

**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Marisa Lundstedt, Director of Community Development

BY: Nhung Madrid, Senior Management Analyst
Laurie B. Jester, Planning Manager
Ted Faturos, Assistant Planner

DATE: March 23, 2016

SUBJECT: Informational Overview of the Draft Downtown Specific Plan

RECOMMENDATION:
Staff recommends that the Planning Commission **ACCEPT THE PRESENTION.**

BACKGROUND:

Since June 2014, the community has been engaged in an ongoing discussion of the future of Downtown. The community has provided a tremendous amount of time, input and feedback through several outlets including City Council meetings, Commission meetings, workshops, stakeholder interviews, and the City's newest public engagement platform, Open City Hall. The Downtown Specific Plan project kicked-off in May 2015 with Michael Baker International (MBI), the Consultant hired to prepare the Downtown Specific Plan.

In addition, the project team has met and still continues to engage with several key stakeholder groups, along with groups that share common interests in the Downtown to discuss the ideas and preferences for potential changes and/or revised regulations to help maintain and enhance the Downtown's small town character and economic viability. These discussions have built upon the stakeholder outreach that took place during the ULI visioning week activities in January 2015. Because a wealth of information was received through the initial ULI interviews, the discussions with the stakeholder groups have focused on delving deeper into the important questions facing the Downtown's future. The individuals that have participated in the discussions represent a broad cross-section of the community, including Downtown and citywide residents, members of the Downtown Business and Professional Association, the Manhattan Beach Commercial Property Owners Association, local merchants and business owners, realtors, the Chamber of Commerce, and Cultural Arts Commissioners.

Moreover, the project team has been collaborating with the Downtown Specific Plan Advisory Committee since inception of the project to listen to their impressions of the Downtown area, feedback on project deliverables, including the Specific Plan document, and public outreach activity and workshop results. To date, the Advisory Committee has met on three occasions, and they will meet again after Workshop #4 to share their impressions and perspective on the Draft Plan.

DISCUSSION:

This report is intended to provide an update and overview of the Draft Specific Plan.

Milestones

A summary of the upcoming Downtown Specific Plan schedule milestones is provided below:

March 14: release of the public draft posted on the City website, as well as available at City Hall, the Library and the Public Safety Facility.

March 16: Community Workshop #3 (Police and Fire) – informational overview of the plan only.

March 23: Planning Commission – informational overview of the plan only

March 24: Community Workshop #4 (Police and Fire) - this meeting will include breakout sessions where the public can ask questions and discuss main elements of the Plan. This meeting will also be an opportunity for the public to provide comments on the Draft Specific Plan. The next day the Advisory Committee will meet to debrief on the Workshop.

March 28: City Council - informational overview only of the Plan

April 12: Joint City Council/Planning Commission joint study session (Police and Fire). The purpose of this meeting is to receive specific direction from the Planning Commission and the City Council on the draft plan.

With the release of the public draft Specific Plan on March 14th, the public will have a month to provide comments up to April 12th. Comments can also be provided at future hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council when the Plan is considered for adoption in June/July. A timeline is included in the attached Workshop flyer.

Specific Plan Chapter Summary

The Specific Plan includes ten chapters which in part are required pursuant to state requirements. A brief summary of each chapter is provided below.

Chapter 1- Introduction:

This chapter discusses the purpose of the Specific Plan, defines the Specific plan area, provides background, the specific plan requirements, relationship to other City documents, guiding project principles, planning process and outreach, and organization of the Plan.

Chapter 2- Existing Conditions

Discussion on the local setting, historic context, existing land use, general plan land use, and local coastal program is included in this Chapter. Additionally, a discussion of the existing circulation networks and parking, community character, urban form, and existing infrastructure and public facilities is provided. Finally, the chapter discusses the Downtown's strong economic

position as well as a summary of key opportunities to improve parking, streetscape improvements, and future market opportunities.

Chapter 3- Vision

This Chapter includes a vision statement, as well as vision goals, and a definition of “small town character” as detailed below.

Vision Goals:

- Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the project area’s small town character
- Goal 2: Enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to the project area
- Goal 3: Improve access to parking and alternative transportation options
- Goal 4: Encourage economic development

Small Town Character Defined:

- Relaxed, charming, eclectic beach atmosphere
- Walkable, pedestrian-oriented, clean and safe environment
- Strong sense of community with the Downtown as the heart
- Events that reinforce a shared sense of community and place
- Recognize the need of visitors and tourists to sustain local businesses
- Balance residential and commercial quality of life to maintain the community’s integrity and soul

Chapter 4- Land Use Plan

The land use plan includes land use classifications within the Specific Plan areas, a discussion of the existing and proposed allowed use, as well as additional findings required for use permits for formula uses. Additional details on the proposed changes are included in the summary on the following pages.

Chapter 5- Circulation Plan

The circulation plan provides a discussion of street classifications and types, pedestrian and bike circulation, transit, automobile circulation, and parking. Proposed circulation projects are a key component of this chapter.

Chapter 6- Private Realm Development Standards and Design Guidelines

This chapter provides the development standards and design guidelines for private property development. Additional details on the proposed changes are included in the summary on the following pages.

Chapter 7- Public Realm Design Guidelines & Improvements

Design objectives, conceptual framework descriptions, design guidelines and the application of the guidelines are provided within this chapter. In addition, specific improvements to public spaces are discussed.

Chapter 8- Infrastructure & Public Facilities

Chapter 8 includes an analysis of utility infrastructure, recreation and parks, public safety, and educational, library, and cultural facilities.

Chapter 9- Economic Development & Strategies

Included within this chapter is a discussion of key strategic development issues and targeted economic development goals and strategies.

Chapter 10- Implementation

The Implementation Chapter is a framework that will be expanded once further direction is provided by the City Council on the detailed direction and provision of the Specific Plan. These strategies will include development incentives, an implementation action plan, a funding and financing strategy and plan administration.

Summary of Key Proposed Specific Plan Changes:

The following table provides a summary of the key changes, as provided in Chapters 4 and 6, proposed within the Draft Downtown Specific Plan. This table provides a comparison of the existing Code to the proposed Specific Plan and the ULI recommendations. A summary of the specific ULI recommendations are included as Attachment A.

STANDARD	EXISTING	PROPOSED	ULI
Maximum Setbacks			
Front	-	10 feet	-
Side	-	15 feet	-
Street Side	-	10 feet	-
Rear	-	0 feet or 10 feet	-
Height Limits			
Area A	22 feet / 30 feet 3 stories	22 feet / 30 feet 3 stories	30 - 45 feet, 3 - 4 stories
Area B	26 feet, 2 stories	26 feet, 2 stories	30 - 45 feet, 3 - 4 stories
Optional Upper Floor Stepbacks	-	5 ft for Residential 6 ft for Commercial	-
Façade Transparency	-	70%	-
Individual Building Frontage Along a Block	-	50 feet	-

Formula Uses	-	Use Permit and additional findings	30-40% max gross floor area
Office/Bank on Ground Level	Permitted	Use Permit	Linear Street- 25-30% max of blocks on MBB 40% max of blocks for rest of DT
Office Use Size	Use Permit for Offices over 2,500 sq ft	Use Permit for Offices over 2,500 sq ft	Use Permit for Offices over 2,500 sq ft
Commercial Use Size	Use Permit for Uses over 5,000 sq ft User Permit for Land Area over 10,000 sq ft	Use Permit for Uses over 5,000 sq ft User Permit for Land Area over 10,000 sq ft	Use Permit for Uses over 5,000 sq ft User Permit for Land Area over 10,000 sq ft

Additionally, the proposed Specific Plan guidelines discuss allowing additional building height for corner towers, turrets and other accent elements, up to 6 feet in additional height, and prohibiting pole and can signs.

Other land use changes are proposed within the Downtown Specific Plan area, as discussed within Chapter 6. ULI did not make recommendations on land use changes, other than for formula and ground level office and bank uses as discussed above. The following is a summary of the proposed Land Use changes:

New Uses:

- Live/Work Units- Use Permit
- Formula Uses- Use Permit
- Senior Citizen Housing- Use Permit
- Farmers Market- Permitted

No Longer Allowed in Downtown Commercial Zone (CD):

- Animal Boarding
- Animal Hospital
- Service Stations
- Vehicle Equipment Repair

Not Allowed in Spaces Adjacent to a Sidewalk, Pedestrian Area, or on a Ground Level without a Use Permit:

- Banks, Credit Unions, Savings & Loans
- Office Uses
- Catering Services
- Communication Facilities

The goal of these proposed changes is to encourage pedestrian-oriented uses on ground level.

CONCLUSION

This report is intended to provide an update and overview of the Draft Specific Plan. The April 12th joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting will provide an opportunity for Planning Commission and Council in-depth review, discussion and comments on the Plan. The public will have an opportunity to review and provide comments at these meetings as well as public workshops then public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council.

Attachments:

- A. ULI Advisory Services Panel Report- January 11-15, 2015- Suggested Guidelines for a Downtown- Specific Plan
- B. Workshop #3 and #4 flyer
- C. Draft Downtown Specific Plan (distributed separately)

Suggested Guidelines for a Downtown-Specific Plan

A downtown-specific plan is a regulatory tool that local governments use to implement the general plan and to guide development in a localized area. While the general plan is the primary guide for growth and development in a community, a specific plan is able to focus on the particular characteristics of a special area by customizing the planning process and land use regulations to it.

A specific plan is enacted pursuant to section 65450 et seq. of the California Government Code. Implementation is regulated through detailed development standards, design standards and guidelines, and land use regulations related to the specific plan. These important specific plan features are consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the city General Plan.

The downtown-specific plan is a tool to create public improvement projects, promote development, evaluate development proposals, and facilitate historic preservation. The provisions of the specific plan apply to all properties included in the downtown-specific plan area. No construction, modification, addition, placement, or installation of any building structure shall occur, nor shall any new use commence on any lot, on or after the effective date of this specific plan, except in conformity with the provisions of this specific plan.

ULI believes that the greatest opportunity for success exists when a locality's land economics (i.e., market potential) and its community vision interconnect. A downtown-specific plan approach can provide the community's vision component to this equation. The downtown-specific plan process requires input from residents, property owners, and business owners as well as consultant work to integrate that input into a usable plan. The panel envisions a series of specific and focused charrettes conducted by the city's consultant. The panel feels that providing some guidance to the quantitative and qualitative components of the downtown-specific plan will be helpful.

Therefore, that panel recommends the following:

- **Balance of local vs. national retail:** Several communities in this country put specific limits on the amount of gross floor area (GFA) for national retailers. Many communities limit national retailers to no more than 30 percent, 35 percent, or 40 percent. One New Jersey community has an upper limit of no more than 60 percent of total GFA for national retailers. Currently, Manhattan Beach has approximately 20 percent national retail. The panel believes that a reasonable GFA limitation should be in the range of no more than 30 to 40 percent.
- **Office vs. retail on ground floor:** Many residents and downtown small business owners expressed concern about the limitation on ground-floor offices and banks. Communities around the country impose limitations on a wide variety of uses, most often food establishments, and most often using linear street frontage as a means of calculation. The panel believes that no more than 25 to 30 percent of the linear street frontage of any one block should be office or bank uses on Manhattan Beach Boulevard and no more than 35 to 40 percent in the rest of the downtown area.
- **Height limits:** A key component of downtown character is defined by the height of the buildings. Currently, most downtown buildings are one or two stories, with an occasional three-story building that is built into the grade of the topography. Other factors such as parking and loading-space requirements would, even with current land values, limit the potential for taller buildings. The panel believes that some densification could be beneficial to the economic development goals of the city and would support higher buildings. A suggested range is three to four stories, not to exceed 30 to 45 feet, with consideration for higher buildings with a use permit.

■ **Store size (i.e., lot consolidation):** The issue of store size has been the subject of heated debate in urban planning circles for the last decade. Most arguments revolve around localities limiting big-box retail stores in suburban locations on major arterial roads. The issue of limiting store size in smaller-scale downtowns is less common but is understandable where issues of community character arise. The panel surveyed a number of communities (Huntington Beach, San Luis Obispo, Carmel, Santa Barbara, Half Moon Bay, San Clemente, Redondo Beach, Sausalito, and Santa Cruz, among others) and found a staggering array of requirements. Some communities had no square-footage regulations and relied on floor area ratio, lot size, parking, and even historic precedent to address the issue. Other locations permitted up to 16,000 square feet. Many used a range of 2,500 to 5,000 square feet as the demarcation point before a use permit was required. For such regulation to be effective, it must address the potential for circumvention. For example, a square-footage cap could be avoided by combining two adjacent spaces that effectively operate as one space. This can be addressed by defining two or more adjacent buildings operated by one company as a single retail store for the purposes of the size cap (meaning the total square footage of all the buildings cannot exceed the cap). That said, the city already has what the panel believes are appropriate square-footage thresholds for office and retail and use permits as the appropriate mechanism to ensure compliance.

■ **Quantity of space and downtown size:** The panel estimates that the downtown has approximately 400,000 square feet of retail and commercial uses. Of those uses, 70 percent are in a small-shop format that gives the city its character. Part of downtown's charm is the constantly fluctuating boundaries for downtown, and the panel would encourage this idiosyncratic style to continue. With the future redevelopment of the Vons site, the densification of some existing sites and the development of the shared office/retail building there will be an increase in this square footage. The panel believes that an upper-end goal of 500,000 square feet would be appropriate. Boundaries for this space would generally be 15th Street to Ninth Street and the Strand to Valley Drive. The downtown-specific plan and its implementation tools (use permits, rezoning process, occupancy permits) would be used to ensure this goal.

■ **Residential uses:** An important component of any successful downtown is a mix of residential and nonresidential uses. The panel suggests that the city consider upper-floor residential; however, entrances should be located off primary streets such as Manhattan Beach Boulevard, Manhattan Avenue, Highland Avenue, and Morningside Drive. In addition, to ensure that downtown retains its primarily nonresidential flavor, no more than 60 percent of any one building should be used as residential space (excluding lodging).

■ **Sidewalk cafés:** The panel has recommended that sidewalks on Manhattan Beach Boulevard be widened to accommodate both green space and sidewalk cafés. It is important that not every linear foot of the newly widened sidewalks be inundated with tables and chairs. The creation of the downtown-specific plan should address cafés in depth, but taking cues from other jurisdictions, the city should consider the following regulations for unenclosed cafés:

- The café may not obstruct the means of egress from any portion of a building.
- No surface cover or treatment of any kind (e.g., paint, artificial turf) may be applied to the public sidewalk.
- The maximum height permitted for any boundary marker, railing, fence, or planter (including vegetation) is 30 inches above the sidewalk.
- A space of a minimum of eight feet must be left clear on the adjacent sidewalk.
- Café awnings and umbrellas should be limited and must not project onto the eight-foot clear sidewalk.
- Only tables, chairs, and one wait staff station (maximum 24 inches wide) are permitted in café area.
- The café must be at least 15 feet from large sidewalk obstructions such as bus-stop shelters, newsstands, and wayfinding maps or signage.

If the regulations are crafted carefully, cafés should be permitted by right and not through a use permit process; however, city review and permitting should be required.

DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN BEACH



DEFINED

DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #3

Wednesday, March 16, 2016, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #4

Thursday March 24, 2016, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

Both meetings to be held in the Police/Fire Community Room, 400/420 15th St, Manhattan Beach

During these workshops, we will present the Public Draft Downtown Specific Plan document. You will have the opportunity to review key elements of the Plan and provide your input. Key elements include:

- Building design
- Streetscaping and public spaces
- Mobility and parking
- Business development and relations

The City of Manhattan Beach wants YOU to help define the future of our downtown through the Downtown Specific Plan process. Join the conversation by attending our community workshops and help the City prioritize what is important to you!

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE



For more information, visit WWW.CITYMB.INFO/DOWNTOWNMBDEFINED or contact Ted Fatusos at tfatusos@citymb.info or (310) 802-5512.

Post photos and comments about what you would like to see using [#downtownmbdefined](https://twitter.com/downtownmbdefined)



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