


Santa Monica
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Building a Thriving Community Since 1925

April 25, 2013

David Martin
Director of Planning and Community Development
City of Santa Monica
1685 Main Street, Room 212
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Re: Downtown Specific Plan

Dear Mr. Martin:

Enclosed with this letter are the Chamber of Commerce's recommendations for the Downtown Specific Plan ("DSP").

Our recommendations have been guided by the LUCE, which envisions Downtown as the economic heart of Santa Monica with the greatest concentration of activity, the tallest buildings, and the highest development intensity. Santa Monica's economic and fiscal health depends upon a vibrant, thriving Downtown.

With respect to height and density for the non-opportunity sites, the Chamber believes the DSP should include clear height and density standards that are consistent with the LUCE's vision for Downtown. These standards should include sufficient height to accommodate successful ground floor uses and reasonable floor-to-floor heights, guided by input from architects experienced in Santa Monica. And, the Chamber supports a modified approach to incentivizing housing in Downtown, with a "sliding scale" floor area bonus subject to an overall cap on the bonus amount. The Chamber looks forward to an ongoing dialogue with the City, Downtown stakeholders and the community with respect to the precise height/density standards for the Downtown's non-opportunity sites.

The Chamber also supports the LUCE's vision for the key investment sites in the Downtown ("opportunity sites") as essential to Downtown's ongoing revitalization. These sites, limited in number (only eight as recommended by City Staff) and strategically located, provide extraordinary opportunities for community benefits that justify flexibility with respect to height and density. The City should establish height and density limits for these sites on a site-specific basis when considering proposals for development and project-specific community benefits. The DSP should not pre-judge what the height/density standards or the community benefits will be for these sites.

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Thus far, proposals have emerged for several opportunity sites that contemplate extraordinary community benefits. These benefits include publicly-accessible open space, significant works of public art, a museum, affordable housing, public parking, preservation of rent-controlled housing, significant investment in public infrastructure improvements, iconic architecture, public viewing areas, and historic preservation. The DSP should allow these proposals to be considered on their individual merits after full environmental review, community meetings and public hearings without pre-judging their height and density.

Above all, we encourage the City to stay on course in planning for an exciting, pedestrian-friendly and economically successful Downtown that follows the LUCE's vision, accommodates reasonable development, and continues Downtown as a place to be enjoyed by all who live, work and visit Santa Monica.

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