

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

SAN DIEGO AREA

7575 METROPOLITAN DRIVE, SUITE 103

SAN DIEGO, CA 92108-4421

(619) 767-2370



November 30, 2017

**W24g**

**TO:** **COMMISSIONERS AND INTERESTED PERSONS**

**FROM:** **KARL SCHWING, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SAN DIEGO COAST DISTRICT  
DEBORAH LEE, DISTRICT MANAGER, SAN DIEGO COAST DISTRICT  
MELODY LASITER, COASTAL PROGRAM ANALYST, SD COAST  
DISTRICT**

**SUBJECT: STAFF RECOMMENDATION ON CITY OF SAN DIEGO LCP AMENDMENT  
NO. LCP-6-CCP-16-0064-2 for Commission Meeting of December 13-15, 2017**

**SYNOPSIS**

The subject Local Coastal Program (LCP) land use plan (LUP) amendment was submitted and filed as complete on November 10, 2016. Pursuant to Section 30512 of the Coastal Act, the Commission must act on land use plan amendments within 90 days of complete submittal or filing. However, pursuant to Section 30517 of the Coastal Act, the time limit for this amendment was extended for one year at the January 13, 2017 Commission hearing. As such, the last date for Commission action on this item is February 8, 2018. In addition to this amendment, there are two other pending LCP items from the City of San Diego: LCP-6-SAN-17-0056-3 (LDC Revisions) and LCP-6-SAN-17-0057-4 (Parking Regulations Cleanup). Both of those amendments are also scheduled for the December 2017 Commission hearing.

**SUMMARY OF AMENDMENT REQUEST**

The City of San Diego is requesting an amendment to the certified Downtown Community Plan which serves as the City's LUP component for the Centre City community planning area, otherwise known as downtown San Diego. The modification includes replacing in entirety the existing Transportation Chapter of the LUP with an updated Mobility Chapter that provides for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to accommodate active mobility options for residents and visitors to downtown, resulting in a more balanced circulation network.

**SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff is recommending approval of the LCP amendment as submitted by the City. The proposed amendment would replace Chapter 7, Transportation, of the existing Downtown Community Plan in its entirety with the Mobility Chapter ([Exhibit 1](#)). Only a small portion of the planning area is within the Coastal Zone ([Exhibit 2](#)), however, changes in the planning area could impact the public's ability to access the coast as they traverse

downtown to reach the San Diego Bay. Specifically, the Mobility Chapter would provide for the implementation of a layered network of roads to accommodate multiple modes of travel across downtown, including protected bicycle facilities (“cycleways”) and pedestrian facilities connecting to planned and existing parks (“greenways”), by reconfiguring the existing roadways and converting the excess capacity to accommodate other travel modes. Implementation of the plan will result in reduced accommodations for vehicle transportation and parking; however, pedestrian, bicycle and transit user facilities will be improved resulting in a more equitable transportation system for the downtown community.

Changes in traffic patterns could impact the public’s ability to access the coast as vehicles travel through downtown or along the two main coastal access corridors of Harbor Drive and Pacific Highway. While Harbor Drive is under the Port of San Diego jurisdiction, the traffic study conducted for the plan considers planned changes to Harbor Drive which would decrease the amount of lanes and divert traffic to Pacific Highway and found no significant changes in service. One intersection in the Coastal Zone, at Laurel Street and Pacific Highway, would operate at an unacceptable level of service that could not be mitigated for; however, the intersection is not proposed to be modified with the plan and is already built to the limits of the existing right-of-way. Thus, there would be no significant traffic impacts as a result of the implementation of the policies within the Mobility Chapter.

The Coastal Commission has historically identified vehicular parking as a public access issue and protected public parking supplies adjacent to beaches and coastal resources. While the most significant impacts to parking will occur outside of the Coastal Zone from the installation of greenways along Cedar Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and Union Street, parking will also be removed on Pacific Highway (17 spaces) and Beech Street (11 spaces) to install cycleways, on Grape Street (13 spaces) and Hawthorn Street (11 spaces) to increase road lanes from 3- to 4-lanes to accommodate traffic flows, and on Cedar Street (3 spaces) to install a greenway. To address the loss of parking, the Mobility Chapter proposes to implement a parking management program and transportation demand management program, in addition to the improvements to active transportation facilities. Thus, while parking will be lost as a result of the proposed amendment, a parking management program will be implemented to mitigate against any significant adverse impacts.

Finally, the resulting transit network will include increasing overall user levels for active and public transit users and decreasing the need for vehicle circulation downtown, which will minimize energy consumption and vehicle miles travelled. Therefore, the proposed LCP amendment will increase pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure downtown, have no significant adverse impacts to coastal resources or public access and will facilitate growth of active transportation in downtown San Diego and decrease energy consumption. The proposed LCP amendment is therefore consistent with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

The appropriate resolutions and motions begin on Page 5. The findings for approval of the Land Use Plan Amendment as submitted begin on Page 5.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Center City community is one of the City of San Diego's twelve LCP segments. The majority of the land in the Centre City community planning area within the Coastal Zone, including the land along the waterfront, is not under the coastal permit authority of the City of San Diego. Those areas west of the Mean High Tide Line are within the jurisdiction of the Port of San Diego and are covered by the certified Port Master Plan. Additionally, the County Administration Center is an area of deferred certification in the City's LCP; and, thus, it remains within the coastal permit jurisdiction of the Commission at this time. Therefore, the only area within the City's permit jurisdiction covered by the subject LCP Amendment is the one to two-block wide, approximately two mile long area bounded by Harbor Drive on the south, Pacific Highway on the west, Laurel Street to the north, and Kettner Boulevard to the east as far north as Ash Street, and then California Street north of Ash Street. In addition, there is a small area in the southernmost portion of downtown that is also covered by the subject amendment – the area bounded by Commercial Street on the north and on the east, 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Newton Avenue, Sigsbee Street, Harbor Drive, and generally Harbor Drive to the west ([Exhibit 2](#)). Although the City's coastal permit jurisdiction covers only a few blocks, the entire waterfront is shown in the City's LCP and given land use designations for planning purposes only.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Further information on the City of San Diego LCP Amendment No. LCP-6-CCP-16-0064-2 may be obtained from Melody Lasiter, Coastal Planner, at (619) 767-2370.

---

## **EXHIBITS**

- [Exhibit 1 – Adopted Downtown Mobility Chapter](#)
- [Exhibit 2 – Vicinity and Coastal Zone Map](#)
- [Exhibit 3 – Adopted Downtown Mobility Plan](#)
- [Exhibit 4 – Planned Downtown Mobility Network](#)

## **SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS**

City of San Diego Downtown Community Plan  
Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report SCG #2014121002

## **PART I. OVERVIEW**

### **A. LCP HISTORY**

The City of San Diego has a long history of involvement with the community planning process; as a result, in 1977, the City requested that the Coastal Commission permit segmentation of its Land Use Plan (LUP) into twelve parts in order to have the LCP process conform, to the maximum extent feasible, with the City's various community plan boundaries. In the intervening years, the City has intermittently submitted all of its LUP segments, which are all presently certified, in whole or in part.

When the Commission approved segmentation of the LUP, it found that the implementation phase of the City's LCP would represent a single unifying element. This was achieved in January 1988, and the City of San Diego assumed permit authority on October 17, 1988 for the majority of its coastal zone. Several isolated areas of deferred certification remained at that time; some of these have been certified since through the LCP amendment process. Other areas of deferred certification remain today and are completing planning at a local level; they will be acted on by the Coastal Commission in the future.

### **B. STANDARD OF REVIEW**

The standard of review for land use plans and their amendments is found in Section 30512 of the Coastal Act. This section requires the Commission to certify an LUP or LUP amendment if it finds that it meets the requirements of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Specifically, it states:

#### Section 30512

(c) The Commission shall certify a land use plan, or any amendments thereto, if it finds that a land use plan meets the requirements of, and is in conformity with, the policies of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200). Except as provided in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a), a decision to certify shall require a majority vote of the appointed membership of the Commission.

### **C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Section 30503 of the Coastal Act requires local governments to provide the public with maximum opportunities to participate in the development of the LCP amendment prior to its submittal to the Commission for review. The City has held Planning Commission and City Council meetings and a series of public workshops with regard to the subject amendment request. All of those local hearings and meetings were duly noticed to the public. Notice of the subject amendment has been distributed to all known interested parties.

**PART II. LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM SUBMITTAL - RESOLUTIONS**

Following a public hearing, staff recommends the Commission adopt the following resolutions and findings. The appropriate motion to introduce the resolution and a staff recommendation are provided just prior to each resolution.

**I. MOTION:** *I move that the Commission certify the City of San Diego Land Use Plan Amendment No. LCP-6-CCP-16-0064-2 as submitted.*

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO CERTIFY:**

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in certification of the land use plan amendment as submitted and adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion to certify as submitted passes only upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the appointed Commissioners.

**RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT AS SUBMITTED:**

The Commission hereby certifies the Land Use Plan Amendment for the City of San Diego as submitted and adopts the findings set forth below on grounds that the land use plan will meet the requirements of and be in conformity with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. Certification of the land use plan amendment complies with the California Environmental Quality Act because either 1) feasible mitigation measures and/or alternatives have been incorporated to substantially lessen any significant adverse effects of the plan on the environment, or 2) there are no further feasible alternatives and mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts on the environment that will result from certification of the land use plan, as amended.

**PART III. FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL OF THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT, AS SUBMITTED****A. AMENDMENT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed amendment would replace Chapter 7, Transportation, of the existing Downtown Community Plan in its entirety with the Mobility Chapter ([Exhibit 1](#)). The proposed Mobility Chapter is based on the Downtown Mobility Plan, which is intended to serve as guide for future decision-making by establishing a vision with goals, strategies, and policies to outline the structure of the City's transportation system in downtown San Diego. The Downtown Mobility Plan effort was undertaken to address the changing priorities and needs of the multi-modal network within downtown, bringing forth improved connections and access for transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians, while maintaining roadway circulation for vehicles. The Downtown Mobility Plan is available

in full on the California Coastal Commission's website as a digital exhibit to this report ([Exhibit 3](#)), and is incorporated into the LUP by reference.

Specifically, the Mobility Chapter would provide for the implementation of a layered network of roads to accommodate multiple modes of travel across downtown, including bicycle facilities ("cycleways") and pedestrian facilities ("greenways") by reconfiguring the existing roadways and converting the excess capacity to accommodate other travel modes. Full implementation would result 5.5 miles of greenways, 9.3 miles of cycleways, 6.8 miles of transitways, 12.9 miles of autoways, and 21.7 miles of multi-functional streets ([Exhibit 4](#)), both in and out of the Coastal Zone.

The City of San Diego City Council held a public hearing for the Mobility Chapter on June 6, 2016 and certified Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the project. The City Council voted to replace the Transportation Chapter with the 2016 Mobility Chapter in the Downtown Community Plan and submit the Mobility Chapter to the Coastal Commission for the subject LUP amendment through Resolution No. 310562 at the same June 6, 2016 hearing. The amendment request was filed as complete for Commission consideration on November 10, 2016.

## **B. CONFORMANCE WITH SECTION 30001.5 OF THE COASTAL ACT**

The Commission finds, pursuant to Section 30512.2(b) of the Coastal Act, that the Land Use Plan amendment as proposed is in conformance with the policies and requirements of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act to the extent necessary to achieve the basic state goals specified in Section 30001.5 of the Coastal Act, which states:

The legislature further finds and declares that the basic goals of the state for the Coastal Zone are to:

- a) Protect, maintain and, where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment and its natural and manmade resources.
- b) Assure orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of coastal zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state.
- c) Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.
- (d) Assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the coast.
- (e) Encourage state and local initiatives and cooperation in preparing procedures to implement coordinated planning and development for mutually beneficial uses, including educational uses, in the coastal zone.

The Commission therefore finds, for the specific reasons detailed below, that the land use plan amendment conforms with Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act and the goals of the state for the coastal zone with regards to LCP Amendment No. LCP-6-CCP-16-0064-2.

**C. CONFORMITY OF THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO LAND USE PLAN WITH CHAPTER 3**

**1. Public Access/Recreational Facilities**

Section 30210 states:

*In carrying out the requirement of Section 4 of Article X of the California Constitution, maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse.*

Section 30212.5 states:

*Wherever appropriate and feasible, public facilities, including parking areas or facilities, shall be distributed throughout an area so as to mitigate against the impacts, social and otherwise, of overcrowding or overuse by the public of any single area.*

Section 30213 states:

*Lower cost visitor and recreational facilities shall be protected, encouraged, and, where feasible, provided. Developments providing public recreational opportunities are preferred. [...]*

Section 30252 states:

*The location and amount of new development should maintain and enhance public access to the coast by (1) facilitating the provision or extension of transit service, [...] (3) providing nonautomobile circulation within the development, (4) providing adequate parking facilities or providing substitute means of serving the development with public transportation, [...] (6) assuring that the recreational needs of new residents will not overload nearby coastal recreation areas by correlating the amount of development with local park acquisition and development plans with the provision of onsite recreational facilities to serve the new development.*

The proposed Mobility chapter maintains consistency with and expands on the policies included in the existing Transportation chapter of the Downtown Community Plan. While implementation of the plan will result in reduced accommodations for vehicle

transportation and parking, pedestrian, bicycle and transit user facilities will be improved resulting in a more equitable transportation system for the downtown community. It should be noted that the effect of the proposed amendment in the Coastal Zone will be limited and mostly indirect, as the majority of the land in the Centre City community planning area within the Coastal Zone, including the land along the waterfront, is not under the coastal permit authority of the City of San Diego. However, there are portions of the planning area within the Coastal Zone and many visitors to San Diego Bay travel by way of downtown so amendments to the Downtown Community Plan could impact the public's ability to access the coast.

The existing street network in downtown provides a high degree of connectivity for vehicles while also providing multiple regional access points by three freeways, including I-5, SR-163, and SR-94, and to San Diego Bay. A large concentration of transit options are also available downtown, including the local bus, rapid bus, light rail, commuter rail, and freight rail. Existing bicycle facilities, however, are inadequate as there is a lack of connectivity. The network is primarily characterized by Class II bike lanes along the community boundaries and no existing facility traverses downtown San Diego. In addition, there are many locations where existing pedestrian and bicycle users experience high rates of collisions with vehicles. As such, the subject Mobility Plan and associated Mobility Chapter amendment was undertaken with an overarching goal of providing enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are evenly distributed throughout downtown to provide a more equitable transportation network for all users.

Studies were conducted to assess demand, number of collisions, and network characteristics for active and transit users. Strategies were then developed in part by assessing and addressing these areas with the goal of a safer, more comfortable network of facilities.

For pedestrians, a series of greenways would link existing and planned parks and improve connections to adjacent communities and the waterfront ([Exhibit 4](#)), promoting public access to the coast and recreational opportunities for visitors and residents alike. Recognizing the relatively high volume of vehicles that circulate in downtown San Diego, the proposed bicycle network relies heavily on protected bicycle facilities such as cycle tracks and multi-use paths which provide physical separation between vehicular traffic and cyclists. Finally, while transit is operated by outside agencies, the plan seeks to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety near transit stops, work with responsible agencies to improve route deficiencies, and install amenities to promote ridership such as high-quality transit shelters, bike racks, bike share stations, and information kiosks. Thus, the proposed amendment would provide recreational opportunities consistent with public safety needs pursuant to Coastal Act Section 30210, provide lower cost visitor and recreational facilities consistent with Section 30213, and facilitate the provision or extension of transit service, provide nonautomobile circulation within downtown, and assure the recreational needs of new residents will not overload nearby coastal recreation areas by developing additional parks and green space as mandated by Section 30252.

A comprehensive data collection and analysis effort was also undertaken to realize existing traffic demands and deficiencies in the downtown area resulting in a series of recommendations to alter the traffic flow through existing streets. Strategies include prioritizing certain streets (“autoways”) to provide for high volume automobile and transit flows into, out of and through downtown; converting select one-way street segments to two-way streets to provide for increased vehicular mobility; and reducing the number or size of lanes on roads with excess capacity to accommodate improvements to other facilities.

There are two highly used coastal corridors, Pacific Highway and Harbor Drive, which could be impacted by the project. One intersection, at Laurel Street and Pacific Highway, would operate at an unacceptable level of service that could not be mitigated for, with implementation of the Mobility Chapter. This intersection, however, is not proposed to be modified with the plan and is already built to the limits of the existing right-of-way. In addition, even without implementation of the Mobility Chapter, potential traffic impacts at this intersection would remain significant.

While not in the plan area, Harbor Drive, which fronts the San Diego Bay, could be impacted by the proposed amendment. The Port of San Diego is currently conducting a mobility study for Harbor Drive that would include a potential road diet along Harbor Drive, and traffic diversion from Harbor Drive to Pacific Highway. The traffic study conducted for the Downtown Mobility Plan took these impacts into consideration, and also assumed that additional traffic would be generated by the Port’s North Embarcadero Visionary Plan and the Airport Master Plan. Even with these considerations, the FEIR found no significant change in service.

While implementation of the Mobility Chapter would result in improvements to bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities, losses to the public parking supply will be necessary to accommodate the improvements to active transport facilities. The Coastal Commission has historically identified vehicular parking as a public access issue and protected public parking supplies adjacent to beaches and coastal resources. In this case, the implementation of the Mobility Chapter would result in a short term (10 year) increase in public parking supply of approximately 277 spaces due to planned improvements including parking reconfiguration and the construction of a parking garage. However, full implementation, assuming all projects are fully funded, constructed and that no new parking facilities are added, would result in a worst-case scenario estimated loss of 477 public parking spaces.

While the most significant impacts to parking will occur outside of the Coastal Zone from the installation of greenways along Cedar Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and Union Street, parking will also be removed on Pacific Highway (17 spaces) and Beech Street (11 spaces) to install cycleways, on Grape Street (13 spaces) and Hawthorn Street (11 spaces) to increase road lanes from 3- to 4-lanes to accommodate traffic flows, and on Cedar Street (3 spaces) to install a greenway. To address the loss of parking, the Mobility Chapter proposes to implement a parking management program to include converting parallel parking to angled, reconfiguring or converting vacated driveways and obsolete curb zones (red zones, white passenger loading zones, etc.) to maximize on-street parking availability;

expanding the existing year-round free, on-demand downtown circulator shuttle from 17 to 30 shuttles to reduce the demand for parking on interior streets and surface lots; constructing a new 200 space underground public parking facility beneath the East Village Green Park Project; developing website and smart phone applications to display real time parking availability; developing shared public parking facilities; branding public parking facilities; encouraging shared parking agreements; implementing dynamic pricing and enhanced enforcement with censor technology; and implementing a transportation demand management program aimed at reducing traffic congestion and increasing the number of commuters who rideshare through carpooling or vanpooling, ride transit, bike, walk, and telecommute. These programs are in addition to the improvements to active transportation facilities.

Thus, while parking will be lost as a result of the proposed amendment, a parking management program will be implemented to mitigate against any significant adverse impacts. Overall, vehicle travel will likely be reduced while non-automobile transportation facilities will see significant improvements. The proposed amendment considers all street users. As such, the Commission finds that the Mobility Chapter's focus on a multi-modal transportation system with improvements to cycling, pedestrian, transit, and motorized vehicle facilities is consistent with the public access and public recreation policies of the Coastal Act.

## **2. Energy Consumption**

Section 30253 states:

*New development shall do all of the following: [...]*

*(d) Minimize energy consumption and vehicle miles traveled. [...]*

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act requires that projects minimize energy consumption and vehicle miles travelled. Implementation of the Mobility Chapter will increase safety and comfort for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users and provide for a more efficient targeted network for vehicle transit and parking. The results will include increasing overall user levels for these active and transit users and decreasing the need for vehicle circulation within downtown San Diego. Thus, the proposed amendment is consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act.

## **PART IV. CONSISTENCY WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)**

Section 21080.9 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exempts local government from the requirement of preparing an environmental impact report (EIR) in connection with its local coastal program. Instead, the Coastal Commission acts as lead agency for the purposes of fulfilling CEQA. The Commission's LCP review and approval program has been found by the Resources Agency to be functionally equivalent to the

EIR process. Thus, under CEQA Section 21080.5, the Commission is relieved of the responsibility to prepare an EIR for each LCP submission.

Nevertheless, the Commission is required in an LCP submittal or, as in this case, an LCP amendment submittal, to find that the LCP, or LCP, as amended, does conform with CEQA provisions. A Program Final Environmental Impact Report SCH No. 2003041001 was certified by the City Council in 2006 for the Downtown Community Plan (2006 PEIR). The street network and facilities changes proposed by the Mobility Chapter have been evaluated in a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2014121002). The SEIR identified new potential impacts to Transportation and Circulation and mitigation measures were identified which reduce the significant impacts; however, not all impacts were mitigated to below a level of significance. Therefore, on June 14, 2016 the City Council certified the Final SEIR and adopted a Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Conditions and a Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program.

Specifically, the FSEIR found that the network set forth by the proposed project would result in eight intersections operating at an unacceptable level of service that could not be mitigated for, as these intersections are built to the limits of the existing right-of-way. One of these intersections, at Laurel Street and Pacific Highway, is located in the Coastal Zone. However, the Finding of Fact found that even under the No Project Alternative, traffic impacts would likewise remain significant and unavoidable while the Statement of Overriding Conditions lists multiple benefits of the project including developing downtown with a transportation network that provides convenient and safe access to parks and the waterfront for all travelers, and assisting in the implementation of the City's Climate Action Plan.

Thus, the Commission finds that approval of the LCP amendment, as submitted, would not result in significant environmental impacts under the meaning of the CEQA, and there are no anticipated adverse impacts to any coastal resources, including public access and mobility. Therefore there are no feasible alternatives and mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts on the environment that will result from certification of the land use plan amendment.