

**MINUTES
CITY OF NORTH LAS VEGAS
SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION**

CALL TO ORDER: Thursday, November 1, 2007 at 3:51 P.M.
North Las Vegas City Hall, Council Chambers
2200 Civic Center Drive, North Las Vegas, NV

WELCOME: Chairman Steve Brown

ROLL CALL: Chairman Steve Brown - Present
Vice-Chairman Dilip Trivedi - Present
Commissioner Dean Leavitt - Present
Commissioner Harry Shull - Absent
Commissioner Jay Aston - Present
Commissioner Jo Cato - Absent
Commissioner Ned Thomas - Present

STAFF PRESENT: Jory Stewart, Planning & Zoning Director
Marc Jordan, Planning Manager
Frank Fiori, Planning Manager
Vicki Adams, Planner
Stephanie Bruning, Planner
Nick Vaskov, Deputy City Attorney
Jo Ann Lawrence, Recording Secretary

VERIFICATION: Jo Ann Lawrence, Recording Secretary

BUSINESS

- 1. THE CONSULTANT FIRM OF MOORE, IACOFANO AND GOLTSMAN, INC. (MIG) WILL MAKE A PRESENTATION TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND DISCUSS THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN / INVESTMENT STRATEGY.**

Daniel Iacofano, Principal with MIG, explained they were urban planners, designers, and landscape architects and one of their specialties was working on downtown areas which they had done in various cities of small, medium and large sizes all over the United States. He indicated they had some great meetings to get to know the City and had interviews and discussions with City Staff, department heads, and members of the Planning Commission and were currently underway with those reviews and were receiving input and ideas to help shape the plan. It had to be a City driven and a community effort and they hoped to involve the public and private sectors in a partnership to come up with the right strategies and

ideas for how downtown should evolve. Opportunities abound and the number of acres that are up for grabs and are being discussed where new private investment was being considered really showed the potential for what downtown North Las Vegas could be and their view was that a plan that they aim to produce would help bring those different forces and investments together so the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. They look at how the public realm, the public interface would be shaped and organized, that's where a real sense of place and identity could be achieved. At MIG they believed the plans were only as good as the implementation that happened as a result and he was proud to say their projects resulted in billions of dollars of new investment in the cities. In Spokane, Washington, since 1999, there was approximately three billion dollars of investment taking place with a series of strategic projects that were identified in the 1999 plan and they were updating the plan, as they want to set a new set of ten projects forward to help revitalize the city. He indicated there was a long way to go in understanding North Las Vegas; but, they had started to look and begun to put their planning and design hats on to see what North Las Vegas could become. As part of the team, the Project Manager, Jay Renkin, who was with the Portland Office, would be going through the steps of the project. In addition, there is Square Peg Design, which specializes in the branding of environment, the signage and way-finding. They believed strongly that you have to have a grounding in the economic reality of planning and design and development to have successful implementation, so they have economic and planning systems as part of the team and they would help determine just what the fundamentals are, the market realities, the demand for land uses and the estimates of what prototypical development should look like in order to have something feasible for developers. In addition, they have a representative of PBS & J, a local area firm, to help because they were currently involved in the North Las Vegas Boulevard traffic circulation study, so there was a nice tie there. They also bring the urban planning and urban design perspective so the image presented could get translated and become a framework for the private investment and they hoped to identify, along with EPS and the other team members, the tool kit of materials and products that will help guide the development. They do not believe in overly prescriptive design standards or regulations, as they want it to be performance oriented and were looking for certain key relationships and would be focusing on those. Within the framework, should be a very wide latitude for what private development could actually achieve. They need to look at the downtown in a very focused, concentrated manner, so if you looked at the imaginary downtown grid and thought about all of the key building blocks, such as Civic Center or the Hospital, or the retail areas, some of those form the basis for the framework they were going to be putting together in the planning effort. Then the pieces would be filled in and they would concentrate the street scape or the public realm investment so that it added up to something and there really was ultimately a focus. So, if you thought of the map of the City, in the downtown area where Lake Mead Boulevard came across from I-15 going to the east, and you had North Las Vegas Boulevard, that formed a very critical core area and within that circle, there was a number of assets that existed and there were a number of opportunity sites that existed and if they were all tied together, there would be a powerful turnaround and the Fifth Street Corridor could be a better opportunity to have going on at

the same time as the downtown plan was being prepared. In terms of the project goals, they want the vision, the distinct brand for the downtown area and would be working with Square Peg to do that. Ultimately it would get translated into the form of signage and way-finding landscaping improvements. They want the investment strategy so they know how the capital projects of the City would be phased in and ultimately, something that would enhance the connectivity to the neighborhoods in and around downtown. They were talking with Commissioner Leavitt about that, of how important it was that they gather the views of the residents surrounding the downtown area. Mr. Iacafono introduced Jay Renkin to give an overview of the planning context of what was imagined to be some of the tools coming out of the effort.

Mr. Renkin explained they were in the beginning phases of the project and he would overview the project and the planning process. In preparation for the meeting, the project itself, they were in the phase of gathering information, understanding what has happened to date and what the plans were that were currently underway and what the potential was. Las Vegas Valley was one of the fastest growing places in the country, even with certain slow-downs in the residential side, it was still growing very rapidly, especially relative to other places and while Las Vegas was best known, North Las Vegas was the fastest growing large city over 100,000 people. The growth gives a lot of opportunity, especially in the downtown core, which was a more mature part of the City; but, because of the strong Hispanic population that was migrating to the area, there was opportunities because of those roof tops and because of the higher residential population to do some new things and some new investment on the commercial side. Some of those are previous planning efforts that we have looked at including the Fifth Street Transit Corridor, the Comprehensive Master Plan. One of the most important, the 2025 Visioning effort which called for the plan being developed. If you looked at the downtown area, typically, they worked in a downtown that was the central city; but, the way the area has developed, it is definitely not the center. Development has occurred northward from where the city began rather than outward and circling that. It was something that needed to be considered as they moved forward. Some of the preliminary assets, issues and opportunities include capitalizing on the strategic location, so you are next door to Las Vegas and, in fact the study area itself, the downtown area, was immediately adjacent to Las Vegas. There was currently a diverse mix of uses, while maybe there was not a cohesive glue between the uses to make it a real sense of place, there was government and civic uses, medical uses, entertainment, residential, which were assets that could be built upon as the process moved forward. There were several major destinations that had either gone through recent investment or planning new investment in their properties and it was concentrated in the urban renewal area. Some projects that were in the works were the Latino/Hispanic shopping center which was across from the Silver Nugget and the potential for the new City Hall, which negotiations were underway, the Aheck Office Complex, the Silver Nugget improvements, and the gateway transit station at 5th Street and Lake Mead Boulevard. As previously pointed out, there were amazing opportunities, not only in the assets already available, in terms of new investment, but also in the vacant parcels that are available. There are a lot of properties

that are already owned by the City, under control by the Redevelopment Agency, or have potential to be. There is an opportunity to reinvent the downtown, but at the same time, there were some major obstacles to doing so. Some of the zoning codes limit density and have minimum site areas for development, so there may be opportunity to recast how in-fill occurs in terms of density, set-backs, and the size of the development. As that is done, there are major investments and existing properties, perhaps in new investment, and that is stitched together through the public realm, through the street, the public spaces and that should be done in the pedestrian environment, for bicyclists, motorists and transit, so it was a multi-modal approach and they not only want to create something beautiful and aesthetically pleasing, but also something that was safe and connected the different areas, not only within the downtown, but also the commercial core to the adjacent residential areas. If you begin to think about the connections, the development in terms of the uses are not much different; but, if you looked at the street grids and how they were laid out and how it compared to the downtown area of North Las Vegas, you could see the stark contrast, where there was probably the fewest bones to build off of in the area of North Las Vegas Boulevard, but it was not much better when you looked at the areas along Civic Center Drive and then east of the City Hall Campus, there are long blocks that there is a more regular grid, but the connection between that and the existing commercial core are very difficult. The 5th Street Corridor transit opportunity was mentioned, and when thinking about the connections, about the public realm, you want to think about opportunities, not only for the actual street itself, but the development that occurs around it, so 5th Street provided one opportunity, or an example where maybe the style of development could be different, maybe it was transit oriented or mixed use development, a little higher intensity around a transit station or two, whether that's at Lake Mead Boulevard or maybe a couple stops north and south of there. Also, an increase in housing choice. There are a lot of residential roof tops; but, it is a pretty homogenous pool at this point, but you want to increase the mix of housing opportunities and to create different product types, different cost, an entry level for the different products and really give people a choice. Maybe they do not want to live in Las Vegas or other sections of North Las Vegas but want a more urban experience but they do not have a product to purchase. If you think about the branding and the identity, the one thing that was really strong in the downtown area and would be even stronger with the Latino shopping center coming in, is the Hispanic community and so there may be opportunities, at least for sections of downtown, if not the entire area, to really brand it in a certain way that it is identified as being Hispanic. At this time most people do not know where downtown North Las Vegas is located and there are ways to put North Las Vegas on the map. The identity does not just go on a high level district brand naming but it starts to be noticed by how the build form is created. There was already a unique identity to the transit stops and so building on those types of assets could enhance the identity. It is one thing to create a unique identity with the different pieces together with the public realm within the actual commercial core, within the downtown, but it is another thing to actually get people to realize that North Las Vegas is changing. When they were talking to Scott Kyler with Square Peg, he was saying they want to have the signage and way-finding inside the downtown area, but you need to get people off the

highway and into the downtown area, so that is taken into consideration during the planning stage. The economical analysis was important, so the market must be understood, what could be absorbed in different places and what the drivers were of the demand for different uses and also look at the competitive supply. They have met with the major investors and gotten them up to speed on what was happening and were in the process of conducting stake holder interviews, but they were trying to determine the existing conditions and what was already in place and what was already planned and analyzing the market including social dynamics as well as the political atmosphere. Phase 2 would be updating visioning goals. They would identify the 2025 vision and update it or make it more specific to the downtown area and then identify specific goals on how to implement that vision. They would create a planning framework through an intensive charrette process which would be done at their office and on-site with several standing groups and develop a planning framework that would guide development and the public realm improvements as the implementation takes place. Design concepts would be included focusing on urban design and form, street scape and public space improvements and the land use and absorption potential. They would identify some key catalytic opportunity development projects where the public side of things, the City could help leverage additional private investment in the future through either a model project, through some incentives and that type of thing. That would all lead to the draft plan, an investment strategy. After it was presented to the public, staff, the Planning Commission and City Council, they would take the input and hone it and develop the final master plan. There was an existing conditions memo, that would have a strong narrative describing the demographics, social conditions, political conditions, and economical conditions, along with a series of maps that would help in understanding the area. The vision goals and economic realities memo highlighted the update to the vision and the goals that would be necessary and wanted by the community to achieve the vision. There was a planning framework memo to apply the vision to what was on the ground and identify the opportunities, the major gateways and major corridors. A vision and image were created and would be implemented through standards, design guidelines and basically guiding. It would not be through subsidizing every project; although some of that might occur. The important part, as the Planning Commission, would be feeding into the zoning code update that was occurring and codifying some of the things that would make the downtown area more cohesive. The downtown branding strategy memo would integrate it throughout the entire process, including the Visioning document but they would also call out specifically through way-finding, different building elements, landscaping and other means, which would brand North Las Vegas as something distinct, something that was a regional draw, not just a local draw. The Master Plan and Investment Strategy would be usable by the Commission and Staff and could be implemented.

Commissioner Dean Leavitt asked if a quantitative amount of time had been put into each of the categories.

Mr. Renkin responded a time line had been assigned and basically the process was expected to conclude in July or August, 2008. The first round of public meeting would be done in mid December, 2007 and then there would be meetings in February and April/May with final adoption in July or August, 2008

Commissioner Jay Aston asked if the investors they had met with were people who were already invested in North Las Vegas.

Mr. Renkin responded that was correct. They had been meeting with members of the major investors group. Although they had met with one of the partners in the Latino shopping center, who was a new investor in the area and had done projects in Texas and California. Commissioner Aston asked if, when they were meeting with investors, if that included investors from Las Vegas. Mr. Renkin indicated that was a good point.

Mr. Iacofano welcomed any suggestions for people or organizations that they should interact with, as that was how the planning processes worked because organizations like that know the City of North Las Vegas was planning the major moves and they wanted to be part of it. It was an opportunity to use the process to make things happen. People in the development community like to have the rules of the game clearly laid out, the vision laid out, there was agreement on the vision and when they were ready to move in, they could do things when the table was set.

Commissioner Aston asked Staff if there was a height restriction in the downtown area. Mr. Iacofano indicated that question had come up in conversations and the downtown area should have more density of use and more interaction, which would revitalize it and activate the area. It would also make it safer and generate more activity for the retail and entertainment venues. Housing could be a part of it also and Mr. Renkin indicated some of the housing product types that would be investigated to create the variety and mix, which was what successful downtowns were built on.

Commissioner Aston indicated the segregation between Las Vegas and North Las Vegas was that North Las Vegas had a moratorium on casinos and hotels in the downtown area and was a thought process of the past and in the downtown vision, he asked what the height limitation would be and if we still stop potential casino investors, and asked if those concerns were being discussed.

Mr. Iacofano indicated those were relevant points and he hoped for MIG and his team to bring forward some tools or modeling capability that would help look at the footprint of potential development to see it in three dimensions as well as being able to understand the economics and the urban design aspects and the impacts associated with doing that, both fiscal and environmental. While they might not achieve the same intensity of development as you would in downtown Las Vegas, we could still be a regional sub-center and play a role within the valley that would be complimentary and not necessarily trying to duplicate what was elsewhere.

Commissioner Aston asked if the development would lean more toward a vision of a more upscale Latino environment.

Mr. Iacofano responded that question would be answered through the process. It was hard to ignore the demographics and there was energy and economic opportunity that would support it. There was also private market interest; but, there was a potential hybrid, which was alluded to; where it does not necessarily all go that way. He would rather see something that was more of a diverse portfolio of activity types and groups that were being attracted to the area, so it maintained a better economic strata, more diversity of economic development opportunity.

Commissioner Aston felt the growth that was taking place, needed to be considered when determining the end result.

Mr. Renkin agreed that the current assets should be built on and you wanted to be careful not to dilute the investment that was created but there was potential for sub-areas and sub-districts, where there was not one blanket identity to the downtown area.

Commissioner Dean Leavitt indicated the time line set forth by MIG was fairly aggressive and he liked it, but it put the onus on Staff to tie up all the loose ends on mixed use, because there was a distinct possibility that the downtown area would see the first mixed use in the City. The height restrictions, the distance separation and those type of things would need to be brought into play, so, as they meet with stakeholders and potential investors, those questions could be answered, so they could make better judgement and see the potential.

Mr. Iacofano indicated, now that the City was undertaking the comprehensive zoning update into review, it was perfect for what they were doing, because they could develop the vision, the concepts, the design ideas, and then they could bring that and infuse it into the zoning update, which would lock it in and allow two vertical mixed uses and create the variety and intensification of downtown.

Commissioner Aston asked if in the downtown redevelopment strategy, some isolated casino potential would be allowed; because, it could increase revenue.

Jory Stewart, Planning and Zoning Director explained the only limitation was that when SB-208 went before the legislature, there was an opportunity to designate gaming enterprise districts and, at that time, there was controversy that centered around neighborhood casinos penetrating areas of residential development. North Las Vegas did very specific footprints of their existing gaming districts based on the existing gaming that was in place. The limitations were how they went about expanding GED's and the City Council making those determinations to stay in compliance with State law.

Commissioner Aston understood the original concept behind the restriction of casino growth in North Las Vegas, as they wanted it to be a bedroom community; but times have changed. He thought for the downtown area to be successful, a couple of key properties could become a hub of growth potential.

Director Stewart thought they could be determined by the branding and investment strategy which would be determined.

Commissioner Ned Thomas agreed with Commissioners Leavitt and Aston and added another draw was the proximity to the large employment center on the Strip. When talking about connecting our downtown to the Strip and employment center with transit, then you were getting some synthesis. He believed the idea of having transit connections through downtown North Las Vegas and onto the Strip and to other parts of the City was really the long awaited catalyst for redevelopment in downtown North Las Vegas. He asked if areas would be identified and packaged as development sites that would be marketed by the City's Economic Development Department to developers and if it would include the traditional office buildings and transit oriented developers as well as the mixed use.

Mr. Iacofono responded they intended to create prototypical development concepts that would be tested from an economic standpoint and urban design standpoint and present them and show how they could be integrated into the downtown framework. In addition, the investment strategy would include a phasing of the public investments and improvements that would be needed to tie those different development opportunity sites together. So, combining the public and private, the public investments would also help to provide additional incentives for the private sector and certain things the City would be responsible for doing; but, that would enhance the value of those private development sites, which in turn would enhance the value of the real estate for the City of North Las Vegas, so there was a win win for the public and the private investors coming in. They would like to set the plan up where they have those high priority sites along with the phasing plan for public improvements.

Commissioner Aston thought bringing in some high quality housing and developing some of the sites in ways that have not been seen previously would be a great boon to the downtown area.

Chairman Steve Brown asked if a study was being done to find out why demographics are the way they are and if they know why the downtown area was 80% Latino. He understood the City of North Las Vegas was 36% Latino but 80% concentration in the downtown area and asked what would happen when the downtown area was changed, whether the land value would go up to where people could not afford to live there.

Mr. Renkin explained the demographics were most likely economic driven. North Las Vegas has traditionally been the least expensive place to live in the valley and the downtown area has been the least expensive area to live in North Las Vegas; so, that drove a lot if it and the type of development also played a role. As the City moved forward, an economic analysis was being prepared, as well as the existing conditions, but was not focused on pinpointing why certain populations live in certain areas; but, was something they wanted to consider as the process moved forward. They would develop an array of alternatives and identify the pros and cons associated with the alternatives and see how they stack up to the expectations of the Commission, Staff and major investors that were involved and basically they want to lend their expertise to help plan the downtown.

Chairman Brown did not want to see the downtown evolve to the point where there were high rise condos that cost a million dollars and would not be affordable.

Mr. Renkin indicated that would need to be considered and a risk that would have to be evaluated as they moved forward, not only through the planning process but through implementation as well.

Phil Stoeckinger, Finance Director felt the City was on target with the planning component, making sure that it was in sync with economic development and also with the business community, the financial piece. In the past legislative session, an extension for the Redevelopment area was granted and for the bonding capacity the City would have. It would increase the ability to do it from a financing piece, some of the investment by making sure that having the wise type of planning pieces that go with what was recommended by Staff and ultimately going to the Commission and Council was a key component and also working with the development community to explore those types of financing tools, whether a combination of different things, whether it be a site to use, looking at the different things to make a plan as the process goes forward, to bringing forward a project and a plan to long term fruition was a very key component.

Commissioner Leavitt indicated he provided information to the legislature which helped get the extension for the downtown redevelopment and another portion of the expedited process and time line was critical because the City was chided to do something with the time they had and this would show the legislators that the City held to their word.

Commissioner Dilip Trivedi agreed with comments made by Commissioner Aston and felt the City needed their own brand and it would not hurt to have a couple more casinos in the downtown area. He suggested having a bi-lingual planner available during the charrette.

PUBLIC FORUM

There was no public participation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

APPROVED: November 28, 2007

/s/ Steve Brown
Steve Brown, Chairman

/s/ Jo Ann Lawrence
Jo Ann Lawrence, Recording Secretary