



Item #17-6-10 Information

Transportation Committee

May 25, 2017

Community Revitalization Technical Assistance Program

Issue: SACOG is winding up its infill/revitalization technical assistance program under our Strategic Growth Council Grant.

Recommendation: None, this item is for information only.

Discussion: SACOG received a third round Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) that began in 2015, and will end in November 2017. A major focus of the three-year grant program has been technical assistance to help jurisdictions address community infill and revitalization challenges and help implement the SACOG Blueprint Principles and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS).

All member jurisdictions were invited to participate in the assistance program offered by SACOG staff and Portland State University (PSU). Common challenges for which jurisdictions sought assistance included revitalizing Main Streets, placemaking in rural communities, and strengthening economic development in existing commercial corridors.

While jurisdictions face similar challenges, their solutions needed to be customized. Three communities who benefited from the technical assistance program exemplify that diversity in approaches:

- The small community of Cool in unincorporated El Dorado County had been engaged in community planning for a number of years. Robert Liberty of the PSU Urban Sustainability Accelerator Program (USA) became a key expert in providing technical assistance. In Cool, he engaged in a series of interviews, conducted public workshops and tours with stakeholders, businesses, property owners, and the public on ways to create a stronger presence on historic Highway 49. This effort led to a streetscape design for Cool's section of Highway 49 to better support safety, and more successful business and tourism in the community.
- In the City of Citrus Heights, an initial workshop conducted by subconsultant Michele Reeves of Civilis Consultants so inspired city and business leaders that they were finally successful in developing an Auburn Blvd. Business Association. Combined with a Community Design Grant that the city received, the technical assistance allowed Ms. Reeves to work individually with business and property owners on how to develop a more vibrant profile for businesses along the corridor.
- In the City of Davis, the Davis Joint Unified School District has long owned and used a property on the edge of downtown and across the street from City Hall as the district's headquarters, but which has significant infill development potential. Mr. Liberty of USA helped jump-start a planning effort by facilitating hands-on workshops with key stakeholders

focused on potential reuse scenarios for the property. Building on this technical assistance, the City is now undertaking a full plan for future redevelopment of the site.

This technical assistance effort has been beneficial to jurisdictions, fruitful in terms of outcomes, and is providing many lessons for our region. Some of the key lessons so far are:

- Local governments and the business community are not always organized or knowledgeable on ways to improve, brand and market their business districts/Main Streets and commercial properties to make them more appealing and economically viable, and how and when to pursue reuse vs. new development.
- Most situations require the involvement of affected stakeholders, the earlier the better.
- Education that focuses on practical issues coupled with real-life examples and visuals is particularly effective.
- Sometimes having an outside party without attachments to projects can help focus on the important elements for a community and provide an objective assessment of opportunities, as well as more creative approaches to economic development/revitalization. The neutral party can help the affected stakeholders focus on finding solutions that meet multiple objectives. In the case of Cool, the project team worked with public stakeholders to discuss road safety while furthering the discussion on community planning and the long-term livability of the community.
- Technical assistance and implementation strategies are not one-size-fits-all. Each community faces a different set of circumstances that need to be addressed according to the situation: location, background, community needs and preferences, and timing.

Attachment A summarizes the full range of assistance provided to communities throughout the region through this grant work. The formal technical assistance program culminated in a well-attended regionwide Infill and Redevelopment Workshop on April 13, 2017. The presentations made by key experts in the project, Robert Liberty and Michele Reeves, are posted on SACOG's website at <http://www.sacog.org/post/infill-and-redevelopment-workshop-materials>. To close out this technical assistance phase, SACOG and USA are documenting the outcomes of the SGC grant-funded assistance.

Approved by:

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Attachment

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Summary of Infill/Revitalization Technical Assistance through SACOG's SGC Grant

This document summarizes the services provided to SACOG member cities and counties through the three-year infill/revitalization technical assistance program funded by the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) Sustainable Communities Planning Grants Program. Technical assistance was provided by SACOG staff consultants at Portland State University's Urban Sustainability Accelerator (USA) Program and Center for Public Interest Design (CPID), and subconsultant Michele Reeves of Civilis Consultants. SACOG individually contacted all 28 city and county members before the grant was initiated, and invited jurisdictions to identify centers, corridors, or existing areas that could utilize these technical services. The USA team and SACOG staff met with individual jurisdictions to discuss potential efforts, and the services provided are summarized below.

Stakeholder Education and Individual Consultations by Michele Reeves

Numerous jurisdictions received at least one stakeholder or community workshop with Michele Reeves. Ms. Reeves' specialty is economic revitalization, and she is known for her practical suggestions, coupled with real life examples, for how to turn a lagging Main Street or corridor into a thriving, economically sustainable community. In each location, she worked with the jurisdiction's planning and economic development staff, plus individual property and business owners, on ways to better present their properties and businesses for greater economic activity. These include the following specific efforts facilitated by SACOG and Ms. Reeves:

City of Citrus Heights: worked with the City to develop momentum for establishing a business association in the Auburn Blvd. corridor, and worked individually with business and property owners on how to develop a more vibrant profile for businesses along the corridor.

City of Colfax: conducted two public workshops, one on overall Main Street revitalization and one on property owner-specific activities to increase Main Street vitality.

City of Elk Grove: conducted a workshop with property owners on opportunities for the Old Elk Grove Blvd. corridor, and conducted another work session with key stakeholders and City Council members on next steps.

City of Rancho Cordova: conducted a stakeholder workshop with business and property owners on enhancing revitalization efforts along Folsom Blvd.

Sacramento County: conducted a public workshop and met with individual stakeholders to discuss the revitalization of North Watt Ave.

City of Winters: conducted a general workshop plus a hands-on full-day workshop with the Chamber of Commerce and business and property owners on Main Street revitalization.

Yolo County: conducted a workshop on rural community Main Street revitalization in the unincorporated community of Esparto.

Community Planning Workshops/Meeting Facilitation by PSU's USA Program

The USA and SACOG team worked with communities in designing engagement workshops related to a planning and/or development effort. Playing the "neutral outsider," the team was able to conduct individual stakeholder interviews with direct input, as well as organize and facilitate stakeholder workshops. These included the following:

City of Davis: in a joint effort between the City and the Davis Joint Unified School District, the team conducted hands-on workshops with key stakeholders to identify potential redevelopment scenarios for the school district's headquarters property.

El Dorado County: the team helped kick off a community planning effort for the unincorporated area of Cool. This effort included stakeholder interviews, a stakeholder workshop, and a public workshop and on-site tour with business and property owners.

Placer County: working with jurisdictions and other stakeholders in the Tahoe Region portion of Placer County, the team conducted stakeholder interviews and facilitated working meetings to discuss long-range land use and transportation planning coordination.

Placerville and El Dorado County: the team facilitated a discussion, and is continuing to conduct a high-level analysis of potential tax-sharing/land planning coordination between the City and County.

Senate Bill 743 Implementation: USA staff is continuing to facilitate a statewide working group of MPOs and stakeholders on the implementation of SB 743 and the shift in the CEQA analysis of transportation impacts from level of service to vehicle miles traveled.

Direct Technical Assistance

The USA and CPID teams and SACOG staff provided direct planning and design support to the following Blueprint implementation projects in the region:

City of Isleton: to help support the City's General Plan update, which received a grant from SACOG's Community Design program, SACOG staff oversaw the development of a Request for Proposals and the consultant selection process.

City of Sacramento: along the Franklin Blvd. corridor in South Sacramento, the CPID team worked with local organizations to prepare for the conversion of an unused public elementary school to a community center, and to further activate of the corridor. In the Del Paso Heights area in North Sacramento, the CPID team worked with local organizations on conceptual designs for placemaking through a new community sports center complex, street activation, and the design of nearby transit stops. USA also organized a tour in the Portland, Oregon, area of innovative housing projects in urban settings that could help achieve the City's goal to build 10,000 new housing units downtown.

Sacramento Regional Transit (RT): working with RT, the City of Sacramento, the Sacramento Kings, and other key stakeholders, the USA team provided transit examples to help support the public opening of the Golden 1 Center and increased light rail usage downtown.

City of Woodland: the USA team provided site analysis to the property owner and developer of a critical 5-acre redevelopment site along the City's Main Street that is surrounded by strip developments. The team provided several examples of viable, built projects featuring mixed-use development with more innovative features that would meet market demand for this area.

Culmination

PSU and SACOG staff organized a full-day, regionwide infill and redevelopment workshop, showcasing local and national examples, providing practical suggestions for where and how to focus infill and revitalization efforts, and including a hands-on exercise for determining a development project's feasibility.