

From: jon@biorenewlabs.com <biorenew415@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 2, 2022 3:24 PM
To: DG_PlanningCommission <DG_PlanningCommission@hermosabeach.gov>
Cc: City Council <citycouncil@hermosabeach.gov>; Suja Lowenthal <suja@hermosabeach.gov>; Ann Yang <anny@hermosabeach.gov>
Subject: E comment on Usage/Zoning meeting tonight

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I missed the window to put in an e-comment but still wanted to provide feedback before tonight's meeting.

We need to consider how important flexibility is in a rapidly changing environment, such as the one we are in now. We are seeing unprecedented acceleration of changes in the way we work, shop, dine and are entertained. We need to be able to adapt so space can be put to its best and highest use. What will retail, office, and services look like in the future? This is unknown and thus flexibility is very important for the future of downtown.

The Preliminary Draft USE Regulations report presents a rather inflexible vision of downtown with usage suggestions that show the lack of understanding of important nuances. I understand this is all a work in progress and is being presented for feedback. I greatly appreciate that I am able to provide this. Here are some feedback as it relates to downtown:

1) The Preliminary Draft USE Regulations bans ground floor office in Downtown:

Should we ban offices from the ground floor? This is a much debated topic, which I have myself vacillated on. Marlin equity and Baker, Burton, Lundy do take up a large part of our 400 Pier block, but I do not believe they are to blame for the less than ideal vibrancy. The bike shop (retail) and Rockefeller (restaurant) which is rarely open also do little for vibrancy. I believe the real issue is not what is there but what is NOT there. Upper Pier needs more great operators that draw people. We need to focus on creating a regulatory environment that encourages those businesses to set up shop in Hermosa.

Instead of focusing on bans, I would like to see us focus on incentives. The new parking code that forgives parking requirements for ground floor non-office, non-late night alcohol businesses already creates incentives that I believe over time will help shape our landscape in a positive way.

We also need to carefully define the term "office" and consider nuance if we are to regulate where offices belong. For example, The current designation of personal services does not apply to Medspas, which specifically would fall under the category of office because they have a medical professional. Yet, Medspas look and act very much like salons. All day, every day patrons go in and out to buy skin care products and get short 15-30 minute treatments. They are considered "retail medicine" because they offer retail services and exist in retail locations such as shopping areas and strip malls. They thrive off of foot traffic and advertise to create new foot traffic. They generally do not exist in office buildings or hospitals. Under the proposed guidelines these businesses would not be welcome on the ground floor of our downtown and thus we would be driving to our surrounding cities because ground floor exposure is important for them.

True North, IV solutions, and Pier Medical are all examples of such business. They all add to the vibrancy of the 400 Pier Ave block.

2) The Preliminary Draft USE Regulations bans research and development in downtown?

I did not see R&D defined, so I could be wrong. Regardless, we want tech companies to move into Hermosa and even downtown. I would like the next Apple or Tesla to be born in a small office downtown.

3) The Preliminary Draft USE Regulations bans indoor recreation in downtown?

What is the future of retail and entertainment? Does it have an “indoor recreation” component? It very well might involve virtual reality activities, new types of fitness that blends entertainment, etc.

4) The Preliminary Draft USE Regulations bans Animal Services in downtown?:

A place like Bow-wow Boutique would not be able to open because they fall under the category of “Animal services” by engaging in “retail sales and services related to boarding, grooming, and care of household pets.”

5) The Preliminary Draft USE Regulations bans Work-Live lofts (residential mixed-use) in Downtown?

Hermosa submitted in the state housing element that certain areas of our downtown are candidates for mixed-use residential. Additionally, work-live lofts (mixed-use residential) should be contemplated as a permitted use in appropriate parts of downtown because they reflect the future needs of how people will work and live. There is a great example in the 11 studios above El Terasco on the 400 Block of Pier Avenue. Those studios help create affordable housing and put feet on the street for economic vibrancy. Lastly, Hermosa has been trying to get its own coastal plan so we can better influence our own future. Adding work-live lofts to our coastal zone would be looked upon very favorably by the coastal commission.

Because the topic of Usage is such an important and nuanced part of zoning, I highly recommend the City create a group within the business owner and commercial property owner pool with whom they can consult. It is very hard to understand the consequence of change unless you are in dialogue with those that would be most affected.