

DATE ISSUED: July 20, 2005

REPORT NO. 05-155

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee
Agenda of July 27, 2005

SUBJECT: Balboa Avenue Revitalization Action Program

SUMMARY:

Issue – Should the LU&H Committee recommend that the City Council adopt the Balboa Avenue Revitalization Action Program (Balboa Avenue RAP)?

Manager’s Recommendation – Recommend City Council adoption.

Planning Group Recommendation – On June 21, 2005, the Clairemont Mesa Planning Committee voted 9-0-0 to recommend that the City Council adopt the Balboa Avenue RAP. Additionally, on May 25, 2005, the Balboa Avenue Citizens Advisory Committee (BACAC) voted 7-0-0 to recommend City Council adoption.

Fiscal Impact – None with this action. Implementation of the specific measures contained within the Balboa Avenue RAP will require future funding allocations. These measures will be implemented through a variety of methods, including: private project-related improvements, grant requests and City Capital Improvement Projects.

Environmental Impact – The proposed Balboa Avenue RAP is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it is “not a project,” pursuant to state CEQA guidelines Section 15060(c)(3). Future implementation actions related to this program will require environmental review at the time they are proposed.

BACKGROUND:

The Balboa Avenue RAP is a comprehensive implementation program that examines the current conditions of the Balboa Avenue corridor, discusses potential design concepts, and provides a series of recommendations. The planning process began in 1996 with the establishment of the BACAC to act as the community liaison with the California Department of Transportation as part of a repaving project along Balboa Avenue. The BACAC worked to expand the scope of the desired improvements along the corridor. In late 2001, the state of California relinquished Balboa Avenue to the City of San Diego which provided an opportunity to provide pedestrian-oriented improvements that had not been possible under the state highway code. Along with this relinquishment came a significant amount of state funding to be used specifically for capital improvement projects on Balboa Avenue. Additionally, a San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Walkable Communities Demonstration Program grant was awarded to help create a vision plan for Balboa Avenue. This grant allowed for an intensive collaborative design effort, which consisted of a five-day charrette that developed a high degree of public involvement in the planning process for future improvements. Over the years, the BACAC has been meeting on a monthly basis with professional planners and engineers, consultants, business owners, private developers and public officials from all branches of government. The vision plan has evolved into the Balboa Avenue RAP (see Attachment).

DISCUSSION:

The Balboa Avenue RAP has been developed in cooperation with Walkable Communities, Inc., and the BACAC. The program is a summary of the information gathered during the five-day charrette and the walkability study completed by the consultant team. The charrette process, conducted in 2001, was the basis for developing the Balboa Avenue Vision Plan, and provided opportunities for staff, community leaders, and the public to contribute their ideas and concerns. This vision plan process also included walking audits of the Clairemont Drive and Genesee Avenue sections of Balboa Avenue and focus groups to determine improvements and recommendations for the Balboa Avenue corridor.

The Balboa Avenue RAP includes analysis, design concepts, recommendations, and implementation and funding strategies for Balboa Avenue. The analysis section discusses the current conditions, various opportunities, and different segments of the corridor. In order to simplify the implementation process, the Balboa Avenue corridor has been divided into four geographic segments starting from the east. Each segment contains unique opportunities to realize the overall goal of creating a better corridor to serve the community. Segment I is considered the eastern gateway, which starts along the eastern boundary of the Clairemont Mesa community, beginning at Interstate 805. Segment II is known as the community core, which is the shopping center area that begins at Mt. Abernathy Avenue, and is central to the entire Clairemont Mesa community. Segment III includes the segment of Balboa Avenue which passes through Tecolote Canyon and Segment IV is considered the western gateway, which is where motorists enter the community from Interstate 5.

Design concepts for the corridor include ways to identify Balboa Avenue as a unique place that is inviting, cohesive, and connected to nature, and links adjacent neighborhoods to goods, services, and people. The character of the Balboa Avenue corridor varies considerably, from being more urbanized east of the community core and more oriented to the canyon landscape in the west. For this reason community identity is a major concept discussed in this program. Safety issues for motorists, walkers, cyclists, and transit riders are also concerns that are addressed.

Recommendations contained in the Balboa Avenue RAP will influence the final design of projects throughout the corridor. General recommendations for the overall corridor include: driveway redesign, median widening, the addition of bike lanes throughout the entire corridor consistent with the City's adopted Bicycle Master Plan, landscaped planter strips to separate walkways from the street, curb ramps, and high visibility crosswalk markings. Recommendations pertaining to each of the four segments of the Balboa Avenue corridor are discussed in more detail including: landscaping features, street design elements, and other features that impact the street.

Many of the general recommendations contained in the Balboa Avenue RAP have their basis in the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan. The community plan contains policy statements intended to foster such objectives as a visually enhanced streetscape, bicycle mobility and improved pedestrian circulation, with the overall goal of creating a pleasant pedestrian environment along the Balboa Avenue corridor. Additionally, the community plan includes specific recommendations for commercial development within the community core section of the corridor, many of which have been incorporated into the Balboa Avenue RAP. The overall recommendations contained within the Balboa Avenue RAP are designed to implement policies contained within the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan. While most of the concepts in the Balboa Avenue RAP conform to the goals and objectives of the community plan, there are several areas in which the community plan calls for Balboa Avenue to be widened to a six-lane major thoroughfare, whereas the Balboa Avenue RAP discourages the widening. Wherever this discrepancy exists, the Balboa Avenue RAP contains a statement which acknowledges the community plan discrepancy and states that the community plan would have to be amended prior to any implementation step to the contrary.

Implementation of the recommendations in the Balboa Avenue RAP will be dependent upon a coordinated public/private funding partnership, leveraging City and private funding and improvements, along with state, federal and other grant funds. Beyond the specific implementation actions proposed in the document, it is the objective of the Balboa Avenue RAP to foster quality design and development throughout the Balboa Avenue corridor.

CONCLUSION:

The Balboa Avenue RAP is the product of nearly nine years of community meetings, workshops and field observations, involving dozens of residents, planners, engineers and public officials from a variety of organizations, agencies and City departments. A group of citizens, the BACAC, has assumed a leadership role in attracting broad segments of the community and professional staff in the development of the Balboa Avenue RAP. The analysis, design concepts, recommendations, and implementation measures included in the Balboa Avenue RAP are intended to implement the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan by transforming the Balboa Avenue corridor into a pleasant and inviting environment for pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles alike. By recommending City Council adoption of the Balboa Avenue RAP, the Land Use and Housing Committee would be taking a significant step in realizing this vision of making Balboa Avenue a great place that characterizes the community's quality of life and sense of identity.

Respectfully submitted,

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Planning Director

Approved: Ellen Oppenheim
Deputy City Manager

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Attachment: [Balboa Avenue Revitalization Action Program \(RAP\) \[Limited distribution\]](#)