



Staff Report

PLANNING DIVISION
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To: Salt Lake City Planning Commission
From: Molly Robinson 801-535-7261 or molly.robinson@slcgov.com
Date: August 20, 2014
Re: Downtown Master Plan

Amendments to the Downtown Master Plan

REQUEST: Mayor Ralph Becker, is requesting the Planning Commission review and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding an update to the Downtown Master Plan. The proposed plan will replace the existing Downtown Master Plan, adopted in 1995, and the Gateway Specific Plan, adopted in 1998. The proposed Downtown Master Plan includes the area generally located south of North Temple, west of 200 East, north of 900 South and east of I-15.

RECOMMENDATION: Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a positive recommendation to the City Council to adopt the plan. This recommendation is based on the information in the staff report, the process, input and outcomes involved in updating the Downtown, consideration of the Mayor's Livability agenda and City Council Philosophy Statements, and consideration of adopted citywide plans related to the Downtown area. Below is a motion that the Commission may consider in making a recommendation that is consistent with the Planning staff's.

"I move that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the City Council to adopt the Downtown Master Plan based on the information presented in the staff report, the public involvement process associated with creating the plan, and the testimony and discussion provided during the Planning Commission briefings and public hearings."

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Draft Downtown Master Plan
- B. Existing Conditions Report
- C. Public Engagement Report
- D. Public and Department review comments
- E. Comprehensive Housing Policy

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

SALT LAKE CITY CORPORATION
451 SOUTH STATE STREET, ROOM 406
PO BOX 145480 SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84114-5480

WWW.SLCGOV.COM
TEL 801-5357757 FAX 801-535-6174

The Downtown Master Plan Update project is located within the Central Community Planning Community and covers the Downtown area west of 200 East between North Temple and 900 South. Historically the Downtown Master Plan has been a small area plan located within the Central Community Master Plan. The Planning Division is recommending that this update to the Downtown Master Plan area be expanded to include the area west of 300 West (currently covered by the Gateway Specific Master Plan) and the area south of 600 South to 900 South, including the area between 900 South and the I-15 on/off ramp. Due to the unique nature of Downtown and its importance to the City, region and State, The Planning Division is also recommending that the Downtown Master Plan be elevated to a Community Master Plan. Doing so would remove the area out of the Central Community Master Plan.

The Central Community Master Plan was adopted in 2005. This plan covers a large portion of the City, including the entire area that would be covered by the proposed update to the Downtown Master Plan. This plan established the future land use for the area and broke it down into two basic categories: Central Business District and Downtown Support, differing to the Downtown Master Plan for related land use policies within the Central Business District. The plan defers to the Gateway Specific Master Plan for the area west of 300 West. Due to the limited amount of detail associated with the Downtown area in the Central Community Master Plan, no changes to this plan are required as part of the update.

The current Downtown Master Plan was adopted in 1995. The 1995 Plan included two primary sections: a policy section and a project section. Many of the policies were associated with specific projects, such as hosting the Winter Olympics, constructing a light rail line, and building a performing arts center. The plan included a number of other projects, most of which have been built or implemented over the last 20 years.

In 1998, The City adopted the Gateway Specific Plan, which covers the area bounded by North Temple, 300 West, approximately 900 South and I-15. This plan divided the area into sub districts: Union Pacific, Rio Grande, Gateway Corridor, South Gateway and I-15/Railroad. Most of the development that has occurred since 1998 has occurred in the Union Pacific and Rio Grande sub district. The other areas have seen minimal development, primarily due to the area not being in high demand from a private market view point. Over the past few years, the Granary (which corresponds to the South Gateway sub district) has emerged as a focus area for the City, RDA and private sector. During the public process for updating the Downtown Master Plan, it became evident that updates to the Gateway Specific Master Plan would also be necessary to establish the framework for future land use and development.

In 2012, it was determined that it was time to update the Downtown Master Plan to prepare Downtown for the next 10-20 years. Since that time, the Planning Division, working closely with a broadly represented group of stakeholders to understand where Downtown is, what Downtown should be in the future and what needs to happen to realize the future Downtown Salt Lake.

The Existing Conditions report established a base line of understanding where Downtown is currently. This report helped identify the challenges and opportunities that exist in Downtown and inform the Vision, Goals, Action Items, Key Moves and Catalytic Projects. A copy of the report is attached as Attachment B.

Highlights of the Plan

The Downtown Master Plan is organized around the process of identifying where the Downtown is today, the vision for the future, and how to make the vision a reality. The “Where We Are” section summarizes the key facts from the existing conditions report, identifies the opportunities and challenges that we face and describe the intent and purpose of the plan.

The Vision for Downtown follows and includes a series of guiding principles that are based on the values that were identified through public outreach, other City policies, related planning processes and past master plans.

Each Guiding Principle contains a set of goals, with action items following each goal. These goals and action items provide direction on what needs to happen to turn the vision into a reality. The primary focus of the plan is to increase the Downtown population through adding more housing and employment opportunities, understanding that doing these two things will have positive impacts on all of the other goals listed in the plan. The action items are intended to be implemented by the public sector and the private sector. Performance Indicators have been identified that relate to the guiding principle and will be used to measure the effectiveness of the plan. The performance indicators include data about where we are now and what the target or trend is.

The Key Moves are projects that help implement a number of the guiding principles and can trigger immediate positive impacts. These moves are things that have been on the radar for a number of years, but it is getting to the point that they are needed more than ever. Some, like the Cultural Core are well under way and should correspond with the opening of the Eccles Theater. Extending the 4th South Trax line to Salt Lake Central Station is central to not only creating better links between the University and Downtown, but also sets the stage for a Downtown circulator and may help with a Downtown light rail bypass, which could speed up commute times and make transit more convenient.

The Downtown has been broken down into districts for the purpose of establishing a development framework. This intent of this section is primarily to guide future land use and zoning decisions. Each district has a description that is written as if it were 20 years from now. Catalytic projects were identified through the public engagement process, past plans for the area and an analysis of each district to identify the obstacles that make place making in specific areas challenging. Catalytic projects are intended to improve the overall quality of the districts, stimulate private investment and address the challenges faced in each district.

The implementation section of the plan focuses on tools that are available now and potential tools that may help speed up the process of realizing the vision. This section discusses the roles that various sectors play in implementing the role. It is important to note that the City (and its public sector partners) is not the only entities that help implement master plans. The private sector, including business owners, property owners, residents, special interests, and developers, play a major role in implementing master plans. While many of these entities are often viewed with a critical eye (sometimes earned, sometimes not) the primary goal is to establish a standard for development that helps build better, human oriented places that people can take pride in, a sort of “return on community” versus an economic bottom line approach to development.

Public Participation

From the beginning of the project, an equitable and accessible public participation effort has been tenant for the Downtown Master Plan team. The Advisory Committee was established to help guide and promote the participation process, respond to updates, provide ideas and be a sounding board for the accumulation of the total public input that resulted in a draft plan.

A Technical Advisory Committee was established to keep the outcomes grounded and provide an understanding of the realities of future growth. This committee was comprised of City staff, representative from the County and State, Utah Dept. of Transportation, Utah Transit Authority, Rocky Mountain Power, and other agencies that provide services in the Downtown.

Over 100 public events were held throughout the outreach process. One of the goals of the project was to attend community events where people were already going to be so we did not have to try to draw people in. To accomplish this, the team attended the Downtown Farmers Market, Utah Arts

Festival, Greek Festival, Twilight Concerts, numerous events at the Gallivan Center, for example. The team also organized smaller, more focused meetings with area residents and businesses. The Living Room Socials and Brown Bag lunches provided people an opportunity to meet in a different setting, have more one on one conversation and discuss the future of Downtown.

The Project team also held community workshops, design charrettes, and urban design debates at different locations and at different times to provide another avenue of participation. A full description of the public outreach efforts and outcomes can be found in Attachment C.

DISCUSSION:

The City has not adopted specific factors when considering amendments to Master Plans. Throughout the planning process, Planning Staff has used a number of adopted policy documents, citywide master plans and planning efforts done by other groups to provide some insight into policies that may impact the Downtown Master Plan. These documents and how they relate to the Downtown Master Plan are discussed below.

Mayor's Livability Agenda

The Mayor's Livability Agenda is a document created by the Mayor's Office that is intended to help frame priorities as they relate to making Salt Lake City "one of the greenest, most accessible, most inclusive and most economically viable municipalities in the country." The document contains 6 sections:

1. The Resilient Economy
2. Salt lake City in Motion
3. A wise Energy Future and Quality Environment
4. Innovation and Celebration of Education
5. A Commitment to Equality and Opportunity
6. Enhancing the Artistic and Cultural Life

The Resilient Economy Section focuses on how the City administers specific tools, such as the RDA programs, Community Development Block Grants, Community Reinvestment Act, Capital Improvement Program, etc. The Downtown Master Plan includes a section that identifies a variety of tools that may help provide funding sources for Action Items, Key Moves and Catalytic Projects. The Resilient Economy section also focuses on supporting small business, increasing housing options for residents, supporting the local food economy, and cultivating the right types of industry in the City. All of these things are identified as goals or action items in the proposed update to the Downtown Master Plan.

Section 2 "Salt Lake City in Motion" discusses providing transportation options. The documents states "Drive if you want to, but it shouldn't be your only, or necessarily best, option in town." While the City has a specific transportation plan (Downtown in Motion) for the Downtown area, the intent of the Downtown Master plan is to support those transportation projects that range from expanded rail and bus transit, expanding bicycle infrastructure and improved pedestrian environment. The Downtown Plan links the transportation network to land use by providing destinations at key nodes of the transportation network with the end goal of connecting people to places.

The purpose of the section titled "A Wise Energy Future and Quality Environment" is to find ways to conserve existing resources, protect our natural assets, plan for climate adaptation, reduce our waste and lead the region to better air quality. Many of these items go beyond the downtown area, but the Downtown plays a critical role in achieving these initiatives. The Downtown Master Plan has incorporated many of these initiatives into the action items associated with several goals and guiding principles.

While the City plays a limited role in education, the Mayor's Livability aims to support the Education system in the City. Education is a key component of an equitable, accessible Downtown and provides a foundation for economic development and resiliency. The goal of the Downtown Master Plan is to provide more access to education facilities in the downtown area as the need arises. If we are going to add possibly 20,000 new residents in Downtown, the school system will have to respond by providing convenient and accessible education facilities.

The City has made a strong push towards making “A Commitment to Equality and Opportunity”, the fifth section of the Livability Agenda. The Downtown Master Plan supports this effort by including goals and action items that are focused on improving the opportunity index for Downtown residents and working towards equal access to all services for all people.

Downtown is the center of the City’s, region, and State’s artistic and cultural life and the Downtown Master Plan supports the efforts identified in the Livability Agenda. The Key Moves and Catalytic Projects reinforce this commitment, while specific action items are aimed at improving the artistic and cultural life in the City.

City Council Philosophy Statements

In 2012, the City Council adopted a series of philosophy statements on several subjects pertaining to the City. The document states “It is the Council’s intent that this collection of philosophy statement will provide direction and communicate vision that can be used and built upon by City residents, business owners, developers and City employees.” These philosophy statements cover:

- Historic Preservation
- Housing
- Economic Health of the City
- Arts and Culture
- Neighborhood Quality of Life
- Transparency
- Transportation and Mobility
- Parks and Open Space
- Sustainability
- Education

The above categories address a number of elements that are typically addressed in a master plan. In fact, State statute requires master plans to address, at the least, land use, housing and transportation. Typically, the City’s Community Master Plans have satisfied the land use element requirement, and this is the case of the Downtown Master Plan. Although the Council Philosophy Statements were not adopted in a way that makes them official land use policies for the City, they can be considered for creating new or updating master plans.

The Council Philosophy Statement on Historic Preservation mirrors the City’s adopted Historic Preservation Plan, which is a citywide plan, intended to guide the future historic preservation efforts of the City. The Downtown Master Plan includes multiple goals and action items related to historic preservation and recognizes the role that historic structures and sites have in defining the character of Downtown.

The Philosophy Statement on Economic Health of the City identifies the importance that the City plays in local, regional and State economies. There are a number of value statements about supporting businesses of various sizes, supporting greater population growth through density opportunities, annexation opportunities and improving the overall quality of life, and other similar values related to the economy. The Downtown Master Plan includes many of these values through the guiding principles, goals, and action items and in the discussions about individual districts.

Similar to the Mayor’s Livability Agenda, the Council supports a strong vision for arts and culture in the City by supporting a wide variety of artistic expressions in different locations and at different scales. The Downtown provides many opportunities for artistic expression, from large concerts to small art galleries. The Plan also supports accessibility to these venues for all people.

In the Quality of Life Philosophy Statement, the Council has outlined a vision and shared values that represent a position of accessible housing, opportunity for social interaction, safety, access to food, retail, entertainment, and schools and variety of nearby business that are accessible by a number of transportation options. The Downtown Master Plan supports enhancing the existing, easily identified neighborhoods in and near Downtown while supporting a framework for up and coming neighborhoods to be established and self identify.

The Council Philosophy Statement on Transparency endorses best practices in open government, including expanded public engagement, an open decision making process and improving access to government data and

processes. The process associated with the Downtown Master Plan has been extensive, with over 100 opportunities for people to participate over a one year period, an open process that has allowed people to see what others had to say and the opportunity for interested parties to suggest modifications throughout the entire process. Moving forward, the Downtown Master Plan includes a series of targets that can be used to help gauge the success of the Plan and inform decision makers when it comes time to make changes.

The Council's Vision for Transportation and Mobility states "Salt Lake City residents should have choices in modes of transportation which are safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable. Residents should reap the value of well-designed transportation systems that connect residents to neighborhoods and the rest of the region." The Downtown Master Plan supports the goals of Downtown in Motion by aligning land use and development policies in the Downtown with the existing and planned transportation networks that include cars, transit, bicycles and walking, as well as the need to serve Downtown land uses.

The vision for the Councils Philosophy Statement on Sustainability is to "measurably change habits and patterns to use only what is minimally needed for our generation so resources are readily available, and where possible, replenished for future generations." The Council Philosophy Statement lists planning for future growth using tools such as land use planning, zoning, land acquisitions, setting growth targets, expanding housing choices and transferring development opportunities to increase the use of sustainable practices. The Downtown Master Plan supports this statement by providing options for people to live in an environment where they consume and pollute less and have a smaller footprint. This helps the City grow while at the same time preserving necessary resources for future generations.

The vision adopted by the City Council related to Parks and Open Space focuses on both programmed and non-programmed recreational opportunities. The philosophy statement mentions several values that are related to items found in the Downtown Master Plan, including promoting healthy lifestyles, improving air quality, and overall well being of residents; maintaining high quality, aesthetically pleasing public places and including along transportation corridors. The Green Loop, Gateway Commons Park and Grand Boulevard catalytic projects and key moves would help fulfill this vision and values.

The Council Philosophy statement on Education is very similar to the Mayor's Livability Agenda. As discussed, the Downtown Master Plan supports increasing access to education opportunities for all residents, particularly as the Downtown population grows.

The Comprehensive Housing Policy (the title of the Philosophy Statement on Housing) lists several purposes, including to foster and celebrate the urban residential tradition, ensuring a wide range of housing types, ensure affordable housing is available in all neighborhoods, emphasizing the value of transit oriented development, and supporting green building techniques. Downtown is well suited to achieve all of these purposes and has the infrastructure in place to do it. As Downtown grows, the infrastructure must grow with it. Housing is a high priority of the Downtown Master Plan and targets, actions items, etc. are all aimed at increasing the housing supply to support a diverse population. Of specific note is that the Statement on Housing includes the expectation that the housing policy will be considered whenever the City Administration engages in master planning efforts. For this reason, the specific policy statement on Housing can be found in Attachment E. To the extent possible, the Downtown Master Plan incorporates the applicable policies in the form of various Guiding Principles, Goals and Action Items. Specific Statements are most commonly found in the "Provides Housing Choice" Guiding Principle and accompanied Goals and Action Items. Other policies have been incorporated into other applicable Guiding Principles.

Sustainable Salt Lake Plan 2015

Although not an officially adopted master plan of the City, the Sustainable Salt Lake Plan 2015 establishes certain metrics and benchmarks with a goal of reaching those by 2015. Some of the measures have extended goal dates due to the nature of the item. This plan relates to the Downtown Master Plan through the action items in the Downtown Plan that relate directly to some of the metrics in the plan. The Downtown, if developed as envisioned, will also help the City establish the goals listed in the Sustainable Salt Lake Plan.

Salt Lake City Housing Plan

The City adopted a City wide housing plan in 2000. Although the Comprehensive Housing Policy was adopted in 2013, the Salt Lake City Community Housing Plan is still an adopted City plan and has not yet been replaced by a new plan. The Housing Plan identifies a number of key statements and objectives related to providing, preserving and improving the housing stock in the City. The Downtown Plan accomplishes this by setting targets for new housing units and establishing policies for adaptive reuse of historic buildings to provide more housing. Protecting existing enclaves in housing, such as on Edison around 800 South and Washington and Jefferson Streets is a goal of the plan aimed at providing housing choice.

Downtown in Motion Transportation Master Plan

Downtown in Motion is the adopted transportation master plan for the Downtown area. The transportation projects that are in the Downtown in Motion Plan are identified in the Downtown Master Plan as well and the land use policies and guidance are intended to link future growth along the key transportation corridors that provide people with transportation options. Downtown in Motion considers all transportation modes. The highlights of Downtown in Motion include an expanded midblock walkway network, extending the 400 South LRT line west on 400 South to Salt Lake Central Station, a downtown circulator, expanded bicycle network and working urban design into infrastructure. All of these concepts are enhanced in the Downtown Master Plan. Although not yet adopted, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan has also been used to inform the Downtown Master Plan. This is reflected in the descriptions of the midblock walkways, improving pedestrian and bicycle safety and other elements.

Plan Salt Lake

Although Plan Salt Lake is not yet an adopted plan of the City, the process for creating it has been running concurrently with the Downtown Master Plan process. The intent of Plan Salt Lake is to be an overarching vision plan for the City that guides future community master plans and provides some insight into what each community plan should consider as they are updated and implemented. The Downtown Master Plan includes a section that discusses Plan Salt Lake and how it has influenced the Downtown Master Plan. Many of the guiding principles are similar to those in Plan Salt Lake and the metrics and targets listed in the Downtown Plan help inform the targets listed in Plan Salt Lake.

Downtown Rising

Downtown Rising is not an official City Plan. However, it was created by a broad based representation of the downtown community, the City as a whole, the region and the State. It had broad political support as well as support from the business community. It was also widely viewed as a very successful plan with big ideas that will help ensure Downtown remains the urban center of the State. Most of the Key Moves and Catalytic Projects identified in the Downtown Master Plan were influenced by Downtown Rising. The district concept also came from Downtown Rising.

Kentlands Initiative and the Granary Charrette

The Downtown Master Plan process started on the heels of the Granary Charrette, a planning effort that was carried out by the property and business owners in the Granary. The outcomes of this charrette have been used to inform the Downtown Master Plan on the future of the Granary District. The Granary District section incorporates the key themes from that process including midblock walkways, reuse of existing buildings, mixing a variety of housing types into an area in a manner that respects the industrial nature, rethinking public streets and improving the infrastructure and transportation connections to other parts of the City.

Wasatch Choice for 2040

Wasatch Choice for 2040 is a regional planning effort that “considers how growth, mobility, housing and jobs can be shaped for the next few decades to have outstanding positive impacts on the life of residents in the Greater Wasatch Area.” This effort focuses on “centered growth” which can be summarized by making changing strategic changes to a small percent of our metropolitan area can yield huge benefits. The benefits of “centers” is that they provide housing and transportation choices, reduce the time distance and money associated with transportation, helps business reach more consumers and employees to have a selection of more jobs, improves air quality, reduces growth pressure on sensitive areas and reduces demand for water. Wasatch Choice for 2040 states the following about Downtown:

Downtown Salt Lake City is the metropolitan center, serving as the hub of business and cultural activity in the region. It has the most intensive form of development for both employment and housing, with high rise development common in the central business district. It will continue to serve as the finance, commerce, government, retail, arts, and entertainment center for the region.

The vision identified in the Downtown Master Plan is similar to this statement. The guiding principles, goals and action items not only help fulfill the vision of the Plan, but also Wasatch Choice for 2040. This sends a strong message that Salt Lake City recognizes the importance of Downtown, the role regional planning plays and the role that Downtown plays in the region.

NEXT STEPS:

The Planning Commission is a recommended body for all master plan amendments. The Planning Commission can choose to forward the Downtown Master Plan with a recommendation to adopt the plan, adopt the plan with specific changes, or to not adopt the plan. Given the amount of review that has already occurred with the Planning Commission, Planning staff is of the opinion that the plan captures the vision of the community and the Planning Commission and that the Plan has incorporated the input already provided by the Planning Commission.

After a recommendation is made, the City Council is required to consider the Planning Commission's recommendation. The Council can adopt the plan as recommended, make modifications to the plan as it sees fit and then adopt the plan or deny the plan. If the plan is denied, the existing Downtown Master Plan, Gateway Specific Plan and applicable section of the Central Community Master Plan remain in place.

ATTACHMENT A: Draft Downtown Master Plan

ATTACHMENT B: Existing Conditions Report

ATTACHMENT C: Public Engagement Report

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