



Staff Reports

File #: 1690-2018, **Version:** 1

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

From: Steve Potter, City Manager

Prepared By: Robin Schabes, Economic Development Manager

TITLE:

Oxbow District Place Branding Report prepared by the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive a report regarding the Oxbow District place branding study by the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel

DISCUSSION:

Background

In April 2018, the Economic Development Division applied to the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) program for help in evaluating the Oxbow District and the elements that make it a special place. This approach was selected based on internal discussion with representatives of the City Manager's Office, the Economic Development Division, the Community Development Department, and the Planning Division. The application was accepted, and the City entered into an agreement with ULI to proceed with the TAP program. The Economic Development Division led this brief initiative, working with members of the Planning Division for assistance on data gathering, information sharing and other program elements.

As background, ULI is a global nonprofit organization, and a well-renowned interdisciplinary real estate forum focused on policy and practice. ULI's TAP program is implemented through its local chapters, and its panelists consist of unpaid volunteers from ULI's local membership chosen specifically for each assignment. The TAP program allows local governments, public agencies and nonprofit organizations to access expertise on complex issues.

Working with the Bay Area chapter of ULI, the following volunteer panelists were selected for this study, and were onsite in Napa between August 6th and 7th, 2018.

- Jim Heid, President & Founder, UrbanGreen (*TAP Chair*)
- Sandra Kulli, President, Kulli Marketing
- David Israel, Principal, BAR Architects
- Elizabeth Shreeve, Principal, SWA Group
- Blaine Merker, Partner & Managing Director US, Gehl
- Edith Ramirez, Economic Development Director, City of Morgan Hill
- Michael Lander, Owner, Lander Group

Expertise represented on the panel included urban design, economic development, placemaking, real estate development, urban planning, architecture, marketing/branding, and landscape architecture.

The purpose of the Oxbow District Technical Assistance Panel was to solicit feedback, perspectives, and opinions; to synthesize information and data; and to make recommendations for the City's consideration with respect to place branding based upon the respective experiences and expertise of the panel members. The focal point of this effort has been to inform the City of proposed next steps that will assist in the branding of the area and creative placemaking.

As part of the ULI TAP process, staff of the Economic Development Division prepared a background briefing book for the panelists. In addition, the City convened a community engagement event on July 19th, 2018 focused on providing a platform and venue for stakeholders of the Oxbow District to speak and be heard about their perspectives. The information was shared with the City Council in advance of the August 7th, 2018 ULI presentation.

Report Highlights

The report presents a place branding framework, recommendations for consideration, and related implementation actions. A brief presentation will be provided at the Council meeting.

Place Branding Framework

The TAP identified a 5-step place branding framework focused on: 1) the area's unique and special characteristics; 2) the area's key elements; 3) the area's connection with surrounding neighborhoods and the downtown core; 4) the area's eclectic pedestrian qualities, natural setting, and organic evolution; and 5) the ways in which market trends, policies, and development can support the desired place brand.

Recommendations

The report includes the following high-level recommendations to help guide the creation of the place branding framework.

1. Focus on the Napa River so it becomes the center of the district, and more integrated in experiencing the area through sight lines, connections (to, across, along), placemaking, and graphic identity.
2. Nurture public life by developing a public realm framework plan focusing on desired activities (e.g., programming, walkable routes, human scale streets/spaces) and greater attention to public spaces.
3. Embrace the Oxbow Commons (i.e., Name it, Sign it, Use it) with intentional focus on activating higher levels of daily use through strategies such as flexible programming, renaming, signage to encourage walking and connections to the river and downtown, and removable public art displays.
4. Enhance the First Street bridge to make it a welcoming, engaging, and walkable destination route via strategies such as seating options, shading, public art, and/or lighting.

5. Create a principle-driven vision plan that clearly articulates development-related expectations (e.g., defining qualities, human-scale, active ground floors, mix of uses, interesting frontages, integrated pedestrian and bicycle networks).
6. Explore opportunities to leverage public land to catalyze / support development that reinforces the Oxbow District's vision and brand, and the downtown at large.
7. Facilitate the continued evolution of the Oxbow District as a maker's place through creative strategies that encourage local artists and craftspeople to use space.

Next Steps

The Economic Development Division is in the process of evaluating and organizing the suggested action items, and will be working collaboratively with other City staff to begin the process of prioritization and implementation of which Council will be apprised as actions move forward.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS:

This agenda item is informational and does not result in a financial impact without future Council action.

CEQA:

The Community Development Director has determined that the Recommended Action described in this Agenda Report is not subject to CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c).

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

ATCH 1 - ULI Technical Assistance Panel Oxbow District Report

NOTIFICATION:

The Agenda was posted at least 72 hours in advance of the Council meeting.