



AGENCY: Planning Commission
MEETING DATE: February 28, 2024
DEPARTMENT: Community Development
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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE: Receive and Accept Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy; (1) Consider Adoption of a Resolution of the Fort Bragg Planning Commission Recommending that Fort Bragg City Council Amend Division 18 of the Fort Bragg Municipal Code and Parking Standards Established for the Central Business District; and (2) Consider Adoption of a Resolution of the Fort Bragg Planning Commission Recommending that the City Council File with the Coastal Commission a Local Coastal Plan Amendment Application to Revise Parking Standards by Amending Division 17 of the Fort Bragg Municipal Code – Categorically Exempt.

BACKGROUND AND GOALS OVERVIEW:

The City Council authorized a contract with Walker Consultants on March 27, 2023, to prepare a Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy, to consider updates to existing parking codes, and to identify current parking challenges and solutions in the Central Business District (CBD). The City Council agenda is [here](#) (Item 8B).

The purpose of the Downtown Parking Strategy is to perform a comprehensive review and update to the CBD land use parking codes in order to address long standing parking issues. In 2007, the City performed a Nexus Study that resulted in a resolution for collection of an in-lieu fee to offset parking requirements in the district. These in-lieu fees are intended to be used for maintaining City owned parking lots. In 2011, the in-lieu fee was reduced to 50% and in 2012, a moratorium on fee collection and parking requirements was established. Now almost 10 years later, the moratorium remains in place and parking requirements are not applied to development in the CBD. With no fees being collected, and no established parking requirements available to offset parking impacts in the CBD, there are no current plans for navigating a path forward for parking in the heart of the City's downtown.

In addition to the parking analysis, this study includes a review and update of existing parking codes, identification of alternate potential parking lot areas and improvements to parking wayfinding. Also included is a review of the potential for achieving regional transportation goals such as encouraging pedestrian and bicycling activity, increasing access to transit stops and evaluation of opportunities for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and solar canopy lots. Ultimately, the City is looking for the development of a guiding document that addresses these needs and is pragmatic, implementable and capable of meeting current and future demands while factoring in the needs of all community members.

To date the staff/consultant team has sought input in the form of a digital community survey, outreach at Farmers' Market, a public workshop at Town Hall on August 17, 2023 and a study session with Planning Commission on December 13, 2023. The team has met regularly to review materials and discuss observations, opportunities and obstacles and to

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refine draft strategy direction. Tonight's hearing before Planning Commission is the culmination of the team's investigatory and outreach efforts prior to taking a final Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy and accompanying code updates to City Council for review.

Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy and draft LUDC amendments have been prepared by Walker Consultants; and are included as Attachments 1-8 to this staff report. They contain observations, conclusions and recommendations for managing the downtown parking, and include an outreach document that summarizes findings, as well as a context document that provides further background information to facilitate a deeper understanding of the team's recommendations.

The noticed public hearing scheduled for tonight is to receive and accept the parking study and to review and consider actions on LUDC amendments 17.36 and 18.36. Following the hearing, staff recommends Planning Commission accept the Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy and approve the accompanying resolutions recommending that City Council amend the ILUDC Division 18, Chapter 18.36 *Parking and Loading* and file with the Coastal Commission a Local Coastal Plan Amendment application to revise parking standards by amending CLUDC Division 17, Chapter 17.36 *Parking and Loading*.

ANALYSIS:

PARKING STUDY

The Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy before the Planning Commission outlines six parking management principles that were developed by the team and provide context for strategy recommendations. It also includes an analysis of the proposed strategies' relationships to the City of Fort Bragg's broader overall goals as defined in the General Plan, and highlights those existing policies. While the study does not go into depth on related programs, it does briefly summarize several, such as outdoor dining, mobile vending and regional transit. The study describes existing conditions and summarizes the project process.

The heart of the strategy is comprised of recommendations for immediate action related to parking minimums and the In-Lieu fee, public parking wayfinding improvements, public bicycle parking, and on-street parklet dining. The final section includes recommendations for ongoing monitoring and possible future change related to securing additional public parking, downtown business employee parking, on-street public parking management, and consideration of a downtown circulator shuttle.

ORDINANCE

The proposed ordinance amendments (Attachments 6 and 8) amend Chapter 18.36 and 17.36 (Parking and Loading) of the Inland Land Use and Development Code (ILUDC) and

Coastal Land Use and Development Code. The ordinance amendments were drafted to align with the recommendations for immediate implementation and are a deliverable of the grant from the Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG).

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS:

As proposed the project is consistent with the City's General Plan. It does not conflict with any policies and is consistent with the following relevant policies:

Land Use Element

Goal LU-3 *Ensure that the Central Business District remains the historic, civic, cultural, and commercial core of the community.*

CONSISTENT: The amendments promote viability for new businesses opening in the CBD which is a necessity for a vibrant and thriving commercial core, and as such they comply with Program LU-3.1.1.

Policy LU-3.1 *Retain and enhance the small-scale, pedestrian-friendly, and historic character of the Central Business District (CBD).*

CONSISTENT: The amendments support this policy by not requiring additional parking spaces for incoming businesses that could detract from the small-scale, pedestrian-friendly, and historic character of the CBD, and as such also comply with Policy LU-3.1.

Policy LU-3.2 *Support mixed use development (i.e., a combination of residential and commercial uses) in the Central Business District that does not conflict with the primary retail function of this area.*

CONSISTENT: The amendments are consistent with this policy by not requiring additional off-street parking spaces for incoming businesses that could detract from the primary retail function of the area, and as such also comply with Policy LU-3.2.

Policy LU-3.4 *Encourage infill development of vacant and underdeveloped land in the Central Business District and adjacent commercial areas before amending the Inland General Plan and rezoning to obtain additional commercial land elsewhere.*

CONSISTENT: The amendments would encourage infill development of vacant and underdeveloped land in the CBD by reducing financial and feasibility barriers to development, and as such also comply with Policy LU-3.4.

Policy LU-3.6 *Encourage the adaptive re-use and more complete utilization of buildings in the Central Business District and other commercial districts.*

CONSISTENT: The amendments support adaptive re-use in the CBD by reducing financial and feasibility barriers to new businesses in the CBD, and as such also comply with Policy LU-3.6.

Circulation Element

Program C-6.1.1: *Continue, and update, as needed, the City's parking in-lieu fee program for the Central Business District.*

CONSISTENT: The amendments update the program to current City Council standards by removing the in-lieu fees that have been waived by City Council every year since 2012, with the goal of promoting economic vibrancy in the CBD. Thus, ultimately the amendments are consistent with Program C-6.1.1.

Goal C-12 *Make it easier and safer for people to travel by bicycle.*

Policy C-12.2: *Improve and expand bicycle facilities and infrastructure according to the City's Bicycle Master Plan and the Residential Streets Safety Plan recommendations.*

Program C-12.2.4: *Work to achieve designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community from the League of American Bicyclists by 2015.*

CONSISTENT: The amendments increase the required number of bicycle parking spaces for nonresidential projects and for multifamily projects with over five units, and as such are consistent with Goal C-12, Policy C-12.2 and Program C-12.2.4.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The exact fiscal impact of the proposed elimination of the in-lieu fee cannot be accurately estimated, since the collection of in-lieu fees has been waived since 2012 and prior to that, was directly related to the amount of development in the CBD and whether or not applicants opted to meet parking minimums or pay the in-lieu fees.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:

The preparation of this study has no impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Reduction of parking minimums in the CBD and increase in bicycle parking spaces could decrease greenhouse gas emissions as these activities have the potential to encourage alternative modes of transportation such as public transit, walking and bicycling.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Parking Study Approval: Categorically exempt from the provisions of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines §15306. This categorical exemption consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

Ordinance amendments: Adoption of these ordinance amendments are not subject to CEQA because the adoptions are not a project, in that they do not involve any commitment to any specific project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4)).The City has not enforced parking

minimums in the CBD for over a decade. There is no possibility that the formal removal of parking minimums or in-lieu fees in the CBD would have a significant effect on the environment, because the revisions contained in this ordinance and resolution do not modify the physical design, development, or construction of residences or nonresidential structures (CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3)). Increasing bicycle parking space requirements across zones, and mandating only that required parking and loading spaces be limited to those uses in the absence of a Limited Term Permit, reduces impacts on the environment as these amendments lessen prioritization of vehicular traffic over alternative uses and modes of transportation. Finally, the “activities and approvals by a local government necessary for the preparation and adoption of a local coastal program or long range development plan” pursuant to the California Coastal Act are statutorily exempt from compliance with CEQA, and this statutory exemption “shifts the burden of CEQA compliance from the local agency to the California Coastal Commission” (CEQA Guidelines §15265(c).

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Open the public hearing, receive staff report and consultant presentation, take testimony from the public, close the public hearing and deliberate;
2. Adopt Resolution recommending that City Council adopt an ordinance to amend Chapter 18.36 – Parking and Loading of Division 18 of the Fort Bragg Municipal Code including ILUDC Section 18.36 Central Business District Special Parking Combining Zone.; and
3. Adopt Resolution recommending that City Council adopt an ordinance to amend Chapter 17.36 – Parking and Loading of Division 17 of the Fort Bragg Municipal Code including CLUDC Section 17.36 Central Business District Special Parking Combining Zone.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

1. Continue public hearing.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 2024 Downtown Comprehensive Parking Strategy
2. Appendix A: Community Outreach Summary
3. Appendix B: Planning Context
4. ILUDC Resolution Ch. 18.36 Amendment
5. Resolution Att A: ILUDC Ch. 18.36 Amendment
6. CLUDC Resolution Ch. 17.36 Amendment
7. Resolution Att A: CLUDC Ch. 17.36 Amendment

NOTIFICATION:

1. “Notify Me” subscriber list
2. Fort Bragg Downtown Businesses