

CHAPTER ONE

Assessment and Analysis of Economic and Community Problems and Opportunities to the City’s Stakeholders

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the key issues identified by the community as part of Phase I of the project process.

The City of Inglewood underwent an effort to develop a Citywide Economic Development Strategic Plan. The purpose of Phase I was to present an assessment and analysis of economic and community problems and opportunities to the City’s Stakeholders. A successful development can be achieved by a truly collaborative effort between local community, agencies, and policy makers. Hence the purpose of Task 2 was to engage the community- residents, business people, staff, and elected officials in the visioning and planning process of the Inglewood Citywide Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Community Meetings

Community members and other stakeholders were engaged in the visioning and planning process through a series of six meetings between August 26, 2004 and October 2, 2004. Four meetings were held in conjunction with each of the council members, one with the Mayor, and one with stakeholders from the business and real estate development community. Briefing meetings were held by the consultant team with the Mayor and each of the Council members prior to each meeting with the exception of Councilman Morales whose Community Meeting had to be rescheduled.

Exhibit 1: List of Community Meetings

Meeting	Date
Mayor Roosevelt F. Dorn	August 26, 2004
Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr.	September 15, 2004
Councilman Ralph Franklin	September 18, 2004
Councilwoman Judy Dunlap	September 25, 2004
Councilman Eloy Morales	October 2, 2004
Business Roundtable	September 15, 2004

The City staff or the Mayor and/or Councilperson kicked off each meeting with a presentation on economic development issues. Then the consultant team presented an overview of the visioning process and a comprehensive review of recently completed studies and previously completed studies relevant to the strategic plan. This served as background information for the solicitation of input from the community on commercial and industrial uses and public investments.

Spanish translators were present at each of the community meetings in order to increase access to the presentation and discussion. Translation was provided at the meeting held on October 2, 2004 in District Three with Councilman Eloy Morales, Jr.

The questions posed to the participants were:

- What are your thoughts about what you've just heard?
- What is your vision for the City of Inglewood?
- What can you add that builds on these recommendations?
- What steps do you recommend to implement these recommendations?

A summary of input received follows. Complete notes from the community meetings and business roundtable are located in the appendices.

SUMMARY

A community meeting is one of several ways to organize working sessions. It can perform a number of functions including introducing people to the project, helping to establish the key issues, getting people involved and motivated, identifying useful experience and skills, and establishing the continuing program of events. The community meetings held in the City also helped to achieve these functions. The residents of the City actively contributed and shared their thoughts on development. The community expressed their candid opinion about how they want the City to develop. The key issues identified based on the community inputs fall into five main categories:

1. New Development
2. Ideas for Particular Areas of the City
3. Concerns/Issues
4. Desired Public Investments
5. Strategies to Get There from Here

New Development Ideas

The residents are well aware of the various developments around and outside the City and have a clear idea of the types of new development they would like to occur:

- Upscale shopping;
- Nice restaurants, both high-end and mid-range;
- Trader Joe's, nicer grocery store(s);
- Car dealers, other high sales tax generators;
- Movie theaters ; and
- YMCA/YWCA

Ideas for Particular Areas of the City

The community meetings provided a focus for people to make suggestions and prioritize ideas on how certain areas of the city or surrounding areas could be improved.

Market Street

Market Street is viewed as a tremendous asset to the City. Virtually everyone wants it to be a destination containing retail, restaurants, and a music center with parking structures to accommodate the traffic. The other option is to develop it into a mixed-use with a live/work emphasis.

Key Corridors

Other areas of interest were mostly commercial corridors. The City residents want the following corridors to be cleaned up so that they satisfy the convenience, service needs, and business needs of nearby residents, commuters and industries:

- Crenshaw between Imperial and Century – would prefer a training center instead of fast food;
- Continue redevelopment on Century Blvd;
- Manchester Blvd – aesthetic streetscape;
- Imperial Blvd- enhance the City entrance;
- North La Brea – mixed use development with upscale shops; and,
- Florence – don't allow it to become a truck thoroughfare.

Issues/Concerns

The community meetings also provided an opportunity for the residents to share their issues and concerns. The key issues/concerns raised are:

- The educational attainment of youth and adults is low and therefore should be addressed;
- Avoid displacement of residents or businesses due to new development;
- Include all cultures in the planning process;
- Need for more single family housing;
- Ban infill housing under the LAX flight path;
- Residents must shop outside the city to fulfill all their needs; and,
- There are enough fast food restaurants and 99 cent stores.

Desired Public Investments

The community wants to work together with the City to create a vibrant local economy, through a public investment strategy that:

- Encourages more youth activities;
- Promotes a community center, a senior citizens center, and a child development center;

- Protects the natural environment and provides more parks and playing fields; and,
- Builds sources of entertainment like performing arts center, museums, and a cultural arts center.

Strategies Forward

Strategies help set out an agenda to promote and develop the City’s strengths while also addressing the challenges it faces. The areas of consensus for strategies expressed by the residents are:

- Support entrepreneurship and expansion of small business developments;
 - Incubator, Starting/running/growing business workshops.
- Address the city’s image problem, perception of safety and reality of safety;
 - Address prostitution and gang problems.
- Attract high sales tax revenue businesses and high-tech businesses;
- Update the General Plan to support the Citywide Economic Development Strategic Plan ; and,
- Workforce development;
 - Training and education for 21st century jobs, technology jobs;
 - Do a better job preparing high school students for higher education or jobs in a trade.

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICTS

The city consists of four council districts. Community meetings were held within each of these districts presided by the respective district council members.

Exhibit 2: Map of the Council Districts



Community Meeting with Mayor Roosevelt F. Dorn at the Mayor's Town Hall Meeting

The vision as seen by the residents of the city is that of an environmentally friendly city in the South Bay with clean air and water. The community wants it to be a good place to raise children.

The improvement strategies as suggested by the residents support the idea of development and implementation of effective programs and activities that engage the public. They want to engage in a dialogue on reconsidering Wal-Mart, if Wal-Mart is willing to negotiate on those issues raised during the ballot measure such as eliminating the grocery store and increasing wages. The residents consider strong, diverse, local economies as the backbone of a community and therefore support the small and local businesses that provide a stable tax base which would attract other technology based businesses. They would like the City to provide for a wide array of services for youth and high school students that include employment and training services to help expand their careers and work ethics.

The participants provided ideas for particular areas of the City. Specifically, Market Street is to be kept unique with live/work developments around it. Some thought that building of infrastructure like a golf course would attract malls and capture the commuters passing through the city (Stop 'n Shop). This would help create a thriving, pedestrian-friendly environment which would be supplemented by a program to trim the trees and improve the alleyways.

Community Meeting with Councilman Curren D. Price, Jr - District One

The District One residents want quality development that is attractive and has a nice ambiance. They would like to see businesses like Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Albertsons, entertainment and recreational centers, nice sit-down restaurants, and Hotels as part of new development. The various strategies recommended to achieve such development are:

- To develop a design or theme for new developments to meet;
- Start a business incubator with retail on ground floor, especially restaurants;
- Support new businesses in Inglewood;
- Do business with local developers/contractors;
- Link new development to public transportation networks; and,
- Address the crime situation.

On the upside, Market Street is seen as the business destination of the City. But at the same time the residents suggest façade improvements to be carried along Market Street for it to reach the goal. The residents support the continuing development along Century Blvd as high priority development. The district residents would also like to have more recreational facilities, multipurpose rooms, banquet halls, performing arts center, theaters, child care centers, senior citizen centers and community centers which would help residents of all age groups to participate.

Some of the issues and concerns raised are:

- Displacement due to new development;
- Traffic – worsening of traffic on Century Blvd due to new development;
- Upward pressure on housing prices; and,
- Need for more single-family housing.

Community Meeting with Councilwoman Judy Dunlap - District Two

The residents of District Two want more nice restaurants, upscale shopping centers, doctor's offices and sufficient parking in new residential developments as part of new development. North la Brea is seen as a potential "3rd St. Promenade": A walkable community with mixed use development and parking structures to compliment the developed areas. They want the city to work on streetscape by adding sidewalks, trees, and bike lanes. In addition the District residents desire to have a golf course on the 90th Street.

The residents expressed certain strategies to help elevate the community. They want the city help encourage and generate qualified workers by providing the needed education/training which would result in a strong economic engine. They want development to happen by infill on vacant lots, which would also help change the city's image. They want to focus on the usage of communication by establishing a community television studio which would offer training to the youth. Though all of this is welcomed, they also want to institute laws and/or rules to hold city staff accountable for the new development. Establishing a traffic generator and an increase in tax revenues to fund public investments are also seen as part of the strategies mentioned above. They desire to have a museum of African American art, a performing arts center, and open spaces/parks in their District.

At the same time, the residents are displeased with the land price discount given to Haagen Development. Other concerns and issues raised at the community meeting are: objection for a movie theater on Market Street and lack of a strong customer base and tax base for the City.

Community Meeting with Councilman Eloy Morales - District Three

District Three residents prefer to see more housing for seniors, live/work development, and businesses like bookstores, public spaces like museums, and theaters.

The strategies recommended to achieve new and sustainable development are:

- update the General Plan to encourage the desired types of development;
- Explore the market potential for quality meeting places for different businesses;
- Provide rehabilitation and training programs to keep population productive;
- Address the gang problem by providing alternatives such as educational programs, sports center;
- Encourage students to get quality education, emphasize the need for education;
- Revitalize empty buildings; and,
- Renovate vacant buildings for rental housing.

In short they would like to have development similar to that of Culver City or the Grove (Fairfax and 3rd street). The residents also have ideas in store for particular areas of the city:

- Manchester Blvd – redevelopment of the corridor;
- Market Street – provide quality stores, theatre, bike lockers;
- La Cienega/ Hillcrest – reopening of K-Mart;
- Inglewood /Cedar Ave – provide public parking; and,
- Imperial/Crenshaw – provision of a training center instead of fast food.

As part of the process, they want all the cultures to be included. The residents consider the city a “Diamond which has been chipped away”. Some of the concerns and issues expressed are:

- Reduction in the amount of open space;
- Disappearance of single family housing;
- Increase in airport noise;
- Moving of Lakers from the Forum to the Staples Center;
- Reduction in entertainment programs; and,
- Safety perception.

The residents would like to have more parks for kids, soccer/baseball fields, activities for seniors, and public parking especially at Inglewood/Cedar Avenue. Also considered important are providing housing/shelter for the homeless on the 97th Street and fixing the blind turn at the Oak & Arbor Vitae intersection.

Community Meeting with Councilman Ralph Franklin - District Four

The residents of District Four, as part of the development initiatives for the community, suggest the opening of new businesses that include: Barnes and Noble, Health food chains supermarkets such as Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods, movie theater, upscale restaurants and stores, a banquet center, a YMCA/YWCA, Roller Ring or Ice Ring, Auto mall, a university campus on the corner of Prairie and 90th Street (this would support quality jobs) and a golf course. Suggestions for improvement of particular areas were also made in the meeting. These include commercial development along both sides of Manchester Blvd, cleaning up of the Crenshaw area between Imperial Highway and Century Blvd, and improvement of the southern entrances of the city along Imperial Highway. Projects like the Flyaway project and D-3 site are also a constant topic of discussions.

The residents suggested certain strategies for the achievement of the new development:

- Start a small business incubator with reasonably priced office space;
- Have more balance in planning for development in the city;
- Develop an image building program for Inglewood with a public relations plan that includes a TV campaign and a radio campaign, touting it’s prime location for business;
- Focus on revenue tax generators (Home Depot is generating around \$300 per square foot in sales);

- Amend elements of the outdated General Plan as part of the Smart Growth Initiative;
- Schools must be a large part of the strategy to improve the economic vitality of the city ;
- Inventory the leasable space of the medical buildings in the City and find out how much is not in use and why and develop a strategy to put the space to use rather than developing new buildings and leaving the old to be a blight on the city;
- Promote volunteer efforts and opportunities such as block clubs on the City website to get more grassroots participation in achieving these economic development goals;
- Establish a committee to address the City’s image problem and develop a public relations campaign;
- Address the prostitution and gang issues; and,
- Don’t allow any more fast food or massage parlors.

The residents expressed their unhappiness over the inability to find information on what development projects are currently underway and what projects are being considered. They are also against the proposed LAX expansion and infill housing under the LAX flight path.

They would like to have infrastructures improvements like a large park with space for activities for children, adults, and senior citizens that is safe (Fox Hills), a performing arts center, and a child development center as desired public investments.

Business Input from Business Roundtable

In addition to the above mentioned community meetings, a business roundtable was arranged with the private business owners and stake holders. Business and commerce are the foundation of a healthy economy. Any City’s continued economic well-being and sustained quality of life depend upon a good business environment. By involving the private sector in policy and program development, the City can more effectively develop services that encourage businesses to thrive.

The meeting began with a round of introductions by the meeting participants. The participants provided some insights into what they consider new development:

- More development opportunities
 - Dining and entertainment venues for LAX layovers;
 - Dinner house with white linen; and,
 - Convention center.
- More residential development
 - town homes, single family homes;
 - Increase household density;

In addition to the above recommendations they also have specific ideas for particular areas of the City. They emphasized the redevelopment of the D3 site being vital to the area among

other areas like the Goldmart and theater sites. They also support the renovation along the Century Blvd.

All the business owners agree that Inglewood is a diamond in the rough; its greatest asset is its strategic regional location. But they raised some concerns and issues which they think could hamper the development process:

- City Permit
 - Inconsistency in expertise at various staff levels;
 - Permitting process being too time consuming;
- Image
 - Perception of being a high crime area (lower than Pasadena);
 - Negative press outside the City;
 - Non existence of a safety feeling; and,
 - Facades being deterrent to stopping to shop.

The business owners suggest having certain assets as an incentive to attract various developers. The recommended assets are events like the Jazz festival, good housing stock, efficient police stock and big box retails.

The participants provided some recommended strategies for the development of economic development. They are:

- Development of a Master plan;
 - Follow the lead of other successfully redeveloped cities, e.g. Culver City
 - A master plan will increase comfort level of developers & retailers
 - Council needs to direct staff to plan redevelopment through a master plan
- Marketing of Inglewood directly to LAX hotel guests;
 - Casino could be the draw to increase hotel stay by one more night
 - Hollywood Park wanted to connect guests at LAX hotels to Inglewood
- Enforcing code and usage of signs throughout the City;
- Addition of live theater to the Casino;
- Close marketing gap by developing a marketing plan and prioritising the number one goal;
- Incubate businesses to employ residents;
- Elimination of prostitution;
- Redevelopment of the D3 site;
- Attract retail business;
 - Create visually attractive corridors through/into the City
 - Slow traffic in business districts
- Prioritize locations;
 - Century Blvd
 - La Brea, north and south entrances



In addition to the outline provided the participants were asked certain questions to which the following answers were provided. The list of questions and answers are:

- What can be done to generate quality development?
 - Start with the Planning Commission / City Council; and,
 - Set standards, e.g. 24” box tree.
- Did Inglewood’s response to Walmart cause any cooling off for developers?
 - Not an indicator of development in Inglewood;
 - Wal-Mart was not following rules; and,
 - Should strengthen small businesses first before allowing Wal-Mart in Inglewood.