obtaining more affordable units.

Ms. O’Connell urged the Commission not to over-anticipate the number of units needed, because Brisbane’s future regional housing needs allocation will be set higher. For now, she suggested working to provide the target of 401 units. She suggested including wording in the Housing Element encouraging more senior housing units.

Ms. O’Connell pointed out that having extensive open space helps offset greenhouse gas emissions. She expressed her hope that Brisbane will continue to be a livable,

sustainable, and affordable community.

Director Prince suggested that Commissioners take time to review the information in the staff report and consider the alternatives. He noted that the text of the Housing Element and a comparison matrix were provided in the meeting packet to facilitate review of the Housing Element's policies and programs. He proposed that Commissioners ask preliminary questions at this meeting and continue their deliberations to the next meeting.

Commissioner Hunter commented that he liked the idea of rezoning certain Crocker Park parcels to allow mixed-use housing.

Commissioner Lentz noted that the Housing Element can be viewed as a platform to make Brisbane a better community in the future. Director Prince agreed, and emphasized the importance of planning ahead to ensure sustainable and affordable housing in the future. He said concern about global warming is causing a re-examination of transportation patterns, urban sprawl, and the jobs-housing mix. He talked about the principles of new urbanism and smart growth, and recommended reflecting these concepts in the General Plan.

Commissioner Lentz observed that the staff report mentions changing parking regulations for secondary units as a way of facilitating more efficient and compact development, and he expressed support for this proposal. He questioned the need for a minimum density standard, noting that such a standard could mean that single-family homes on large lots would have to be replaced with duplexes. He said that staff seems to have identified enough sites for housing already.

Senior Planner Tune clarified that a minimum density standard is required by state law to categorize units as affordable to very low and low-income households. He advised that the City could allow exceptions in certain circumstances. Director Prince pointed out that having a minimum density standard helps the City meet its affordability target because it increases the potential number of units on available sites.

Commissioner Lentz commented that it might be better to identify and rezone certain parcels that can accommodate higher density, or to apply minimum density only to new developments. He asked staff to provide the Commission with further information and options with respect to minimum density.

Commissioners asked if the City's next regional housing needs allocation target would include a credit if Brisbane actually provided more than the required 401 units. Director Prince responded that the allocations are recalculated each time based on the needs at that time, so the City would not receive credit for providing more than its quota in the past. He added that Brisbane's allocation went down compared to the last time.

Commissioner Hunter expressed concern that there may come a time when a city is

completely built out and then lacks capacity to provide any more units. Director Prince acknowledged this possibility. He said state law or the method of calculating the allocation could change in response to changing conditions.

Commissioner Parker noted that Central Brisbane is characterized by its small-town atmosphere and diversity of housing types. She remarked that any future housing developments should maintain that character and diversity.

Commissioner Hunter pointed out that Brisbane already has high-density housing, and he cited the Northeast Ridge as an example. Commissioner Parker commented that people who live in town walk around downtown Brisbane, while Northeast Ridge residents tend to stay inside and drive to other places. Commissioner Hunter observed that housing in Crocker Park might be a better alternative than freight forwarding.

Commissioner Lentz said he liked the idea of smaller, detached dwelling units rather than large multi-family buildings. He recommended encouraging these kinds of dwelling groups in the future.

Senior Planner Tune noted that stepping buildings back from the street helps minimize visual impacts and create more of a single-family look. He mentioned a few specific projects that incorporated atriums and other attractive architectural features.

At 10:30 p.m., Commissioner Parker moved, seconded by Commissioner Hunter, to continue the meeting until 11:00 p.m. The motion was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Lentz asked if the Redevelopment Agency had completed its purchase of the parcels in the lower part of Brisbane Acres between Gladys and San Bruno Avenue described in the staff report. Senior Planner Tune stated that the Redevelopment Agency was purchasing the property with the intent of developing affordable units.

Commissioner Lentz asked if the Eagles property had been included in the staff's analysis of housing potential. Senior Planner Tune responded that the Eagles parcel was not included because redevelopment does not appear likely within the next several years.

Commissioner Lentz drew attention to Page G.1.39, regarding emergency shelters and group homes. He said he was pleased that these should be considered as part of the community. He suggested that the portion of the TC-1 District considered for rezoning might be the best place for these facilities because they are close to public safety services.

Senior Planner Tune advised that Brisbane already has one group home on San Bruno Avenue at Bayshore Boulevard. He commented that the Southwest Bayshore subarea has transit access to social services which makes the SCRO-1 District more appropriate for emergency shelters.

Commissioner Hunter commented that Mr. Canepa's email addresses this issue.

Commissioner Lentz indicated that he missed the presentation about the HOPE organization at the last meeting, and he requested a copy of those materials.

Commissioner Lentz observed that Page G.1.42 identifies a couple issues regarding Bayshore Boulevard that the Commission should consider as part of its deliberations.

Commissioner Lentz noted that Page G.1.44 discusses housing in the Northwest Bayshore subarea, and he recalled that the City Council had voted not to allow housing in that area. He expressed his preference to develop the other side of Bayshore Boulevard, and recommended considering Industrial Way as a potential site for a mixed-use development. He said he supported rezoning certain parcels in the TC-1 District for residential uses.

Commissioner Lentz questioned the recommendation on Page G.1.45 to require limited design review for the rezoned parcels. Senior Planner Tune explained that state law requires that design review for affordable housing projects be based only on objective criteria. He added that state law is unclear as to how much flexibility the Planning Commission would have to impose additional restrictions.

Commissioner Lentz said he understood that some of the landowners at Sierra Point wanted to rezone their property for residential use, and Universal Paragon Corporation had applied for to add condominiums to its planned hotel project. Director Prince said UPC withdrew its application to build an 800-unit hotel/condominium project because the issue was clouding the City's consideration of the Sierra Point design guidelines.

Commissioner Lentz recommended that the Commission discuss the issue of allowing housing as an option in uncontaminated portions of the Baylands. He said these might be suitable for artists' housing, senior housing and mixed-use development.

Commissioner Parker noted that members of the public raised concerns at City Council meetings about creating a residential community separated from the main part of Brisbane.

Commissioner Lentz expressed his opinion that housing should at least be considered as an alternative.

Chairperson Maturo agreed with Commissioner Hunter that selective rezoning might provide an opportunity to clean up certain areas of town and accommodate higher density in existing neighborhoods.

Commissioners decided to continue this study session to the May 14 meeting.

ITEMS INITIATED BY STAFF

There were no items initiated by the staff.

ITEMS INITIATED BY THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Lentz suggested that Commissioners forward questions and comments regarding the Housing Element to the staff in advance of the May 14 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Hunter made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Munir, to adjourn to the Regular Meeting of May 14, 2009. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 11:08 p.m.

William Prince, Director
Community Development Department

Theresa Maturo, Chairperson
Planning Commission