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General Plan Study Session on Land Use and Transportation Policies

**SUMMARY**

This is an informational report only and no Planning Commission action is required.

The City of San Leandro is in the process of updating its General Plan. Six study sessions with the Planning Commission have been held to date, and a briefing on economic development initiatives was provided on April 16, 2015. Previous General Plan study sessions have focused on the Housing Element, the Land Use Map, local economic conditions and forecasts, and the vision for San Leandro’s future. The upcoming study sessions will focus on policy review and development, starting tonight with land use and transportation.

**BACKGROUND**

It is important to keep in mind that the process now being undertaken is a General Plan Update, and not a brand new General Plan (as was prepared in 1998-2002). As such, the starting point for most policy discussions is the existing General Plan (the 2002 Plan). The objective of this process is to move the time horizon of the 2002 Plan forward to 2035 and to incorporate up-to-date information about the city, recent forecasts for the future, and recommendations from recent plans and studies. The Update also provides an opportunity to respond to emerging issues and opportunities that were not present in 1998-2002.

Given this approach, an “audit” of the 2002 General Plan has been completed and each of its policies and actions has been systematically evaluated. **Attachments “A” and “B”** are the policy audits for land use and transportation, respectively. Future study sessions with the Planning Commission will focus on Conservation, Open Space, and Hazards (slated for July 16, 2015) and Community Design, Preservation, and Facilities/Services (tentatively scheduled for September 17, 2015).

The policy audits are formatted as spreadsheets, with existing goals, policies and actions from the 2002 Plan listed on each row. The final column of the spreadsheet (Evaluation) includes a determination as to whether the statement should be carried forward, edited, or deleted. It also references possible new policies or actions that should be considered. The audits are supplemented by a review of more recent planning documents, including the Downtown/TOD Strategy, the East 14<sup>th</sup> Street South Area Development Strategy, the Shoreline Development Plan, the Next Generation Workplace District Study for the industrial area, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, and the Climate Action Plan.

There are 208 goals, policies and actions in the existing Land Use Element and 117 goals, policies, and actions in the existing Transportation Element. Because the Planning Commission Study Session does not provide time for discussion of all 315 statements, we will focus on the issues where feedback is needed the most. Comments on the other statements may be provided by the Commissioners and the general public via email or subsequent discussions. The key issues requiring feedback are highlighted in yellow in the policy audits.

A General Plan community workshop was convened on April 30, 2015 to engage the public in this process. Approximately 45 people attended. The workshop identified ten policy issues that required further consideration. Electronic polling devices were distributed to each member of the audience, and real-time “voting” was conducted for a number of policy choices. Following each “vote,” the audience had a chance to discuss the issue and their choices. A summary of the meeting is provided as **Attachment C** to this staff report.

## **ANALYSIS**

The focus of tonight’s study session will be on three topics:

- Place-based recommendations in the 2002 General Plan
- Citywide land use policies requiring a second look
- Citywide transportation policies requiring a second look

### *Place-Based Recommendations*

The 2002 General Plan identified 10 “Focus Areas”-these are geographic districts of the city with unique issues and opportunities. The 2002 Plan provided a discussion and policies for how these areas should develop in the future. The narrative may be found on pages 3-80 through 3-102 of the Land Use Element in the Existing General Plan. Some of the direction provided remains current, and some of the direction needs to be revisited as part of the General Plan Update. An overview of the Focus Areas is provided below, along with questions for consideration:

- *Downtown.* The 2002 Plan relied on the 2001 Downtown Plan and Urban Design Guidelines for the Downtown area. Since the 2001 Plan was largely superseded by the Downtown Transit Oriented Development (D-TOD) Strategy in 2007, much of the language will need to be updated. In general, the D-TOD Strategy presented a similar vision for Downtown, including mixed use

development, more housing, better connections to BART, and better shopping and entertainment venues. However, it envisions higher development intensities than the 2001 Plan did and covers a larger area.

- **East 14<sup>th</sup> Street.** The 2002 Plan describes East 14<sup>th</sup> as San Leandro’s “Main Street” and calls for its transformation from a highway commercial strip to a mixed use boulevard with different “districts’ along the corridor”. The Plan incorporates the 1991 North Area Plan (now 24 years old). The vision for East 14<sup>th</sup> Street in the North Area should be updated to reflect planned Bus Rapid Transit, public input, and the reality of existing land uses and parcel patterns on the street. In the area south of Downtown (Sybil to 150<sup>th</sup>), the text should reflect the 2004 South Area Development Strategy, which was done after the 2002 General Plan was adopted.
- **Bayfair.** The 2002 Plan indicates that Bayfair Center area should be strengthened as a regional retail center, and possibly complemented with new uses such as housing, offices, restaurants, and theaters. The text focuses on improving the connections between the Bayfair Center and the Bay Fair BART station. The updated General Plan will need to incorporate an emerging vision for the Bayfair area as a transit-oriented district with considerably more development capacity than was envisioned in 2002. The City received a Metropolitan Planning Commission (MTC) planning grant to develop a TOD plan for the Bay Fair BART Station and Bayfair Center areas over the next two years. Coordination between the General Plan Update with the Bay Fair TOD planning process will occur beginning Summer 2015.
- **Downtown BART Station Area.** The 2002 Plan treated the BART station area separately from the rest of Downtown San Leandro due to its unique opportunities for large-scale development. Much of the text focuses on redesigning the station and its parking areas, with a secondary focus on mixed use development on the vacant land and parking lots east and west of the station. These areas are now committed to development with Marea Alta affordable rental housing and the San Leandro Tech Campus projects. The text will need to be updated to reflect current conditions and policies for this area. The General Plan Update is not proposing changes to the Downtown TOD Strategy itself.
- **San Leandro Boulevard Corridor.** This Focus Area includes the parcels along San Leandro Boulevard north of San Leandro Creek, the Park Street “island” (around Siempre Verde Park), the vacant land at the north end of Alvarado Street, and the segment of San Leandro Boulevard from Thornton south to Washington. Much of this area is covered by the Downtown TOD Strategy and should be discussed in that context rather than in this section. The future of the Park Street “Island” remains a topic for discussion-it is currently a light industrial area but could support new uses in the future given its proximity to BART. The area south of Williams Street includes the mixed residential-industrial area along Alvarado Street as well as several parcels with development potential along San Leandro Boulevard. Policies in the 2002 Plan suggest a phasing out of residential uses (except for live-work) and recommend additional office and light industrial uses. Much of the focus in the 2002 Plan was on the former Hudson Lumber (at 4000 Hudson Lane where Preferred Freezer presently resides) and Yokota Nursery (on Marina Boulevard near San Leandro Blvd where the Volvo dealership and Paramedic Plus currently operate) sites, which were subsequently redeveloped.
- **Marina Boulevard and SOMAR.** This Focus area includes the portion of Marina Boulevard

east of I-880 and the industrial district along Alvarado, Teagarden, and Montague Streets east of I-880 and South of Marina (“SOMAR”). The 2002 Plan called for completing the Marina Boulevard Auto Mall, beautifying and widening the street, and adding new retail uses on underutilized sites. The light industrial district to the south was envisioned as the city’s future technology and innovation district, with new research and development uses, as well as business services and restaurants. However, this area has continued to be a warehouse, distribution, and light manufacturing district since 2002. The General Plan language for this area should be updated to reflect current market conditions and the recommendations of the Next Generation Study. In addition, the General Plan pre-dated Kaiser Permanente’s decision to build its hospital west of I-880. Policy guidance is needed for the adjacent section of Marina Boulevard (e.g., the “Kaiser North” parcel) and the corridor between Merced and Doolittle. Proposed development at the Shoreline will present opportunities that were less evident in 2002.

- *San Leandro Marina.* The 2002 vision for this area presumed continued dredging of the channel and operation of the Marina for larger boats and yachts. General Plan text supported ferry service to San Francisco and a continued role for the Marina as a community gathering place. The Plan makes reference to potential new commercial and recreational uses, including offices, restaurants, and hotels. It also calls for upgrading of Marina Boulevard as a gateway to this area. The text will need to be updated to reflect the mix of uses envisioned by the Shoreline Development Plan, and to note recent decisions regarding dredging and Marina operations.
- *West San Leandro.* This focus area includes 1,500 acres of industrially zoned land west of I-880, extending from Oakland on the north to Washington Manor on the south. The 2002 Plan strongly limits the encroachment of incompatible uses into the area and calls for the area’s preservation as a high-functioning industrial district and employment center. The Plan and its policies suggest that live-work may be acceptable as a transitional use on the area’s perimeter, but prohibit residential encroachment. Policies also suggest limiting the encroachment of big box retail beyond the existing clusters at Westgate/Walmart. The existing 2002 Plan text does support additional business services such as restaurants in the area. Much of the text focuses on aesthetic improvements, blight abatement, and circulation improvements. The text also addresses reducing conflicts between industry and the residential uses on the perimeter. It also envisions improvement of the Eden Road area and the west end of Davis Street. The narrative and policies in this section will need to be updated to reflect the recommendations of the Next Generation study, and to leverage the investment that has been made in fiber optic cabling.
- *MacArthur Corridor.* The 2002 General Plan focused on beautification of MacArthur Boulevard between Durant and Estudillo Avenues. It acknowledges the potential for new development on key sites along the corridor, and describes those areas where commercial uses are predominant, and those areas where residential uses prevail. The text relies on the urban design guidelines in the 1991 North Area Plan. Most of the direction is still current, and only minor editing of the text is required.
- *Mid-Washington Corridor.* The General Plan defines the Mid-Washington area as extending along Washington from San Leandro Boulevard to Halcyon Drive. Much of the area is commercially zoned but is developed with uses that are industrial in character, including auto body shops, print shops, warehouses, construction suppliers, and food production. The 2002 Plan identified this area as light industrial and suggested rezoning it from its current Community Commercial (CC) designation. However, property owners have expressed an interest in retaining

CC zoning. A policy question to be resolved by the General Plan is whether to retain a Commercial designation on this part of Washington Avenue (in essence, matching existing conditions).

### Land Use Goals, Policies, and Actions

Among the land use policies highlighted for potential follow-up discussion in the policy audit are:

- Improving rear yard fences on double frontage lots (1.07-C)
- Enforcement of conditions of approval when new development is approved (1.08-A)
- Further revisions to second unit standards (1.10-A)
- Discouraging the “tearing down” of small homes and their replacement with larger houses that may be out of character with the neighborhood (2.07)
- Ensuring that “adequate” parking is provided for new residential uses (2.09)
- Allowing live-work uses in more locations (3.08, 3.08-A)
- Requiring more complete mitigation of school impacts (4.03-A)
- Maintaining Downtown as a “banking center” (6.03)
- Conversion of marginal neighborhood shopping centers to new uses (8.05-A)
- Pursuing the development of new hotels, including the Doolittle corridor (8.08)
- Limiting “incompatible” uses in industrial areas (10.04, 10.05-A)
- Attracting companies with high business to business sales volumes (11.02)
- Compiling a directory of local businesses (11.02-A)
- Designating a Foreign Trade Zone (11.07-A)
- Marketing and branding the city (11.08)

### Transportation Goals, Policies and Actions

Among the transportation policies highlighted for potential follow-up discussion in the policy audit are:

- Expansion of LINKS service vs encouraging new employers to operate their own shuttles (15.04)
- Continuing to explore the feasibility of extending Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service to Bayfair (15.05-A)
- Supporting ferry service to San Leandro (15.09)
- Adjusting the street hierarchy (arterial, collector, local) - and identifying which streets should have priority for bike and pedestrian improvements (16.01). See pages 4-11 to 4-15 in the 2002 Plan for street type definitions.
- Extending Aladdin (or Montague) east across the railroad to Washington Street (16.02-B)
- Rebuilding the Washington Street underpass (south of San Leandro Blvd) (16.06-A)
- Priorities for managing truck traffic (16.07-B)
- Calming (slowing/diverting) traffic on collector streets (17.02-B)
- Modifying Aurora (north of Williams), Neptune (north of Williams) and Polvorosa to divert industrial traffic away from Williams (17.05-A)

- Transferring responsibility for Doolittle, Davis, and East 14<sup>th</sup> from Caltrans to the City (20.05-A)

## Next Steps

As noted earlier, the consultant team is wrapping up the “Existing Conditions” phase of the General Plan Update and will be rolling out the Policy Audit during the remainder of Spring and Summer, 2015. The audit will be posted on the project website ([www.sanleandro2035.org](http://www.sanleandro2035.org) <<http://www.sanleandro2035.org>>) as it is finished and public comment and feedback will be encouraged. Development of new policies and actions will proceed based on the feedback provided by City staff, the Planning Commission, interested stakeholders, and the public.

The City Council recently approved in April the addition of an Economic Development Element to the General Plan. Work on that Element will begin shortly. It will include several stakeholder roundtables, interviews, and development of new policies and actions. The data that underpins this Element will largely be based on the work presented to the Commission by Strategic Economics in February 2015, along with data managed by City staff.

The consultant team is currently updating the General Plan Map. The Scope of Work presumes no major land use changes, meaning that existing designations will largely be carried forward. New designations for the shoreline area will be included, consistent with the Shoreline Development Plan (and pending General Plan Amendment). The consultant team is also exploring possible changes to General Plan categories and land use definitions to respond to existing conditions (for instance, the existing “High Density Residential” category has a maximum allowable density of 24 units per acre, even though most parcels with this designation are currently developed at densities in the 24-40 unit per acre range).

The Draft Map will be presented to the Planning Commission at one of its upcoming study sessions. Once finalized, the General Plan EIR consultant will begin evaluating the projected impacts of the expected future growth patterns on natural resources, transportation, utilities, noise, air quality, and other factors. These analyses will take place during Fall 2015.

The City is still working toward the goal of having a Public Review Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Report completed by the end of 2015, with public hearings for them in early 2016.

A progress briefing on the General Plan will be made to the City Council on June 15, 2015.

## ATTACHMENTS

- **Attachment A - Land Use Policy Audit**
- **Attachment B - Transportation Policy Audit**
- **Attachment C - April 30 Community Meeting Summary**