



THE CITY OF
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CALIFORNIA

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DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

MEETING

DATE: December 1, 2010

STAFF: Sandy Stohler, Senior Management Analyst
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Steve Marshall, Senior Planner
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SUBJECT: **DOWNTOWN NOVATO WAYFINDING SIGNAGE PROGRAM**

REQUESTED ACTION

Review and provide comments on three schematic sign design options for the Downtown Novato Wayfinding Signage Program.

PROJECT DISCUSSION

Background

Downtown Novato is the historic and geographic center, as well as the heart of the City of Novato. The past several years have been a pivotal period in the revitalization of downtown Novato with Grant Avenue, Novato's main shopping and business district, undergoing extensive street improvements at a cost of \$10 million, including traffic calming measures, sidewalks, landscaping, and street furnishings. Other downtown revitalization projects have included the renovation of 901 Sherman Avenue (City Hall, civic plaza and green) and the installation of public art. While these efforts have gone a long way in improving the appearance of downtown Novato there remains a need to help publicize downtown as a unique destination for shopping and dining. The City Council, in its continuing efforts to enhance downtown Novato, has authorized staff to engage the consulting firm of MERJE to develop a comprehensive wayfinding signage program to help reinforce downtown Novato's image as a distinctive shopping, dining, and entertainment area.

The goals of the Downtown Novato Wayfinding Signage Program are:

- Support and promote a distinct identity for Downtown Novato
- Raise community and visitor awareness of Downtown Novato, and its location
- Direct visitors to downtown from major transportation arteries
- Enhance visitors' and locals' ability to easily navigate downtown, and find desired destinations, including parking

- Increase the success and market potential for retail, dining, arts, entertainment, and economic growth and redevelopment in Downtown Novato
- Support the City's commitment to downtown economic growth and redevelopment

Wayfinding Analysis & Program Development

Development of downtown Novato's Wayfinding Signage Program began with the formation of a steering committee consisting of representatives of the Downtown Novato Business Association, Design Review Commissioner Telfer, and members of city staff. The steering committee was tasked with helping MERJE refine the project's goals, identify key issues; comment on the project's phasing and approval process; budget; maintenance concerns; and stakeholder/public participation process.

Following discussion with the steering committee, MERJE conducted a series of stakeholder meetings. The objectives of the stakeholder meetings were to explain the purpose of the project, uncover concerns about signs in downtown Novato, and elicit ideas about what type of wayfinding signage program might be appropriate for downtown Novato. The stakeholder meetings resulted in contacts with fifty individuals representing a wide range of interests, including economic development, public safety, elected officials, transportation, education, and the arts.

MERJE staff also accompanied officers with the Novato Police Department on patrol to better understand Novato's neighborhoods, street patterns, and traffic flow.

Draft Wayfinding Analysis & Schematic Designs

Utilizing the feedback received from the steering committee, stakeholder interviews, and touring Novato, MERJE has prepared a draft wayfinding analysis and schematic sign designs for downtown Novato. The draft wayfinding analysis includes a strategic plan for developing and managing the wayfinding program, background on Novato's circulation system, neighborhoods, and existing sign environment, and draft sign location recommendations. The Commission is encouraged to review the wayfinding analysis to understand the background and thoughts driving the schematic sign design concepts prepared by MERJE.

MERJE has prepared three schematic sign packages for review and comment by the Design Review Commission and members of community. Each sign concept was developed with thought given to the Novato's character in terms of its natural environment, architectural themes, and sense of place. The schematic designs provide a sample of signs representing a hierarchy of sign types including, but not limited to, gateway features, directional signs at a vehicle scale, and informational signs at a pedestrian level. The schematic sign designs begin on page 3.4 of the attached wayfinding analysis.

The Design Review Commission is asked to focus its review on the schematic sign designs prepared for downtown Novato. The Commission's comments and those of any public in attendance at the workshop will be taken under consideration by the staff at MERJE, who will then prepare a final design concept for consideration by the City Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and provide comments on the three schematic designs for the Downtown Novato Wayfinding Signage Program.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Downtown Novato Wayfinding Analysis