

SUBJECT/RECOMMENDATION:

Seek Council Direction Regarding Process and Discussion Materials for ULI Report Special Work Session.

DISCUSSION:

The recently-completed ULI Study of the Downtown/East Gateway / Old Clearwater Bay areas presents a comprehensive, far-reaching and, in some instances, very different (from the norm in Clearwater) set of process and policy recommendations to achieve the successful redevelopment of the study area. Interest in the study recommendations has been high, and many stakeholders have queried Council and Staff on plans to consider and/or begin implementation of the various Study recommendations.

However, due to the importance, breadth and complexity of the set of recommendations in the Study, staff believes a Special Council Work Session is indicated to allow the Council to consider and inform staff of the direction Council wishes to take with respect to implementation of the multiple recommendations in the Study. Staff further believes this important discussion needs to be preceded by the necessary analysis and consideration of the ramifications, timing and related issues Council needs to have before it in deciding and directing staff on Report implementation.

To that end, Staff will develop a Discussion Paper to inform the discussion and decision-making at the Special Work Session. It is anticipated that a full consideration and preparation of materials will take 30 days, leading to a Special Work Session towards the end of October. An evening meeting is recommended by the City Manager to allow maximum interested public attendance/viewing.

To assure that staff is proceeding in a way that Council seeks in “framing” the Study issues/recommendations to facilitate Council consideration and direction to Staff, the attached “coarse grain” issue identification and preliminary staff response outline is attached below.

In so doing, three “overarching” considerations have informed the staff preliminary analysis, which we wish to call to Council attention:

- 1) The decision timeline for the CMA Downtown project under the MOU means any master planning or facility siting in Coachman Park and/or the Bluff would have to be conditional on a final decision from CMA whether they intend to proceed with the project; this would also affect facility decisions in the CBD/Downtown, as parking garage, City Hall and multi-modal siting, timing and funding need to be coordinated with the CMA project.
- 2) Many of the ULI recommendations, i.e. activation of the waterfront, restaurant placement in Coachman Park, are subject to the considerations in #1 above, as well as subject to public referendum requirements.
- 3) Depending on the breadth and aggressiveness of the Council direction on Study recommendation, significant Work Program adjustments and/or outsourcing of work will be required. These parameters can more specifically be identified/quantified for the

Special Work Session materials.

Within the confines of these factors, Staff seeks Council feedback as to the proposed Special Work Session process, as well as whether the preliminary outline below identifies the major recommendations/issues Council would like to address in greater detail in the Special Work Session. Staff will then utilize the results of the feedback, as well as staff analysis, to develop a formal Discussion/ Decision Paper.

The ULI organizes their recommendations into three broad categories:

- 1) Strategy:
- 2) Communications; and
- 3) Partnerships/Organizational Capacity and Implementation.

The following outlines the major concepts in each of these key areas for Council direction and discussion to assist staff prepare for the Special Work Session:

I. Strategy:

The Report concludes that the City must “bridge the gap between the Beach and the Mainland” to be successful in it’s redevelopment efforts by: identifying complimentary mainland activities that build upon the existing tourism base; reaching out to the waterfront to create activities in and on the water; develop an identity and improve the Downtown “in and of itself” to attract both residents and tourists; and focus on residential development as an anchor to generate support for retail and activities.

- 1) **Bluff/Waterfront Master Plan**—The ULI report recommends creating a vision and Master Plan for a) the Bluff and b) the Waterfront (extending from Pierce 100 to the Seminole Boat Ramps), as well as implementing programs to activate the waterfront district.

While the Bluff and the waterfront are discussed separately in the report, staff feels that a holistic approach is needed to address the bluff and waterfront together. The interactions functionally, spatially and programmatically seem to indicate one process.

Secondly, the ULI report—which is focused upon realizing the *development* potential of the Bluff and waterfront, not the traditional park /waterfront master planning objectives—has suggested a process whereby the City ACM/ “Brain Trust” of Department heads select a “development partner” (based upon an RFP/RFQ), and, together, based upon “a robust community engagement process,” develop the vision and master plan for the areas. Subsequently, the City would issue a second RFP/RFQ to select a “horizontal” developer to work with the City in effectuating the vision and master plans. While not called out in the ULI report, the retention of a master plan consultant to develop the plan documents and facilitate the community process would be necessary.

This is a very different process from that used heretofore by the City, with a strong emphasis on the “development component” of the master plan process. It may/may not meet stakeholder perceptions for Coachman Park and the waterfront.

If so, and as an alternative, staff feels a “hybrid” process with a more traditional public input process—combined with a strong component of development consultants “at the table” to provide guidance and “reality checks” to a broad-based community Steering Committee perhaps could be considered as follows:

- Appoint broad-based Bluff Master Plan Steering Committee to work with a retained Master Plan firm and the City Staff to develop a vision and Master Plan (MP); Process to include a robust public engagement process (i.e. charettes, focus groups, etc.)
- Retain an independent “Developer Consultant” to “be at the table” during discussions and assist the Steering Committee with the economic realities affecting Master Plan accomplishment:
- Subsequently, City issue RFP/RFQ for “horizontal” developer to work with City in effectuating build out of Master Plan.

Council discussion	Is a consolidated Bluff/Waterfront vision and master plan effort supported at this time? If so, Is Council supportive of the Vision/ Master Plan/”Horizontal” build out process suggested by ULI? If not, what process should be utilized?
Timeframe	When should this process begin?
Cost	TBD, based on process selected.
Lead	ACM/ Planning/Parks/Marine and Aviation/ED

- 2) **Comprehensive Boating Plan**—ULI report recommends promoting and growing the boating culture and establish Clearwater, specifically Downtown, as a major boating center. Areas of focus could include: an evaluation of opportunities for redistribution of boat-related enterprises from Clearwater Beach to the downtown marina; on-shore commercial activities that could attract boaters and bring them to downtown; and, ideas for maintaining healthy marine environment.

The report recommends completing this activity before major decisions are made regarding boat-related infrastructure at the North Marina area i.e. High and Dry facility, etc.

- Conduct RFP process to select consultant to assist City in the creation of a Comprehensive Boating Plan

Council discussion	Is this the desired approach?
Timeframe	When should this process begin?

Cost	TBD
Lead	Marine and Aviation Department, with consultant support

- 3) **North Marina (Seminole) Plan**—ULI report recommends development of a comprehensive North Marina Plan for the Seminole Boat Ramp and surrounding area to appropriately “balance the needs of the boating community, area residents and development community.”

Staff believes that a planning effort in this area is timely and needed at this juncture to provide the necessary planning and regulatory framework to assist in evaluating existing development proposals and maximize the development potential of the area as follows:

- Conduct RFP process to select master planning consultant
- Develop comprehensive Steering Committee to include Marina, developer, community and stakeholder representatives.
- Develop North Marina (Seminole) Special Area Plan

Council discussion	Is this the desired approach?
Timeframe	When should this process begin?
Cost	TBD
Lead	Planning & Development (Marine & Aviation in support)

- 4) **Central Business District**—ULI report recommends focusing activities in this area on beautification of streets, attracting people to the streets, making downtown more navigable, and reconsidering design guidelines and signage regulations.

Staff believes that many of these items are underway and can be evaluated further as part of the implementation and departmental work program discussion, i.e. discussions with PSTA on the intermodal Hub; site analysis for a new City Hall; facility locational discussions with the CMA.

Other recommendations, such as a “tool kit” for secondary and arterials streetscape design and lighting of the Memorial Causeway Bridge, would be analyzed for cost and timing. Certain recommendations, such as Way finding and Gateway definitions, are subject to other facility siting decisions and would be programmed accordingly. “low hanging fruit” can be addressed for early implementation

In the more detailed analysis of the ULI recommendations for the Special Work Session, staff will create a matrix of proposed new projects/programs for Council evaluation of priorities. [See implementation section below]

Finally, although not a part of the ULI recommendations, staff believes that as part of a larger Downtown Strategy discussion, an overall Concept Plan (and “spatial” delineation)

is needed to anticipate future development and/or build out of the downtown core as way to plan projects and market/attract future investment. This could inform the discussion raised by the ULI Panel of where future residential, office, civic and hotel projects should be located to facilitate maximum impact on redevelopment strategy achievement?

- 5) **Community Gateways and Connections**—ULI report recommends a focus on strengthening connections between the Downtown, Beach, East Gateway, and surrounding neighborhoods through transportation, welcoming gateways, and other healthy activities.

These items will be addressed as part of the implementation/work program discussion (see below). Some of these items are already underway, such as the evaluation of the community market and festival location in the East Gateway.

II. Communication

ULI report recommends a more robust branding effort for the City to communicate its strengths. This effort is already underway with City staff and North Star.

A derivative, more “tailored” branding and marketing effort for the ED business recruitment effort, as well as the Cleveland Street District, is anticipated as “follow-on” to the North Star effort.

ED/CRA staff intends to utilize the Market Analysis data on housing, office, hotel and retail absorption to more actively engage the development and brokerage communities to validate absorption and market availability to encourage investment.

In addition, the ULI report concludes that community organizations and flow of information is highly fragmented in downtown. They identify primary roles for the major stakeholder groups to fulfill the Report objectives and implementation is to be realized. They conclude that the City “create a forum for the discussion of issues with the City and their development partners that involves a cross section of community interests.”

One way to address this would be creation of a Communications Stakeholder Group to meet quarterly (or more often if appropriate) to: 1) report on activities within their areas of activity/concern as they relate to the ULI Downtown/East Gateway; and 2) coordinate activities specific to the implementation of the ULI report. Semi-annual reports to the Council at a public meeting could assure communication/coordination with the governing body.

Any number/form of alternate structures could be appropriate to provide this coordination mechanism.

The key community groups/organizations could include, as a base: Downtown Development Board; Clearwater Downtown Partnership; Merchants Alliance; Clearwater Technology Alliance; Pinellas County; Church of Scientology; East Gateway Business and Neighbors Association; Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce, Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition, business leadership group, etc.

Council discussion	Is there a need to create an “umbrella advisory group”? If so, what form and structure should be established?
Timeframe	When should this process begin? Who should be included?
Cost	Staff time
Lead	TBD

III. Organizational Capacity and Implementation

The report concludes that, while the City/CRA Plans and redevelopment strategy are largely appropriate for the redevelopment effort, “the lead responsibility (for implementation) is much too fragmented to be effective. The authority and responsibility, according to the Panel, should be assigned to an Assistant City Manager who would establish a “Brain Trust” of key department heads and other government agencies to assist him and guide implementation of the Downtown/ East Gateway strategies. It recommends that the City take the lead responsibility for implementation and to harness the collective resources of business, institutions, government and the community.

In that regard, the City Manager has appointed the Assistant City Manager for Economic Development, Rod Irwin, as the City “lead” for overall implementation of the ULI initiatives the Council supports. In addition, he’ll be supported by a “Brain Trust” to include the department heads of Planning and Development; Economic Development and Housing; Parks and Recreation; Marine and Aviation; Library; Engineering; Finance/Budget; and Public Communications. Expansion to include County and other governmental representatives/liaisons is anticipated by the ULI.

The ACM/Brain Trust will create an implementation matrix once Council direction is received on the specific action items identified in the report.

Many activities are already underway such as discussions with PSTA on the intermodal hub, location of City Hall, and Clearwater Marine Aquarium among others. Other action items need to be evaluated as to cost and timeframe for Council discussion and direction on their level of priority.

Staff would propose the following:

- Create ULI implementation matrix that includes timeframe, cost, and departmental work program impacts for Council discussion, direction, and prioritization of projects.

Council discussion	Is creation of the implementation matrix the desired approach to track implementation?
Timeframe	If so, when/how often/in what form does Council wish to receive

	progress reports?
Cost	TBD
Lead	ACM/Brain Trust

Staff will be prepared to discuss the above recommendations/issues at the Work Session on Monday under “City Manager-Verbal.”