
NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO: Interested Parties
DATE: February 10, 2009
SUBJECT: **Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
Notice of Scoping Meeting**
LEAD AGENCY: City of Redwood City
PROJECT NAME: Redwood City New General Plan EIR
PROJECT AREA: City of Redwood City

Notice is hereby given that the City of Redwood City (City) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) for the project identified below. We are requesting comments on the scope and content of this EIR which are germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by the City when considering your permit or other type of approval for the project.

The project description, location, and the potential environmental effects are contained in the attached materials. An Initial Study was not prepared for this project.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. **Responses must be received by March 12, 2009.**

An EIR scoping meeting will be held by the Planning Commission on

Tuesday, February 17, 2009

at the

City Hall Council Chambers
1017 Middlefield Road,
Redwood City, California.

Please send your written responses to:

City of Redwood City
Planning Department
Attention: Tom Passanisi, Principal Planner
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 780-7237
tpassanisi@redwoodcity.org

REDWOOD CITY NEW GENERAL PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
February 2009

PROJECT TITLE: Redwood City New General Plan EIR

LEAD AGENCY: City of Redwood City
Planning Department
1017 Middlefield Road
Redwood City, CA 94063

Contact Person, Phone Number and E-mail

Tom Passanisi, Principal Planner
(650) 780-7237
tpassanisi@redwoodcity.org

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of an EIR is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a proposed project. The EIR process is intended to provide environmental information sufficient to evaluate a proposed project and its potential to cause significant effects on the environment; examine methods of reducing adverse environmental impacts; and consider alternatives to the proposed project.

The Redwood City New General Plan EIR is prepared as a program EIR in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines. The project location, project description, and the potential environmental effects that will be evaluated in the EIR are described generally below. No Initial Study has been prepared for the project, as the City has determined that a comprehensive EIR is clearly required for the project (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15063[a]), and that the project has the potential to result in significant environmental effects.

PROJECT LOCATION:

The project area consists of the corporate limits of the City of Redwood City and properties within the City's sphere of influence, all which are considered the General Plan Planning Area. The City of Redwood City is located on the San Francisco Peninsula in the San Francisco Bay Area. The City of Redwood City is located in southern San Mateo County and is bounded on the north by the cities of San Carlos and Foster City, by the San Francisco Bay on the east, by the cities of Atherton and Menlo Park on the south, and by the cities of Woodside, Belmont, and unincorporated San Mateo County on the west. Figure 1 shows the project location.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The City of Redwood City is preparing a comprehensive update of its General Plan, which will serve as a blueprint to guide the City's long-term growth and to direct the degree and character of development and improvements throughout the City. In addition, the New General Plan will provide a charter for future City services and facilities. These principles are set forth in a series of goals, policies, and implementation actions that build on the community's assets, while constructively addressing its challenges and opportunities. The goals, policies, and implementation actions provide a prioritized, progressive, and practical set of policy measures, which are addressed in separate sections or "elements" of the General Plan.

Project Components

The project to be analyzed in the EIR consists of a comprehensive update and revision of the 1990 Redwood City General Plan. This would include comprehensive text and mapping changes to all required elements to incorporate the City's vision into an action-oriented document. The New General Plan will serve as the blueprint for Redwood City and will establish policies, goals, and programs for the long-term physical development of the Redwood City community.

The New General Plan will include all seven State-mandated elements, and is expected to also include several optional elements, including Historic Resources, Human Services, and Cultural Resources, that would respond to the community's immediate interests and needs. The format of the New General Plan will likely group traditional elements into larger subject areas to encourage internal consistency. Regardless of any structural aspects of the New General Plan, it will include the following major topics/elements:

- Land Use Element (required element)
- Circulation Element (required element)
- Housing Element (required element)
- Conservation Element (required element)
- Open Space Element (required element)
- Noise Element (required element)
- Safety Element (required element)
- Historic Resources Element (optional element)
- Human Services Element (optional element)
- Cultural Resources Element (optional element)
- Infrastructure (optional element)

The New General Plan policies are designed to encourage increased pedestrian, bicycle, and transit usage. These policies, contained throughout the document, include land use designations and siting guidelines, infrastructure modifications, new services, and operation modifications. More specifically, the City will explore:

- creating a street car system along the Seaport Boulevard, Broadway Street, Middlefield Road, and 5th Avenue corridors,
- creating bicycle boulevards and enhancing/expanding Class 1 bike paths and bike facilities;
- removing grade separations at Woodside/El Camino,
- encouraging the construction of grade separations along the Caltrain right-of-way,
- installing “road diets” (where the size and/or the number of travel lanes will be reduced or replaced by wider sidewalks, bike lanes, or both) on Veterans Boulevard, Middlefield Road, Jefferson Avenue, Broadway Street, Brewster Avenue, Winslow Street, Farm Hill Boulevard; and
- extending connectivity between the Redwood Shores neighborhood, the Bayfront area, and Downtown.

In addition, the policies address improved traffic flow in and around the US 101/State Route 84 interchange. A new interchange design will be contemplated.

General Plan Proposed Land Uses

Corridors and Focus Area Land Use

The New General Plan is proposing new land uses for five geographic areas in Redwood City in which it is projected that the most significant changes could occur over the next 20 years. These areas include the El Camino Real, Veterans/Broadway, Middlefield and Woodside corridors and the Bayfront Focus Area. The City’s focus on these five areas for the New General Plan’s land use changes reflects the City current expectation that land uses in the remaining areas of the City would not be as affected by the New General Plan and the majority of the existing neighborhoods would not be subject to significant changes. Figure 2 shows the proposed land use designations under the new General Plan. A description of the five geographic areas slated for change is provided below:

- **El Camino Real Corridor.** The El Camino Real Corridor builds upon the established Redwood City Downtown by adding a complementary mix of uses along the corridor. New mix use designations will provide a range of residential, commercial, office, and public space to reflect upon the Grand Boulevard concept. This concept visions a new El Camino that will take advantage of transit stations and mixed uses to create a pedestrian-friendly corridor.

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- Veterans/Broadway Corridor. The Broadway component of this corridor envisions a trolley corridor that connects this industrial/commercial/ Stanford Medical Hospital center to the Downtown. New mixed use designations will provide additional housing opportunities immediately adjacent to Downtown and along the corridor, and, along with an urban design strategy, will create a major entry point from the 101 Freeway at Veterans Boulevard and Broadway Street. The Light Industrial designation, east of Woodside Road, is expected to remain and redevelop over time. A Light-Industrial Incubator Overlay will promote new start-up businesses and new development related to innovative light industrial and research and development businesses.

The Veterans Boulevard component of this corridor envisions a regional-serving commercial corridor that complements the adjacency of the 101 Freeway and Downtown. Automobile-related uses such as dealerships are encouraged to remain and expand along the properties fronting the 101 Freeway. Mixed uses have been designated along Redwood Creek, to create a neighborhood with open spaces that fronts the creek.

- Woodside Corridor. The General Plan anticipates re-establishing Woodside Corridor by concentration commercial and mixed uses at strategic focal points along the corridor. This corridor is expected to maintain as a local-serving corridor but transform to a more pedestrian-friendly collection of activity centers with walkable connections to transit routes and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Residential uses will fill in between the activity centers, thereby increasing the potential for activity center users.
- Middlefield Corridor. New land use designations have been applied along Middlefield Road to reflect the established uses along this corridor. The goal is to allow existing local- and regional -serving commercial and uses while allowing for some additional opportunities for residential uses, but protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- Bayfront Focus Area. Mixed uses have been expanded in Bayfront, particularly along Redwood Creek to create a new destination point just north of the 101 Freeway. The idea for this area is to create lively new water front neighborhoods that take advantage of the San Francisco Bay waters. The new mixed use designation will allow for floating homes, docks, and access to the Bay.

Other Land Use Considerations

The proposed New General Plan would establish new land use designations and residential protections intended to enhance the diverse character of Redwood City's various neighborhoods and centers, improve those areas that need support, and enhance transitional neighborhoods while maintaining the more successful neighborhoods. The New General Plan would also recognize the importance of future planning for the Cargill Salt property. Following is a brief description of these other land use considerations.

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- New Land Use Designations. The proposed Land Use Plan includes nine new land use designations and one new overlay. The new designations include Residential - Medium High, Commercial - Office/ Technology, Mixed Use - Corridor, Mixed Use - Neighborhood, Mixed Use – Waterfront, Mixed Use – Live/Work, Marina , Open Space – Preservation, and Hospital. A new overlay designation, Industrial – Light Incubator Overlay, is also proposed. This designation is intended to promote new startup industrial businesses along Broadway, just east of Woodside Road.

The new Mixed-Use Live/Work Land Use Designation would be applied throughout certain areas in the City, particularly along Main Street between Woodside Road and Jefferson Avenue. This designation is intended to allow the local-serving light industrial uses while allowing for live/work residential opportunities. Live/work environments combine residential occupancy with commercial activity in the same building space, generally with the resident using the combined or adjacent commercial space for his or her business. Typical uses include artist lofts, studio spaces, small offices, and similar uses.

Creative industrial workspace areas are permitted, provided that activities limit or confine noise, dust, and vibration impacts.

- Residential Neighborhood Protections. Through land use designation changes and policies, the proposed New General Plan would focus on preserving the established residential neighborhoods throughout Redwood City. All single-family neighborhoods in the hillsides and surrounding residential areas and in Redwood Shores would be preserved. Some high density neighborhoods, for the most part adjacent to Downtown, would be re-designated to a lower density in order to protect some residential uses, particularly historic structures. New General Plan policies would protect historic structures, particularly residential structures that contribute to the history of Redwood City.
- Cargill Salt Property. The new General Plan will not identify a future land use designation for this property located along the Bayfront south and east of Seaport Boulevard. The land use designation is proposed to remain Urban Reserve and Open Space so as to allow a more comprehensive analysis of the future development potential at a future time. The significant size and critical location of this site merit substantial City review and consideration prior to any decisions on the future disposition and development of this area. For these and other reasons, the Redwood City Planning Commission voted in January 2009 to continue with the General Plan Update program without including this 1,430 acre site. The site is expected to be the subject of a separate City participatory planning effort.

EIR ANALYSIS:

The Redwood City New General Plan Draft EIR (Draft EIR) will evaluate the New General Plan for potential impacts on the environment and analyze proposed land use designations, urban design policies, and the environmental consequences of buildout of the General Plan planning area. The cumulative impacts discussion will consider relevant projects in and around the General Plan planning area that are not included as part of the New General Plan. The Draft EIR for the New General Plan will assume a continuation of the Urban Reserve and Open Space land use designations at the Cargill site.

CEQA requires that an EIR evaluate alternatives to a project that could reasonably attain the project objectives while reducing any significant impact of the project, as well as considering the No Project Alternative. Anticipated alternatives to the project that will be evaluated in the New General Plan Draft EIR will include:

- Lower Buildout Alternative
- Alternative Growth Strategy
- No Project Alternative

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:

The Draft EIR will assess the New General Plan's potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts on all environmental factors outlined in the CEQA Environmental Checklist (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G) as follows:

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| ▪ Aesthetics | ▪ Greenhouse Gas Emissions | ▪ Mineral Resources |
| ▪ Agricultural Resources | ▪ Hazards and Hazardous Materials | ▪ Noise |
| ▪ Air Quality | ▪ Hydrology/Water Quality | ▪ Population/Housing |
| ▪ Biological Resources | ▪ Land Use/Planning | ▪ Public Services |
| ▪ Cultural Resources | | ▪ Recreation |
| ▪ Geology/Soils | | ▪ Transportation/Traffic |
| | | ▪ Utilities/Service Systems |

Date: Feb. 6, 2009

Signature: Tom Passanisi

Tom Passanisi, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City