



Planning & Transportation Commission

Staff Report (ID # 8140)

Report Type: Study Session **Meeting Date:** 11/29/2017

Summary Title: PTC Annual Report to Council

Title: Discussion Regarding the Planning and Transportation Commission's Annual Report to the City Council.

From: Hillary Gitelman

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) take the following action(s):

1. Review and provide comments

Background

This report transmits a first draft of the annual PTC report to Council. Chair Alcheck has authored the letter and seeks commission input. If necessary, the PTC will consider this report at its next meeting.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Draft Chair's Report to Council 2017 (PDF)



PLANNING & COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

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CHAIR'S REPORT TO COUNCIL – PALO ALTO PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 29, 2017

Dear Mayor Scharff and Council Members:

Since I first joined the Planning and Transportation Commission, the Chair's report to City Council has served as a summary of the past year's work. In keeping with that tradition, I would like to highlight some of the items that we reviewed and provided guidance on to Council.

As you are all aware, the major accomplishment of the PTC during my term as Chair was our three month long review of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan. This process began many years ago and included the hard work of countless dedicated residents and volunteers. The new Comprehensive Plan provides a coherent and articulate vision that will facilitate decision making for the next decade and beyond.

The PTC was also involved in many important discussions during the last twelve months covering a myriad of topics including the following:

- the proper management of parking in our downtown¹,
- the best way to control commercial office and R&D development²,
- the design and implementation of residential parking programs³,
- efforts to preserve and encourage retail⁴, and
- efforts to encourage housing unit supply⁵ and development⁶.

It's worth noting that during the last 12 months we reviewed a total of three multi-family housing projects proposing to add 127 units to our supply, including applications for 3877 El Camino Real, 2755 El Camino Real, and 3001 El Camino Real.

I would also like to outline some areas where I believe we could improve the process at the PTC level ensuring improved results for our important work before it makes its way to City Council.

¹ Review of the Downtown Parking Management Study...10/11/2017

² Ordinance to Perpetuate an Annual Limit on Office/R&D Development following Expiration of Interim Ordinance #5357...3/29/2017 and 7/26/2017

³ New Residential Preferential Parking Program in the Southgate Neighborhood...4/26/2017

⁴ Ordinance Making Preferential Parking Program in the Southgate Neighborhood...4/26/2017

⁵ Draft Ordinance to Update the City's Below Market Rate Program and Adopt Affordable Housing Impact/In Lieu Fees for Commercial and Residential Construction...11/30/2016

⁶ Ordinance to Update the City's Municipal Code Sections Regarding Accessory Dwelling Units...11/30/2016

My first suggestion is that the PTC take a more active role in coordinating with Planning Department Staff as they begin to work on items that will come before the PTC. This could be accomplished through the work of a sub-committee made up of no more than 3 members of the PTC. This sub-committee could meet 4-6 times a year to help Staff identify areas of specific interest or importance in items that will be coming before the PTC in future meetings so that Staff can better design or guide the preparation of the information we will be reviewing.

This “advanced planning sub-committee” could have, for example, allowed the PTC to encourage Staff to make more of an effort to engage the retail and restaurateur community in our downtown prior to presenting the Downtown Parking Management Study to the PTC. During that meeting, despite general support for exploring paid parking solutions downtown, the vast majority of Commissioners struggled with the lack of public input, and specifically feedback from a key stakeholder, shop keepers and restaurant owners.

My second suggestion is that the PTC take a more active role in addressing issues affecting our community that have resulted from programs that are currently being implemented or have been implemented within the previous 6 to 18 months. This could be accomplished through the work of a second sub-committee made up of no more than 3 members of the PTC. This sub-committee could meet 3-4 times a year to hear the concerns from residents who are experiencing negative and possibly unexpected impacts from programs that the PTC has reviewed. The sub-committee would then determine which items are deemed significant enough to merit a full PTC review and coordinate with Staff to put the item on a future agenda. The PTC would then review the program and the feedback during a regular meeting and determine whether adjustments are worthy of City Council consideration.

This “implementation management sub-committee” could have, for example, been a perfect venue for individuals struggling with some of the unintended consequences that resulted from the implementation of the Evergreen Park/Mayfield residential preferred parking program. The opportunity for residents and business owners to communicate issues they are having with programs the City has recently implemented may prove to empower individuals to first attempt to work through solutions at the PTC level before burdening the City Council with the same. At the same time, the 6 month requirement would allow for the natural “growing pains” resulting from a change to work itself out before such a review could be suggested.

My final recommendation is that our Commission dedicate itself to acquiring a better understanding of the forces that shape growth and development (or lack thereof) in our community and region. This could be accomplished by amending our bylaws to include the requirement that Commissioners attend 4 hours of continued education in the field of urban planning each year. Such opportunities are readily available and could have a tremendous impact on the quality of our review. The best example of one such opportunity to learn is the annual Planning Commissioners Academy that is hosted by the League of California Cities. I have personally attended this event and can attest to its tremendous value.

The 2018 event is scheduled for April 4-6 and includes seminars entitled:

- Infill Projects: Ensuring Neighborhood Compatibility
- Streets as Places: How Small Projects Lead to Big Changes
- How to Build a Successful Downtown

My hope is that this minimal additional commitment of time be considered as an opportunity to increase the knowledge base of our Commission and expand the breadth of our analysis and review. A second benefit from attending continuing education events like this is that we also encounter individuals from other communities who may be working through similar challenges and the relationships created could result in us learning about innovative approaches to similar problems.

I would like to conclude this letter by acknowledging the tremendous gratitude I have to the members of the 2017 Planning & Transportation Commission and Planning Staff. Your commitment to the work we do and the care and dedication with which you approach each item on our agenda was inspiring to me. I am proud of the work we did this year and I look forward to working with each of you in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Alcheck". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "A".

Mike Alcheck,
Chair, Planning and Transportation Commission