

Planning charrettes yield results

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Josh Petray 5-20-08

A weeklong charrette process that will ultimately lay the framework for development in the city's historic westside north and south of 24th Street came to a wrap-up last Friday.

The charrette was a weeklong public planning session for the Uptown/Town Centre specific plan.

In a packed Paso Robles City Hall/Library Conference Center, the design team headed by Pasadena-based firm Moule & Polyzoides, Architects and Urbanists convened with the public to in a final presentation of the charrette results and discussion.

"This is a remarkable moment in your history," said Stefanos Polyzoides, co-founder of Moule & Polyzoides.

On Friday, the design team was putting the final touches on a series of drawings, charts, maps and other information that will be touched upon in the crafting of the \$1.5 million draft Uptown/Town Centre Specific Plan. The drawings, said Polyzoides, represent "a plan that might come to be some day if the code is followed."

"This city is a field of potential," he said, "I think there is as much excitement about the project within your town as there is beyond your town."

The details of the plan have not yet been finalized.

City officials expect it to be consolidated and refined into a single document for consideration within 18 months. Staff will double-check the creative work that's been done, said Community Development Director Ron Whisenand.

"We'll be doing a lot of work in the next couple of weeks," he said.

The next step in the process is a post-charrette study session, which will be held as a joint session of the City Council and Planning Commission on Tuesday, May 27 from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the Paso Robles City Hall/Library Conference Center, 1000 Spring St. City officials will receive all of the final proposals and have chance to provide some additional direction, according to Whisenand.

After the study session, members of the hired design team perform work on the environmental side of things, as well as the much talked about form-based codes, a new approach to zoning in the city that Whisenand described as "a very logical way that you can find out what's allowed on your property."

The five-day design charrette involved a team of planners, economists, architects and other professionals who arrived in town last week to meet with the public, special interest groups and city officials to design the plan and hash out issues.



“There has been a lot of tug of war,” Whisenand said. “More than I expected.”

Whisenand praised the flexibility of the charrette process, which allowed certain stakeholders to meet with planners during the week as the process unfolded. For instance, on Thursday officials met with representatives from Oak Park Public Housing for some last minute details. A draft environmental impact report for the plan could be completed as early as next fall, he said. The EIR would undergo a full series of public hearings.

For more information on the plan, visit the Web site crafted specifically for it, www.pasoblestownplan.com or contact City Planner Ed Gallagher at egallagher@prcity.com or 237-3970.

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