



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GREG COX  
First District

DIANNE JACOB  
Second District

KRISTIN GASPAR  
Third District

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Fourth District

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Fifth District

**DATE:** January 24, 2018

**06**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### **SUBJECT**

**RECEIVE REPORT CONTAINING OPTIONS FOR REVITALIZING CASA DE ORO WITHIN THE VALLE DE ORO COMMUNITY PLANNING AREA (DISTRICT: 2)**

### **OVERVIEW**

This is a request for the Board of Supervisors (Board) to accept the Casa de Oro Revitalization Strategy Report (Report) and to review the options contained in the Report.

In September 2015, the Casa de Oro Community Alliance (Alliance) was formed by a coalition of residents, business owners, property owners, and community planning groups, nearby schools, churches, and other stakeholders with the mission to enrich and beautify the Casa de Oro area. The Alliance prepared a Conceptual Plan (Plan) that identified issues and outlined a vision for community revitalization. In summer 2016, the Alliance approached the District 2 Board office with a request for professional urban planning assistance from the County. On September 27, 2017 (2) the Board directed the Chief Administrative Officer to, “secure an outside consultant to work with the Casa de Oro Alliance; which includes the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association, the Spring Valley and Valle de Oro community planning groups, and business and property owners to develop a plan with timeline and cost that would meet the goals and objectives of the Alliance’s conceptual plan.”

Planning & Development Services secured a consultant to survey existing conditions, confirm and expand on the issues and opportunities identified in the Alliance’s Plan, conduct additional stakeholder outreach, and return to the Board with options. The Report summarizes the consultant’s findings and identifies a range of actions that could be taken to revitalize Casa de Oro, financial and regulatory options to implement potential actions, and associated timelines.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION**  
N/A

### **DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

1. Find in accordance with Section 15262 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines that today’s actions are statutorily exempt from CEQA because they involve planning studies for possible future actions that the Board has not approved,

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adopted or funded and have no legally binding effect on later activities; and find in accordance with Section 15061(b)(3) that today's actions are exempt from CEQA pursuant to the general rule since it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that today's actions may have a significant effect on the environment.

2. Accept the Casa de Oro Revitalization Report and review the options contained therein.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with accepting the Casa de Oro Revitalization Strategy Report; there will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

The Valle de Oro Community Planning Group and Spring Valley Community Planning Group met on January 2 and 9, 2018, respectively. The Valle de Oro Community Planning Group recommended a Specific Plan with interim design guidelines. The Spring Valley Community Planning Group did not take action; the group stated that more input would be necessary to make an informed decision in support of the project.

**INVOLVED PARTIES**

Parties involved in the revitalization project include Casa de Oro Community Alliance, Valle de Oro Community Planning Group, Spring Valley Community Planning Group, schools within the La Mesa Spring Valley School District, property owners, residents, and business owners.

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

In September 2015, the Casa de Oro Community Alliance (Alliance) was formed by a coalition of long-term residents, including representatives from the business community, community planning groups, nearby schools, churches, and other stakeholders with the mission to enrich and beautify the Casa de Oro downtown area. The Alliance prepared a Conceptual Plan (Plan) (Attachment B) that identified issues, outlined a vision for revitalization, and provided redevelopment priorities for the area. The redevelopment priorities include zoning and redevelopment, public infrastructure, beautification of streets and private properties, civic amenities, mobility, and high-risk businesses.

In summer 2016, the Alliance approached District 2 Board office with a request for professional urban planning assistance from the County to develop a revitalization plan for downtown Casa de Oro. On September 27, 2017 (2) the Board of Supervisors (Board) transferred appropriations of \$50,000 from the District 2 Neighborhood Reinvestment Program budget to the Land Use and Environmental Group, Planning & Development Services (PDS) and directed the Chief

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Administrative Officer to, “secure an outside consultant to work with the Casa de Oro Alliance; which includes the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association, the Spring Valley and Valle de Oro community planning groups, business and property owners to develop a plan with timeline and cost that would meet the goals and objectives of the Alliance’s conceptual plan.”

PDS selected a consultant, Michael Baker International (Consultant), to work with the Alliance and broader community to address the issues identified in the Alliance Plan. The Consultant surveyed existing conditions; confirmed and expanded on the issues and redevelopment opportunities identified in the Alliance’s Plan; conducted additional stakeholder outreach with the Alliance, Valle de Oro and Spring Valley Planning Groups, businesses, and property owners; and prepared a report that presents options including timelines and costs. Staff also coordinated with the Alliance to identify priority issues for action by Code Compliance. Stakeholder input was received during seven stakeholder engagement opportunities:

- November 7, 2017 – Valle de Oro Community Planning Group,
- November 9, 2017 – Stakeholder interviews,
- November 14, 2017 – Stakeholder interviews,
- December 6, 2017 – Public workshop,
- January 2, 2018 – Valle de Oro Community Planning Group,
- January 9, 2018 – Spring Valley Planning Group, and
- January 11, 2018 – Alliance Steering Committee meeting.

**PROJECT ISSUES**

The Michael Baker International (Consultant) Casa de Oro Revitalization Strategy Report (Report) (Attachment A) includes an overview of community issues received during stakeholder engagement, followed by a summary of financing and regulatory options that could address the issues along with associated timelines.

Multiple community issues were identified by the Casa de Oro Community Alliance (Alliance) and during stakeholder engagement opportunities. Issues include:

- Prevalence of undesirable land uses and absence of desirable land uses;
- Existing regulations that deter new development and business;
- Zoning and development standards that constrain development;
- Lack of maintenance and poor aesthetic quality of signage, lighting and trash cans, and landscaping;
- Traffic, streetscape and parking issues related to sidewalk gaps, excessive curb cuts, lack of connectivity, and excess roadway capacity;
- Code compliance; (County will continue to work with the Alliance to prioritize issues)
- Poor perceptions of the community that deter investment; and
- Infrastructure needs.

The common and successful ways of addressing these types of issues include proactive business and community led programs, such as business improvement associations, and regulatory changes.

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#### *Community Based Financing Options*

Potential financing options include a Business Improvement District or Association, a Community Facilities District, and an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District. The financing options could address various issues including the lack of maintenance and poor aesthetic quality of signage, lighting, street furniture and waste containers trash cans and landscaping; poor perceptions of the community; traffic, streetscape and parking issues; and infrastructure needs. If a financing option is selected and implemented, businesses and property owners within a defined district would contribute to an annual assessment or tax that would be used to fund improvement programs, infrastructure operations and community facility improvements.

The financing options identified in the Report are not exclusive and can be combined to achieve community goals. As an example, the community may support a Business Improvement District for ongoing operations, such as improving security and managing community events. Additionally, a Community Facilities District and Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District may be supported to fund new infrastructure such as streetscape improvements or public gathering spaces.

#### *Regulatory Options*

The regulatory options include new land use codes such as Design Guidelines, a Form Based Zoning Code, or a Specific Plan. These regulatory options could address various issues including the prevalence of undesirable land uses; regulations that deter new development and business; zoning and development standards; traffic, streetscape and parking issues; poor aesthetic quality and perceptions of the area; and infrastructure needs.

If a regulatory option is selected and implemented, the results would be anticipated to occur gradually over a period of time (10 to 15 years) as new uses and development comply with the new codes and regulations. Existing structures, businesses, and signs would be grandfathered and allowed to remain if legally constructed or established under the existing codes.

#### *Analysis*

Prior to recommending any financing option to the Board, staff recommends that a survey of business and property owners be conducted to determine which, if any, of the financing options are supported by the community. The survey would allow staff to gauge support for a district, identify potential district boundaries, and determine how much funding could be generated by the district. A survey and preliminary estimate of cost would require approximately \$30,000 and six months to conduct. Funding for the survey and outreach would need to be identified by the County and implemented by County staff and a consultant. If an analysis and survey of business and property owners determine that a district is financially feasible and is supported by those who would make up the district, the formation of a financing option could be pursued as soon as Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19.

If a financing option is approved, it would allow for public improvements that are not scheduled in the County's Capital Improvement Program, such as on-street parking, storm drain upgrades,

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and landscaping in the right-of-way. These improvements could potentially attract new businesses by enhancing community character and reducing infrastructure costs borne by developers that would want to invest in the area.

PDS is currently initiating Community Plan updates to better align the County's community plans with the 2011 General Plan. Casa de Oro represents one sub-area within the Valle de Oro Community that could benefit from an updated community plan and updated development regulations. Additionally, the Board could direct the regulatory options identified for Casa de Oro to be incorporated into the scope for a future Valle de Oro community plan update. Currently the Valle de Oro community plan update is not scheduled; three other community plans are currently scheduled to occur between now and FY 2020-21. If directed, an update to Valle de Oro Community Plan could be programmed for FY 2020-21.

Implementation of the regulatory options, before or concurrent with the development of a community plan update, would not independently encourage economic development. These are tools used by local governments to align community visions with regulations to facilitate and encourage redevelopment. The process for revitalization may take both regulatory and financial options. Change will be incremental and may take years or decades for the full effects to be seen, but as property conditions are upgraded, new projects are built, the continual improvement of the community will be realized.

Since its formation in 2015, the Alliance has worked to build support for their vision for the Casa de Oro area. Building community consensus for a new community vision and forming a financial district is a complicated effort that takes time. The approach taken by the Consultant to outline the issues, goals, actions, and options can serve as a resource for the community and County in any future effort. The Alliance could continue to build support based on this framework for a future association or group that could independently raise funding to implement some of the actions, such as ongoing maintenance activities and community events.

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

Accepting the Casa de Oro Revitalization Report (Report) (Attachment A) and obtaining the Board's direction for further actions are statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 because they involve planning studies for possible future actions that the Board has not approved, adopted, or funded and have no legally binding effect on later activities.

The Report is a summary of options for revitalizing the community. Accepting this report does not commit the County to any definitive course of action as it would have no potential for resulting in a significant physical change or effect on the environment, directly or indirectly. Subsequent actions would be reviewed pursuant to CEQA and presented to the Board for consideration prior to implementation.

Accepting the Report and obtaining the Board's direction for further actions is also exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines as it would have no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly. It can also be seen with

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certainty that there is no possibility that the Board's direction to initiate work on any of the options identified in the Report may have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that today's actions may have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt or is not subject to CEQA.

**PREVIOUS ACTIONS**

September 27, 2017 (2) the Board of Supervisors directed the Chief Administrative Officer to secure an outside consultant service to work with community stakeholders to develop a plan with timelines and costs that would meet the goals and objectives of a conceptual plan prepared by the Casa de Oro Community Alliance.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

Public input was received between November, 2017 and January, 2018. During stakeholder interviews and public meetings, the comments received were supportive of revitalizing Casa de Oro by modifying development regulations, creating opportunities for new businesses and improving and adding community facilities. Comments were also received indicating that existing taxes are too high and that taxes from other communities should not be directed to Casa de Oro revitalization.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

The requested action is consistent with County of San Diego's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan. If directed by the Board, further actions as identified in this report could revitalize Casa de Oro. These actions would support the Sustainable Environments Initiative through planning and/or investments that would help strengthen the local economy in Casa de Oro and increase consumer and business confidence.

Respectfully submitted,



SARAH E. AGHASSI  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

- Attachment A – Casa de Oro Revitalization Strategy Report
- Attachment B – Casa de Oro Community Alliance Conceptual Plan
- Attachment C – Minute Order for September 27, 2017



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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**REQUIRES FOUR VOTES:**          Yes        No

**WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED**

   Yes        No

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:**

September 27, 2017 (2), directed to secure an outside consultant service to work with community stakeholders to develop a plan with timelines and costs that would meet the goals and objectives of a conceptual plan prepared by the Casa de Oro Community Alliance.

**BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:**

N/A

**BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:**

N/A

**MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:**

N/A

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):**

N/A

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** Planning & Development Services

**OTHER CONCURRENCE(S):**      N/A

**CONTACT PERSON(S):**

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