



LET'S PUT IT TOGETHER:
**REDWOOD CITY'S
NEW GENERAL PLAN**

NEW GENERAL PLAN
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS:
A Compendium of Technical Background Reports
January 2009

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Contents

Introduction

Land Use Technical Report

Urban Design Background Report

Sustainability Background Report

Transportation and Circulation Technical Report

Baseline Economics Conditions Report

Historic Resources Background Report

Housing Background Report

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity Background Report

Noise and Vibration Background Report

Hazards and Hazardous Materials Background Report

Neighborhoods Summary

Mixed Use Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Every California city and county is required to have a General Plan that defines the community's goals and vision for the growth over the long term. Redwood City's current General Plan was adopted in 1990. City staff began to update the General Plan in 2004 and found that the existing General Plan required a comprehensive overhaul rather than a simple update. As such, the City initiated the preparation of the *New General Plan* in 2007. This General Plan process began by asking various community organizations and interest groups about what are Redwood City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Concurrently, biologists, geologists, land use planners, economists, noise experts, historical resource experts, urban designers, and traffic engineers conducted technical analyses and studies to profile the existing characteristics, trends and forecasts, and issues that affect Redwood City in 2008. This document, "Analysis of Existing Conditions", is the compendium of those technical analyses and studies. This document provides specific detailed information on land use, housing, transportation and circulation, sustainability, noise, and safety (geologic and seismic). The information contained in this document is intended to assist policymakers and the community with making informed decisions during the General Plan Update.

Background

Redwood City's 20,336 acres and the adjacent 1,528 Sphere of Influence acres comprise the "project area" or areas of study for the analysis presented in the reports of this document. The area is bounded by the San Francisco Bay to the north, Menlo Park to the east, Atherton and Woodside to the south, and San Carlos to the west. The City is bisected by the Bayshore Freeway (U.S. Route 101). Traversing the City in a north-south manner, the El Camino Real arterial street serves as a major corridor. Both the Bayshore Freeway and El Camino Real provide regional connectivity, connecting Redwood City to San Francisco in the north and San Jose in the south.

The Sphere of Influence includes three neighborhoods located just outside the City's boundaries: the Emerald Lake Hills neighborhood to the west of the City; the Palomar Park neighborhood to the north of Emerald Hills; and the North Fair Oaks neighborhood to the southeast of the City.

Since the last General Plan Update in 1990, Redwood City has seen significant changes. The City has exceeded the population estimate listed in the 1990 General Plan by the year 2000. The 1990 General Plan estimated that the City's year 2000 population would reach 70,000; in fact, the 2000 U.S. Census indicates a population of over 75,000. Furthermore, the Department of Finance's 2007 estimates indicate the population has exceeded 77,000 people. Redwood City has grown to become a center of high-tech industry, with the two of the City's largest industries being Information Technology and Scientific and Technical Services. In correlation, according to US Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median household income has increased by 15% from 1990 to 2000, which was a 2% larger increase than San Mateo County, and 16% larger increase than California as a whole.

General Plan Objectives

The New General Plan will serve as the “blueprint” that will guide the physical development of Redwood City. The updated General Plan is intended to serve Redwood City’s physical development until 2030. Key objectives of the General Plan Update process include:

- Create a forward thinking “hybrid” general plan that combines a standard General Plan with a Form Based General Plan.
- Prepare a General Plan that is responsive to the community’s vision for the future of Redwood City.
- Prepare a General Plan that is easy to use and can be fully understood by the general public while still meeting the planning needs of City Staff.

General Plan Guiding Principles

As part of the initial 2004 General Plan update process, the community developed eight “Guiding Principles” to serve as drivers for subsequent policy. These principles were re-examined and endorsed by individuals and local interest groups, a General Plan Committee, and the Redwood City City Council. The eight Guiding Principles are:

- Plan for sustainable open space, water, energy, and air quality within our finite resources
- Ensure change harmonizes with existing development and preserves historic and neighborhood character
- Strengthen economic vitality to provide jobs, services, revenues and opportunities
- Preserve and generate awareness of cultural , educational, economic, recreational diversity and historic heritage
- Partner with and embrace neighborhoods to improve health, safety, and well-being for all
- Continue to make community participation an important part of achieving a grater city
- Work to develop attractive, convenient transportation alternatives, including a transportation hub and ferry system
- Design for active pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets and public spaces

Community Outreach Process

At the center of the General Plan Update process is community outreach. As the General Plan is a document that captures the vision and goals of the community, these goals and overall vision comes directly from the public through the community outreach process. Community outreach is designed to both educate the community on the New General Plan process as well as allow the General Plan team (City staff and consultants)

to learn and receive input directly from stakeholders- residents, business owners, community groups, and others with vested interest in Redwood City.

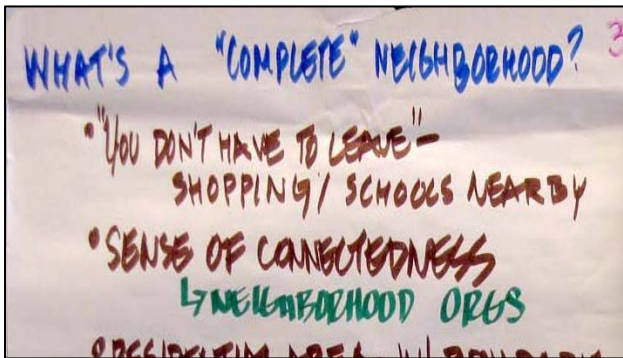
Thus far, community outreach efforts have included:

- **City Council's General Plan Committee.** The General Plan Committee consists of representatives from the Redwood City Planning Commission and City Council and is appointed by the City Council. The General Plan Committee is responsible for reviewing and providing comment to the City staff regarding the General Plan process. In addition, the members serve as liaisons to their representative bodies, thereby keeping the Planning Commission and the City Council informed of the General Plan process.
- **Our Town - Downtown Event, October 2007.** At the Downtown community event, City planning team members staffed a booth that introduces the concept of a General Plan and the General Plan's process to hundreds of festival participants. The participants were, also, asked to map or identify those areas, streets, public amenities that they appreciate or like ("hearts") and those things that need attention ("bugs").
- **General Plan Kick-Off, January 2008.** At a January 2008 Planning Commission meeting, the General Plan team and process was introduced to the public. This meeting continued to help the public understand the intent, purpose, and basic components of a General Plan. This workshop also continued to ask approximately 50 participants to identify "hearts and bugs" issues on maps.



- **"Affinity" Group Meetings, Spring 2008.** A series of "affinity group" meetings were convened in the spring of 2008. These meetings brought together members of groups sharing one or more "affinities" to discuss issues and opportunities facing Redwood City. In setting up affinity group meetings, the General Plan team considered the elements of the *New General Plan*. The City sought to cast a wide net in reaching out to affinity groups. More than 100 people participated in eight affinity group meetings. The affinity groups included: bicyclists/pedestrian interests, neighborhoods and homeowner associations, the interfaith community, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Community Based English Tutoring (CBETS) class attendees, environmental interests,

business and Chamber of Commerce interests, development interests, health care advocates and service providers, and youth/sports groups. Results of the affinity group outreach can be downloaded from the City's website, www.redwoodcity.org.



- **Alternatives Workshop, September 2008.** In the Courthouse Square and San Mateo County's historical courthouse, over 250 residents, business people, and other interested individuals participated in a hands-on workshop to comment on such issues as sustainability, mobility, neighborhoods and urban design, and land use alternatives for four focus areas: the Bayfront, Woodside Road, El Camino Real, and the Veterans/Broadway corridor. Results of the Alternatives Workshop can be downloaded from the City's website, www.redwoodcity.org.





- **Boards and Commissions, Fall 2008.**

City staff conducted a series of meetings with the City's boards and commissions to discuss the General Plan, its process, and issues of importance to the appointed bodies. Such issues included housing policy and strategy, parks and recreation policy, land use alternatives, senior and other human concerns policy. The board and commission members were able to identify other issues of concern and provide suggestions for the General Plan policy.

Report Organization and Overview

The "Analysis of Existing Conditions" is the base document prepared for the *New General Plan* and is one of the first steps in the process of updating the General Plan. The reports contained in this document summarize the baseline conditions that exist in Redwood City. The reports also discuss the constraints and opportunities that should be addressed in the *New General Plan*. The information contained in this document shall act as the foundation for which all subsequent General Plan policies and programs will be formulated.

This document contains the following reports:

Land Use Technical Report. This report documents 2008 baseline land use conditions in Redwood City and identifies preliminary land use issues relevant to the update of the General Plan. The information provides a context for examining development constraints and opportunities for land use change over the long term (20-year period).

Urban Design Background Report. The Urban Design Report discusses such issues as community form, visual structure and human experience: the quality of life issues that make a community a great place to live, work and visit. Urban design concerns are inseparable from land use, economic health, redevelopment, transportation, and sustainability issues, as each element of a city has urban design impact.

Sustainability Background Report. The Sustainability report provides an overview of sustainability issues affecting both the natural and built environments. Information in this report covers a wide spectrum of topics including, but not limited to: wetlands and water bodies; water quality, open space, wildlife, green house emissions, ecological footprint, air quality, green building practices, and energy conservation.

Transportation and Circulation Technical Report. This report provides an overview of existing transportation systems in Redwood City, including vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit circulation. This report also explores programs, policies, and strategies that could be incorporated into the *New General Plan*.

Baseline Economic Conditions Report. The Economic Conditions report provides background economic data for Redwood City. The report discusses economic factors such as Redwood City's employment base, employment trends for major industries in the City, and business openings, closures and relocations in the City. The report also includes real estate market analysis, data and maps showing commute patterns in Redwood City, and analysis of the City's 12 employment zone. It also examines real estate trends, development characteristics, development issues, and makes recommendations for the General Plan.

Historic Resources Background Report. This report describes Redwood City's built environment -- the buildings, structures, and objects that exist today, and identifies the history of human activity. Information from this report will help provide information about those things that make Redwood City distinct.

Housing Background Report. The Housing Background report presents information on Redwood City's resident population, and housing stock characteristics. This information lays the foundation for the policies, and programs that aim to address existing and future housing needs.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity Background Report. This report describes the Redwood City's geologic environment based on published regional geologic reports and maps. Aspects of the geologic setting discussed include geomorphology, geologic units, soils, faulting, ground shaking, liquefaction, lateral spreading, slope stability, differential settlement, expansive soils, subsidence and collapse, soil erosion, and tsunamis.

Noise Background Report. This report provides an overview of existing noise sources and sensitive receptors in Redwood City, as well as an overview of existing noise policy and standards in place in Redwood City.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials Background Report. The Hazards and Hazardous Materials report describes existing conditions related to hazardous materials and other public health and safety issues within Redwood City. Its purpose is to provide information to assist in the preparation and evaluation of a new General Plan for the City. Information from this report will also be used in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)-related environmental review of the new General Plan.

Neighborhoods Summary. The Neighborhood Summary briefly describes the Redwood City neighborhoods in terms of population demographics such as number of residents, income, housing tenure, employment, etc. This summary, while not part of the General Plan, will help the General Plan preparers to better understand and appreciate the similarities and differences among and between the residents and their neighborhoods.

Mixed Use Brief Analysis. This analysis, prepared in response to specific Planning Commission questions, discusses the challenges cities face in trying to attract mixed use

projects, with the idea that a better understanding of these barriers will provide an indication of what policy adjustments should be incorporated into the *New General Plan* to foster more mixed use.

Next Steps in the General Plan Process

The creation of this document is one of the first steps in a long process of preparing the Redwood City *New General Plan*. The next step is to combine the technical reports analysis with community preferences from the many outreach events and to prepare a breadth of goals, policies, and implementation programs that form the basis for the updated General Plan.

A breakdown of sequence of tasks:

- Goals, policies, programs will be formulated for all elements that will reflect the vision of the community. The various draft General Plan elements or chapters will be reviewed with the Boards and Commissions for their initial comment.
- A Draft General Plan will be prepared for public circulation and review.
- An environmental review analysis will be conducted to determine and estimate potential environmental impacts that could occur as a result of the General Plan's implementation. The environmental review document, a Draft EIR, will be circulated for public review and comment.
- Throughout the process, the public will continue to be encouraged to provide input into the General Plan's formulation. Subsequent community workshops and events will be held to discuss and review General Plan policy and the environmental analysis.