



STAFF REPORT

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION ON GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WORK PROGRAM

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary/Background

This companion report to Agenda item 6B on tonight's agenda provides a General Plan Update Work Program status. The General Plan Update was the highest priority and single-most important work program the Council added as part of their Spring 2006 Priority Calendar review.

As discussed in agenda item 6B, a preceding action in advancing through Phase 3 of the Economic Development Strategy - *Targeted Site Strategy process, Vision Clarification and RFQ Preparation* – is to complete the appropriate General Plan Amendment/Updates for the Downtown Specific Plan and following target areas as follows:

- Firehouse Square – this area is located southwest of the Central Village area, and is bounded by El Camino Real, Fifth & O'Neill Avenues, and Broadway Street.
- The Village Center area – this includes the Emmett House and consists of the block bounded by Ralston, Sixth Avenue, Emmett Street and El Camino Real.
- Belmont Station – this area is located northeast of the Central Village area – it includes the train station and properties fronting on Masonic Way and Ralston Avenue.

This memo seeks to clarify with the Council the specific issues to be addressed as part of the General Plan Update Work Program – i.e. future phases/tasks connecting to a comprehensive update of the City's General Plan. From the Council's direction at tonight's meeting, staff will continue to move forward with a long-term action plan for amendments to the balance of the General Plan.

Discussion

In general terms, a long term strategy for an updated General Plan is necessary. After completion of the public review process and adoption of the Economic Development Target Site

& Downtown Specific Plan amendments (see staff report for Agenda item 6B), staff believes a revision of the City’s General Plan Element structure, and new zoning, should occur such that there is no longer a need for a separate Specific Plan. In that way, there are just two governing documents instead of three, and the Specific Plan document is replaced with simplified text and graphics that are easily understood by City staff and project applicants. This can be addressed via creation of the following:

New “Belmont Village” Element to replace the Downtown Specific Plan

- This action would entail the preparation of a new “Belmont Village” Element of the General Plan that covers all the areas within the Specific Plan and the areas beyond the Specific Plan boundary where the City wants to consider policy or regulatory changes. This work project would include goals and policies in this document that preserve the long-established intent of the City for the character of this area, and the hard work of the citizens who participated in the Specific Plan preparation.
- Ancillary tasks include updating policies about streetscape improvements, capital improvement projects, circulation projects, and other items that are currently included in the Downtown Specific Plan.
- Finally, updating the General Plan Map.

Complimentary tasks in association with creation of a new “Belmont Village” Element of the General Plan are as follows:

Zoning: Land Use and Development Standards

1. Locate all the development standards for the “Belmont Village” into a new base zoning district in the Zoning Code. In that way, all the development standards that applicants and staff need are in the Zoning Code, with extensive easy-to-understand illustrations. Include updated diagrams for development standards to replace those in the current Specific Plan. These would be revised to reflect the Council direction regarding height, FAR, and residential uses, and would have much clearer diagrams.
 - Land Use & Mix of Uses
 - Building Height & Stepbacks
 - Floor Area Ratio
 - Setbacks
 - Public Spaces
 - Parking
 - Ground Floor Design – windows, articulation, materials, etc.

2. Add development standards that do not currently exist related to desired character and design quality of the Downtown, such as: minimum ground floor height; windows on the ground floor; building entrances along the street; lighting; and signage.
3. The City Zoning Map would be revised to reflect the sub-districts, so that there is one governing map, rather than two maps as currently exists (Zoning and Specific Plan).

Additional tasks to fully carry forward the notion or expectation of high quality design for the Downtown Village areas are as follows:

Establishing Design Guidelines

A range of options will need to be considered:

1. Preserve the architectural theme and treatment policy established in the Specific Plan and use these as design guidelines for defined areas.
2. Develop new guidelines that deal more generally with design quality:
 - a. Architectural Details
 - b. Building Materials
 - c. Signage & Lighting
 - d. Streetscape
 - e. Public Art

Creation of a Parking Strategy for Village

- Parking for Economic Development Strategic Sites Development
- El Camino Real Crossing for Access to Caltrain Parking
- Master Parking Plan to enable other Downtown Development

General Plan Update Work Program

Along with the updating of land use policy documents for the Economic Development target sites and Downtown Specific Plan, Dyett & Bhatia has been engaged to prepare a work program for updating the General Plan. The final product will be a document that outlines the detailed tasks and data collection required for the General Plan Update. This is the first step in preparing the updated General Plan. The work program will identify the following:

- **Major Areas where the Plan is out of date.** Identify sections and policies that need to be updated to be consistent with City policies or new development that has occurred since the plan was adopted.
- **Major Issues of Community Concern.** Identify sections that need to be updated or added to address major issues of community concern.

- **Future Growth.** Identify potential future growth areas, or areas where development could be intensified, and determine the need for more in depth study in the updated General Plan.
- **Effectiveness of the General Plan.** Identify sections or format that need to be updated to better serve users of the General Plan, including property owners, City staff, the public, and decision makers.
- **Technical Analysis.** Identify any sections of the plan that need to be amended to comply with State or Federal law.
- **Environmental Review Requirements.** Identify technical analysis and scope of work for environmental review for the General Plan Update. Review plans and technical studies relevant to environmental review topics from City, state, and regional agencies. Interview other public agencies if required.
- **Community Input Process.** Identify options for a community input and review process for preparation of the General Plan.

Scope of Work for the General Plan Work Program

The General Plan Work Program involves the following tasks. It is expected to be completed over a period of approximately six to nine months.

Task 1: Kick-off, background research, and plan document analysis

Task 2: Data Collection and Field Reconnaissance

Task 3: Community Outreach: Major Issues

Task 4: Issues and Options

Task 5: Public review of General Plan Work Program

Task 6: Draft General Plan Work Program

Task 7: Final General Plan Work Program

General Plan Element Structure

The following provides a recommended structure for modification of the current elements of the Belmont General Plan:

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Existing Elements	Proposed Elements
	Belmont Village
Land Use & Open Space	Land Use & Community Design: <i>includes Growth Management</i>
Circulation	Circulation & Mobility: <i>Roadways, Bicycle, Trails and Pedestrian Facilities, Public Transit, Parking and Rail Facilities</i>
Conservation	Conservation: <i>Air Quality, Water Quality, Energy Resources, Land Resources, Biological Resources, and Cultural and Historic Resources</i>
	Public Services & Facilities: <i>Schools, Community Centers, Childcare, Library Services, Social Services, and Health Care</i>
	Public Infrastructure: <i>Water Supply, Storm Drainage, Wastewater, Solid Waste and Recycling, and Utilities</i>
	Parks & Open Space: <i>includes Recreation Facilities</i>
Housing	Housing
	Economic Development
Noise	Public Health & Safety:
Seismic Safety-Safety	<i>Noise, Geologic and Seismic Safety, Flooding, Wildland Fires, Hazardous Materials, Police Services, Fire and Life Safety Services, and Emergency Planning</i>
	Implementation

General Plan/Vision Statement

City Council review and direction regarding this matter is consistent with the General Plan and Vision Statement.

Fiscal Impact

Consultant Services for Dyett & Bhatia work efforts and deliverables have been appropriately funded to complete a *General Plan Update Work Program* as described above.

Public Contact

This matter was placed on the agenda and posted as required by the California Government

Code.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Council review the issues in this staff report and provide direction as appropriate.

Alternatives

1. Provide guidance to staff regarding an alternative General Plan Update Work Program.
2. Refer back to staff for additional information.
3. Take no action.

Respectfully submitted,

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