

City of Brisbane

Agenda Report

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: William Prince, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Project for Public Spaces (PPS), Place Evaluation Results

DATE: For Council Meeting on December 19, 2005

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and discuss report and presentation from PPS.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

As part of the public input process on the update to the general plan, the City Council authorized staff (August 2005), to retain the services of the Project for Public Spaces (PPS). PPS is a non-profit consulting firm, led by Fred Kent, that specializes in assisting communities to transform their public spaces into "great public spaces." They call this process, "Place Making."

Last September, PPS facilitated two days of workshops, at the Community Center, focusing on places along Visitation Avenue, the Community Park, Bayshore Boulevard and Old County Road and Sierra Point. Although outside the city core, Sierra Point was included in this work to provide insight on enhancing the public space opportunities there, before additional development occurs. After familiarizing themselves with the City and the goals of the general plan, PPS made presentations and facilitated public workshops on "Place Making."

The PPS methodology consists of training the public to understand the attributes of successful public spaces, both here and abroad, so that they can analyze their own community's spaces and determine what is working and what is not working. This includes an examination of the sociological, psychological, economic, and physical aspects of a place that makes people want to be there. This approach takes the position that by identifying and focusing on the enhancement of a number of public places in a city (usually 10 or so), or in the core of a city, that the over-all result can be a dramatic transformation of the public spaces in that city, into a city of great public spaces. They argue that making a great city is really about creating a number of successful smaller public spaces that add up to an interconnected, synergistic and successful whole.

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This “grounds up” approach to city making evolved out of Mr. Kent’s association with the late great urban sociologist William “Holly” Whyte, who, among other works, wrote *The Last Landscape*, *Organization Man* and *The Successful Life of Small Urban Spaces*.

Staff believes that the results of this “place making” process will be a major contribution to further discussions on the update of the general plan, especially regarding the Land Use and Circulation elements of the plan and the Central Brisbane and Sierra Point sub areas of the plan. With this process, PPS has provided an invaluable service to Brisbane in assisting its citizens to define and characterize the core public spaces in their community and to vision how the enhancement of those spaces can create a better Brisbane. We know, from comments received by the participants, that these workshops were one of the most successful, creative and democratic processes on the nuts and bolts of great city making that the Brisbane has provided to date. The report contains numerous creative and thoughtful insights from the workshop participants that make it a stimulating and thought provoking must read!

At this evenings meeting, Cynthia Nikitin and Meg Walker, of PPS, will review the results of the input from the public workshops, along with PPS’s recommendations for improving public spaces in Brisbane (see attached report – *Brisbane is Awesome: Place Evaluation Workshop Results December 2005*).

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING ISSUES:

The report and presentation are part of a previously approved contract for PPS services.


Community Development Director


City Manager