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Staff Report for General Plan Update Progress (Information Only)

BACKGROUND

This report is for information only. The City of San Leandro is mid-way through a two-year process to update its General Plan, including its Housing Element. The existing General Plan was adopted in 2002 and had a horizon year of 2015. The draft of the new Plan and related California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is estimated for release in January 2016 and will have a horizon year of 2035. Because of State deadlines, the Housing Element of the General Plan was expedited and adopted by the City Council in January 2015.

The existing San Leandro General Plan includes seven “elements”, covering the following topics: land use, transportation, housing, open space and conservation, environmental hazards, community design and preservation, and community services and facilities. Each element includes goals, policies, and actions guiding future City decisions on these topics. The Plan also includes a land use map indicating how growth will take place over the next two decades, and roughly 20 other maps representing the City’s policies on a range of physical development topics.

On March 3, 2014, the City Council approved an Agreement with PlaceWorks to complete the General Plan Update. PlaceWorks has a number of subcontractors, including Barry Miller, who is serving as the project manager. The consultant’s scope of work includes periodic briefings to the City Council on the status of the project. The last briefing was made in January 2015 as part of a public hearing on the Housing Element. Briefings were also provided in March, June, and October 2014.

Housing Element

State law required all 101 cities and nine counties in the Bay Area to adopt new Housing Elements by January 31, 2015. The Element covers a period 2015-2023 and includes policies and specific action programs demonstrating San Leandro’s commitment to accommodate the City’s “fair share” of the

region's housing needs during the next eight years.

The Housing Element was expedited in the General Plan work program because of the January 31, 2015 deadline. The task included a Needs Assessment, an inventory of potential housing sites, an analysis of housing constraints, and an evaluation of past housing policies and programs. It also included an updated set of policies, actions, and measurable objectives. A number of community and neighborhood meetings were convened as part of this process, and interviews with numerous stakeholders were conducted.

The updated Housing Element was adopted by the City Council on January 20, 2015. The California Department of Housing and Community Development found the document to be in full compliance with State requirements and certified it on February 5, 2015.

Baseline Conditions Analysis

The previous (2002) General Plan relied on data collected in 1998-2001. Because much of that data no longer reflects current conditions and issues, the project scope includes a major data collection and analysis component. The updated data will underpin new General Plan policies and provide the foundation for the General Plan EIR. Major tasks completed to date include a citywide inventory and analysis of existing land uses, an evaluation of San Leandro's economy, a traffic analysis (including traffic counts along key roadways and updated "level of service" measurements), an air quality analysis, a noise analysis, and a greenhouse gas analysis. In addition, updates were made to citywide databases on seismic and geologic hazards, water and hydrology, biologic resources (e.g., plants and animals), visual resources, and historic resources.

The update of baseline conditions is about three quarters complete. Tasks still underway include the collection of current information on community services, including parks, schools, libraries, police, fire, and utilities. The consulting team is meeting with local service providers, including the City of San Leandro and other agencies, to collect this data. Also underway is the preparation of maps and graphics depicting spatial data (such as earthquake hazard zones, flood plains, etc.)

Community Engagement

The General Plan Update includes a robust community engagement program, such as a regularly updated project website, community workshops, neighborhood meetings, outreach to Boards and Commissions, and meetings with stakeholders. Press releases and news stories have been prepared prior to major meetings in order to generate interest and increase attendance.

Highlights of the community engagement program thus far include:

- Eight study sessions with the San Leandro Planning Commission, including an introductory session, two sessions focused on land use, three sessions focused on housing, and two focused on economic development. Each of these study sessions included an opportunity for discussion by Commissioners, as well as input from the public
- Nine study sessions with other City Boards and Commissions, including the Rent Review Board, the Board of Zoning Adjustments, the Human Services Commission, the Arts Commission (scheduled for June 10), the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Recreation and Parks Commission, the Senior Commission, the Youth Advisory Commission, and the Library-Historical Commission.

- Four community workshops, including one on the Housing Element (July 2014), two on a citywide visioning under the General Plan Update, including a discussion of San Leandro's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (October 23 and 28, 2014), and one on policy options (April 30, 2015). The April 30 meeting used real-time polling devices to gauge audience opinion on different policy choices. Each attendee was furnished with a push button device and asked to "vote" on multiple choice policy questions presented on the screen. The outcomes of each vote were displayed instantaneously, followed by a discussion of the issue and why people voted as they did. Another workshop is tentatively scheduled for November 2015. Attendance at these workshops has ranged from 25 to 75 people. Meetings have been widely advertised using post cards and flyers, social media, press releases, and e-blasts to a mailing list with over 300 names.
- Meetings with stakeholder groups, including housing advocates [(e.g., Congregations Organized for Renewal (COR)], the Chamber of Commerce, and Friends of San Leandro Creek. More stakeholder meetings are planned in the coming months.
- Meetings with neighborhood groups, including the League of San Leandro Neighborhoods.
- Information was distributed on the General Plan at the 2014 and 2015 Cherry Festivals.

In addition to the meetings and workshops, the team has maintained an interactive project website (www.sanleandro2035.org <<http://www.sanleandro2035.org>>) since project inception. The website includes regular news stories about upcoming meetings, all project-related documents, and information about how to participate in the General Plan Update. Agenda packets are posted to the website on the Friday before each meeting. The website also includes a link to "Virtual City Hall," a site on which residents can weigh in on various policy questions by typing responses visible to others.

The public's input was extremely important in shaping the 2015-2023 Housing Element and will continue to be important as the other elements of the General Plan are drafted in the coming months. Staff and the consultant team continue to reach out to different organizations and individuals to solicit input and to provide education and awareness about the Update.

Policy Audit and Development

The consultant team is midway through an "audit" of existing city policies on the topics addressed by the General Plan. At this point, the team has reviewed all land use policies (including those in more recent planning documents such as the Next Generation Workplace Study and the Downtown Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy, transportation policies, park and open space policies, and environmental hazards policies. The team has not yet audited policies on community design or community services and facilities.

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate each existing policy and determine if it should be carried forward, edited, or deleted. The audit also identifies "gaps" where new policies are needed. Another purpose of the audit is to identify "action items" in the 2002 Plan that have been completed so that they can be replaced with new action items to help implement the General Plan in 2016-2035.

Land Use Map

The consultant team is in the process of preparing a new General Plan Land Use Map for San Leandro. The Map will replace the General Plan Map which was adopted in 2002. That Map was

amended several times in 2002-2014, including an amendment to allow Kaiser Permanente Hospital and an amendment to incorporate the Downtown-TOD Strategy. An amendment to incorporate the Shoreline Development Plan is pending.

The scope of work did not anticipate major changes to the General Plan Map, which will carry forward existing designations for the most part. However, part of the work program includes an evaluation of the Map and how well it is working to guide growth in San Leandro. A number of minor revisions may be proposed as an outcome of this evaluation. This could include adjusting the density ranges for the residential categories to reflect actual densities of development in the city, a “Community Commercial” designation on -Washington Avenue between the railroad underpass and Halcyon-Floresta (in lieu of the Light Industrial designation), and possible changes along Marina Boulevard to reflect the function of this corridor as a major connector between the east and west sides of the city.

To stay on schedule and produce a Draft Plan and Draft EIR) by January 2016, staff and PlaceWorks are planning to produce the draft Land Use Map by July 2015. This draft map is necessary to provide sufficient lead time to complete the technical tasks associated with the EIR, including traffic modeling, air quality forecasts, and noise level projections for Year 2035. The draft map will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the City Council in early 2016 as part of the public review process for the entire draft General Plan Update and EIR.

Economic Development Element

An “Economic Development Element” is not a mandatory part of a General Plan, but is often included as an “optional” element to articulate a city’s position on local economic development issues. Many cities in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties have adopted such elements and use them as policy frameworks for their business attraction, expansion, and retention strategies. Economic Development elements can demonstrate a community’s competitive edge, outline a vision for the future of the local economy, and ensure that economic development initiatives are coordinated with local land use, transportation, housing, and environmental policies.

The original work scope for the 2015-2035 General Plan Update did not include an Economic Development Element, since such an element was not included in the prior (2002) Plan. Based on input from City staff, the public, and the Planning Commission during the first year of the General Plan Update, there has been strong interest in adding an Economic Development Element to the scope. Accordingly, the project scope was amended, and \$20,000 in funding was approved by the City Council in April 2015, to add this new chapter. The element will largely build on the City’s existing Economic Development Strategy and current initiatives, while incorporating input from key business stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce, local business associations, and major employers and industry representatives. Stakeholder meetings are anticipated during the coming months as policies are drafted.

Next Steps

As noted above, the consultant team is presently working on Baseline Conditions Data Collection and Analysis, the Policy Audit, and development of the new General Plan Map. These tasks will be completed by July 2015. At that point, the team will commence with development of the General Plan and EIR documents. Additional study sessions with the Planning Commission are tentatively scheduled for July 16 (on the Conservation/Sustainability and Environmental Hazards elements) and

September 17, 2015 (on the Community Design/Preservation and Community Services/Facilities elements). A community workshop is tentatively scheduled for November 2015. Another City Council briefing will be provided in Fall 2015, prior to release of the Draft Plan in January 2016.

ATTACHMENT

None.

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