

REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council
From the City Manager

October 13, 2003

Subject

General Plan Update

Recommendation

Review and comment on General Plan Update Process

Background

One of staff's highest priorities is to update the City's General Plan. The General Plan is the single most important planning tool as it is the guiding document for all land use decisions within Redwood City. The City will need to update its General Plan to reflect its vision over the next 10 -15 years. The current General Plan prepared in 1990 is outdated, does not address new trends and issues, and does not include required topics per State law.

Staff has recently created a Strategic Planning Section to primarily work on the General Plan. Strategic Planning has over the last several months closely worked with the Planning Commission and has prepared the General Plan work schedule for your review and discussion (see attachment). Staff estimates that the entire General Plan update process will take about 2 years to complete.

The Planning Commission will be the main reviewing body of the document and will provide the public forum for discussion. There will be a series of workshops with the Commission as each of the General Plan elements is prepared. Staff will involve the City Council in the initial visioning process and will regularly inform the City Council on the General Plan's progress through monthly written progress reports. The City Council will ultimately adopt the General Plan upon recommendation by the Planning Commission.

The General Plan work program is essentially divided into three parts: 1) the vision; 2) preparation of the seven mandatory elements; and 3) preparation of optional elements. Presented below is further discussion of these parts.

Vision

The very first part of the General Plan process will be to develop a "vision" for the City. Visioning is important because it provides a solid foundation and clear direction for the development of General Plan policies and actions, based on a shared sense of community values and purpose. A vision will help the City establish the General Plan priorities and issues. It will also determine what is liked or disliked in the community, and what may need to be fixed.

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The Planning Commission will initiate the visioning process and begin to develop scenarios for the City Council to consider. The Planning Commission will discuss and consider a vision for the community, and also engage the community in a discussion of that vision through various workshops. Staff will then discuss that vision at a joint workshop with the City Council. Staff anticipates that City Council will adopt the vision component in February, 2004.

Mandatory Elements

As you may recall, the General Plan is comprised of seven components or elements: Land use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise and Safety. (Note: the Housing Element has been prepared under a separate track and is currently being reviewed by the State).

State law has certain technical requirements for each element, and staff is in the process of gathering and preparing data for these elements. Depending upon the vision, the Planning Commission (with input from the community) will determine appropriate policies and guidelines within the mandatory elements. Staff hopes to have all of the seven the mandatory elements prepared by mid-year 2004.

Optional Elements

The City can adopt other elements that relate to its physical development. Currently, Redwood City has the following three optional elements in its current General Plan: the Historic Resources Element, Human Services Element, and Cultural Element, together with an Appendix on Economic Policies. The Planning Commission, together with community input, will need to determine what optional elements, if any, it wants to include in this update. At this time staff is assuming that at least one of the optional elements, i.e. Historic Resources Element, will need to be updated. Staff will also be talking to the other departments and Commissions/Committees which prepared the existing optional elements for their comments (e.g. Housing and Human Concerns Committee, Parks and Recreation Commission, Historic Resources Advisory Committee, etc.). The Planning Commission and City Council will determine what optional elements it wants to include in the update.

At one of the Planning Commission meetings there was a request to include an "infrastructure element" to discuss and present policies related to the City's general infrastructure needs (water, sewer, electricity, communications, etc.). Staff is evaluating this request or it may recommend to keep these policies in the various pertinent elements (e.g. circulation, land use, etc.) as currently organized.

Public Participation Process

A General Plan update needs to include a well-designed public participation program. State law specifies that during the preparation of the General Plan, the planning agency shall provide opportunities for the involvement of citizens, public agencies, community groups, and other segments of the community through public hearings and other means

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the city determines appropriate. It's really up to the City to determine how extensive it wants to make the public review process.

Staff estimates that there would be approximately 8 - 10 community meetings with the Commission serving as the public forum, and several hearings before the City Council. Staff will prepare two draft elements at a time, and then discuss them before the public and Planning Commission. Prior to these meetings, however, staff would first review the material at a study session with the Planning Commission, and then following that meeting promote and present the material to the community. (Of course all the meetings will be publicly noticed).

In order to provide some context to the work, staff investigated what other cities have done and spent on the General Plan update process. For example, the City of Belmont is just about to complete its visioning process. It took approximately 5 months and seven subcommittees to complete the task, and it cost about \$97,000 for consultant work. The City of Palo Alto completed its General Plan update in 1998 and spent about two years on the project. It cost the City of Palo Alto approximately \$700,000 to one million dollars for staff and consultant costs.

In order to keep costs in check, Redwood City staff plans to conduct all the work in-house. No funds are budgeted for outside consultants to assist the process.

Planning Commission Action

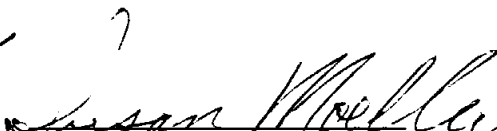
On September 16, 2003, the Planning Commission reviewed and agreed to a similar work program, but emphasized the need for public outreach (using cable TV and posting on the City's Web site), making reference to the Downtown Area Plan, and other items. (Copies of the minutes are attached for your information).

Conclusion

The General Plan Update will be an extensive project that will require public outreach and numerous meetings. The Planning Commission will be the initial reviewing body and "hub" of activity, but staff will also include the City Council in the visioning process and will regularly update the City Council on its progress. The City Council will ultimately have to adopt the General Plan in its entirety. Because of the intricacy of the project staff is seeking early input into the process and is asking the City Council to comment on the work program and concepts as recommended by the Planning Commission.



Tom Passanisi
Principal Planner



Bruce Liedstrand
Community Development Services



Ed Everett
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. General Plan Work Program
2. Planning Commission Minutes dated 9/16/03

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Commissioner Piulle said that the Visioning Study should not corrode the strengths and the diversity of the existing businesses in the area (i.e., industrial, heavy, light, etc.). She said she has been saying for the past four years, we need diversity in Redwood City, it's a balancing act, but it is what makes Redwood City unique and strong. Commissioner Piulle said she wants to make sure that TBI (Transitional Bayfront Industrial) Area/Zoning does not creep into the Industrial Businesses and eventually drive them out. She said there must be safeguards to keep them in the City.

Chair Foust said she fully supports what Commissioner Piulle said, and asked Mr. Passanisi for direction in the process.

Mr. Passanisi said based on Chair Foust's recommendation, staff will combine the Study and all comments into one document and present it to the City Council, and recommending it go back to the Planning Commission.

Chair Foust said it makes sense that the City Council just look at this Study from a policy and procedure stand point and then have it come back to the Planning Commission. Chair Foust said Council needs to know the Commission is not done, and in order to move to the next step, let them know why we're not done, and where we're hope to go with it.

Commissioner Garcia said even having Plan Concepts A, B and C, we don't know where we're going. We can listen to people that have interest on these particular properties, but we can't let that sway us as to what we want for Redwood City. He said, as far as the Century Park Theater, he can't see housing at all.

Mr. Passanisi pointed out to the Commission that there is a recommended land use concept in the Study (Page 27), which is refining Plan Concept B. However, sensing the Commission wants input from City Council first, he said he would get the information.

Commissioner Seybert asked Chair Foust if she was seeking input from the City Council, and if so, it might be more advantageous to have a Joint Study Session with the City Council.

Chair Foust and the Commissioners agreed that staff should take Chair Foust's recommendation to the City Council, and that there should be a Joint Study Session with the City Council.

Pat Dixon, Redwood Shores resident, commented that she wanted to stress that there should be a non-motorized pathway along the waterfront, included in the Study.

Chair Foust said her comment would be included with the additional comments.

5. **GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

Mr. Passanisi gave a Power Point presentation on the General Plan outlining the General Plan Update Work Program.

He said staff essentially divides the Work Program into three areas:

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1. Vision – Mr. Passanisi said staff should have something complete by the end of December 2003. There will be several workshops, and it will be culminated by joint meetings with the City Council.
2. Mandatory Elements – He said staff is trying to do two elements at a time and bring them before the Planning Commission. He said overall, staff envisions a 1-1/2 – 2 year process, for this General Plan Update. He said staff needs to work closely with Police and Fire, and that this project will cross many departments, commissions and committees. Mr. Passanisi said staff is putting together a stakeholders list, trying to formulate who needs to be contacted at what stage.
3. Optional Elements – Mr. Passanisi said the Historic Resources Element was prepared by the HRAC and is presently in the General Plan. Staff put HRAC on notice that they will be going back to them for input. Other possible Optional Elements are Infrastructure, Economic, Cultural, and Social Services, all of which will take some time. Mr. Passanisi said he's not sure we would want to do it at this point.

Mr. Passanisi discussed the issues. He showed a slide of the Planning Commission Model depicting the Planning Commission as the "HUB" of the process.

Mr. Passanisi said the Next Steps would be as follows:

- Council Information Report – October 13th.
- Gather data and information.
- Begin to develop vision.
- Outline Land use and Circulation Elements.

A copy of the Power Point Presentation is available for review in the Planning Department.

Commissioner Piulle commented on the Downtown Area Plan document, and asked what happened to it. She was concerned it was not being used. Commissioner Piulle said she feels it would be useful in the General Plan, because it covers the core of Redwood City and the foreseen future.

Mr. Passanisi said the Downtown Area Plan is being referenced in discussions regarding the Downtown Cinema Project, and when meeting with developers. He said the reason the Commission has not seen it recently is, and that the EIR for it is still being prepared. Once the EIR is certified, then the Downtown Area Plan will come back to the Planning Commission for a final blessing, and then to City Council. He wanted to assure Commissioner Piulle that staff has been referring to the Downtown Area Plan, and in fact, staff will be starting the Precise Plan for the Downtown, which will actually implement the Downtown Area Plan.

Commissioner Piulle said she was glad to hear the Downtown Area Plan is being utilized. She said it is very important that the Planning Commission and the Community get feedback as to what is being used regarding something they took the time and

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trouble to be involved with. Commissioner Piulle suggested putting the information on the Internet.

Chair Foust suggested that this type of information could be included in the Malcolm Smith's E-Newsletter.

Mr. Passanisi said staff is working Malcolm Smith on some ideas for getting the information circulated.

Commissioner Seybert suggested that once a month, the City Council receive a Planning Commission activity status update. He said this would be helpful to the City Council for two reasons: (1) If the City Council sees anything glaring at them, they can bring it to the Planning Commission's attention, and (2) They would not receive a final document for the first time to "digest", they would get it in increments throughout the process.

Commissioner Seybert commented on the use of the new TV Channel (27) in Redwood City. He said that would be a good source for scrolling information about meeting notices.

Commissioner Seybert brought up for discussion, the extra weekly Planning Commission meeting specifically for the General Plan.

Mr. Passanisi said the second and fourth Tuesday's would conflict with the HHCC, and staff did not want that to happen.

Commissioner Seybert, as a member of the HHCC, was concerned about "short changing" one or the other committees, if the extra meetings were scheduled on the second and fourth Tuesday.

Commissioner Paulson said the purpose of the Planning Commission person sitting on the HHCC is to be their liaison in case they have questions. She told Commissioner Seybert that if an extra meeting was scheduled for the fourth Tuesday, both Committees would be meeting in the same building, so if they needed information, you would be at hand.

Chair Foust felt consistency in meeting times was important. She felt that Tuesday nights should be set aside for the extra meetings to meet on the General Plan.

Commissioner Seybert agreed on meeting every Tuesday, especially for something as important as the General Plan, and that he would be close by if the HHCC had any questions.

Mr. Passanisi said he will be talking to the Community Development Services Director and the liaison to the HHCC to make arrangements.

Commissioner Cronin asked if the Commission needed to make any decision tonight about the Optional Elements (i.e., Historic, Infrastructure, etc.) in the General Plan.

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Mr. Passanisi said now would be the time to bring up any ideas or strong suggestions. He said any ideas or suggestions would have to be weighed versus what has to be done and how it would fit into the schedule of the General Plan.

Commissioner Paulson asked what the Infrastructure Element would include.

Gary Bonte, Associate Planner said the Infrastructure Element would include a pipe-based system (water, sewer, storm drain and the proposed recycled water system); an electric power system transmission distribution sub-stations, and possibly communications (i.e., telecommunications, issues of sighting communication towers and fiber optics.)

Commissioner Paulson asked if general recycling could be included in the Infrastructure Element.

Mr. Bonte said that would fit more under the Conservation Element.

Commissioner Piulle said the first meeting on the General Plan should be regarding the "Vision".

Mr. Passanisi said staff will send out something to the Planning Commission to stimulate the thought process for what they see as a "Vision" for Redwood City.

Chair Foust said that would be a helpful "homework exercise", because she is very interested in Economics as an Optional Element, and she would also like to review South San Francisco and the Child Care portion.

Commissioner Piulle asked if the Cultural Commission has been approached regarding the Cultural Element.

Mr. Bonte said he has a draft copy of a plan the Cultural Commission put together, but he had not been in contact with them recently.

Commissioner Piulle asked if the draft would come to the Planning Commission for review.

Mr. Passanisi said staff will take a look at it, but the Planning Commission will have the final say as to what they want in it.

Commissioner Radcliffe asked if guidelines for "monster houses" would come under the Housing Element.

Mr. Bonte said that would be under the Land Use Elements.

Mr. Passanisi said another item in the General Plan is the Cargill Salt area, and what the Planning Commission visions out there.

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MATTERS OF COMMISSION INTEREST

Mr. Passanisi wanted to assure the Planning Commission that corrections have been made, and the up-to-date meeting minutes and agendas will now be on the Website.

Mr. Passanisi asked the Commission if they had any questions about the memo regarding "Officers and Duties of the Planning Commission", which will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Commissioner Piulle wanted to know if the Chair person resigns the Committee, does the Vice-chair automatically take that position, or is there a new election.

Assistant City Attorney Brower said the Vice-chair would fill the position until the Commission held an election (usually at the next meeting or shortly there after).

Commissioner Piulle said that the Civic Cultural Commission on the Percentage for Public Art seems to have disappeared. She said there hasn't been a meeting in more than seven months, and she doesn't think they will continue. She said perhaps staff should ask Corinne Centeno if they intend to go on.

ADJOURNMENT

M/S: (Seybert/Radcliffe) to adjourn the meeting.

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m. to reconvene at the regular Planning Commission meeting at 7:30 p.m. on October 7, 2003, in the City Hall Council Chamber located at 1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, California.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hilary Paulson, Secretary
REDWOOD CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

