



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2014

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager
Community Development Department

RE: **Agenda Item E1: Overview of the Proposed General Plan Update and Discuss and Potentially Provide Comments to the City Council on the Scope of Work**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Commission consider the staff report, presentation and public comment, and provide general input on the scope of work for the General Plan Update.

BACKGROUND

On March 26, 2013, the City Council adopted goals for calendar year 2013. One goal is related to the General Plan and reads as follows:

Initiate work on the update of the General Plan (Council Goal #4):

The City's General Plan (specifically the Land Use and Circulation Elements) was last updated in 1994 and includes outdated land use and traffic projections to the year 2010. The City Council has asked staff to put into place a process and related funding to comprehensively update the Plan. The update would focus on the Land Use and Circulation Elements and would include a geographic focus on the M-2 zoning area, plus other areas of the City aside from the El Camino Real and Downtown areas. Topics that will be part of the discussion would include items such as Complete Streets and a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Strategy.

On June 11, 2013, with adoption of the FY2013-2014 Budget, the Council appropriated resources to initiate the General Plan Update.

On September 23, 2013, the City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the General Plan Update and on-call professional services to firms that would provide expertise in a variety of disciplines to assist in the update of the General Plan and

individual development project review. The City received 49 submittals in response to the RFQ, with 28 firms interested in some aspect of the General Plan Update. All firms appear qualified to participate in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

On December 17, 2013, the City Council conducted a study session on the scope of work for the General Plan Update. The Council provided general comments, expressing interest in hearing feedback from stakeholders and the Commissions before providing formal direction in February 2014. Although there is interest in pursuing a focused update of the M-2 Area, the extent of the area changes requires further discussion and input from stakeholders and the Commissions. In January and February 2014, staff is scheduled to reach out to City Commissions for input on the draft work program in order to present a draft RFP to the Council, tentatively scheduled for February 11, 2014.

ANALYSIS

What is the General Plan?

The General Plan is a legal document, required by state law, which serves as the City of Menlo Park's "constitution" for development and the use of its land. It is a comprehensive, long-range document, providing guidance for the physical development of the City, and of any land outside its boundaries but within its designated "sphere of influence." The California Government Code requires every city and county to adopt a comprehensive General Plan and defines specific purposes and content requirements for General Plans. A General Plan must cover the following seven elements (or topics): land use, circulation (transportation), housing, open space, conservation, noise and safety.

Menlo Park's current General Plan elements, available on the City [website](#), are comprised of three documents as follows:

- Land Use and Circulation Elements, adopted in 1994 with amendments through May 2013;
- Housing Element (2007-2014 planning period), adopted in May 2013; and
- Open Space/Conservation, Noise and Safety Element, adopted in May 2013.

Another key land use document is the El Camino Real Specific Plan, which was adopted in June 2012. The Specific Plan and information regarding the project are available at <http://www.menlopark.org/specificplan>. The recent adoption of the Specific Plan, the Housing Element and the Open Space and Conservation, Noise and Safety Elements represent critical components and the first and second phase of the General Plan Update.

Work to update the Housing Element for the 2014-2022 planning period is underway and expected to be completed in the Spring of 2014 prior to embarking on the substance of the General Plan update. The Draft Housing Element has been

submitted to the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for review and is available on the City's [Housing Element website](#).

In addition, State law allows jurisdictions to include optional elements that may be important to a specific community. Examples include historic preservation, urban design, and/or economic development.

All City actions related to land use, development, transportation and infrastructure need to be consistent with the General Plan. The General Plan establishes goals, policies, programs plus land use and circulation designations and standards. Excerpts of the policy documents of the Land Use and Circulation and the Open Space/Conservation, Noise and Safety Elements are included as Attachments A and B, respectively. The Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and other chapters of the City's Municipal Code all serve to implement the General Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan and Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan are examples of other tools for implementing community infrastructure needs identified in the General Plan.

Why Does the General Plan Need to be Updated?

The City Council has identified the need for the City to focus on the M-2 (General Industrial Zoning District) to explore opportunities to streamline processes and increase revenue potential. Attachment C includes a general land use map for the City and Attachment D includes a focused map of the proposed M-2 boundary. The M-2 Area generally located between US 101 and the San Francisco Bay has historically been a strong source of revenue for the City and provides an opportunity for continued revenue if planned for appropriately. Aside from development projects in the pipeline (i.e., pending and approved projects), the M-2 area has the potential for approximately 1 million square feet of net new development potential under the existing land use intensities of the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. This development potential is above and beyond what was analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report for the 1994 General Plan and EIRs prepared for individual development projects such as Menlo Gateway, Facebook, etc. Given a combination of General Plan policies in the Land Use and Circulation Elements, Zoning Ordinance requirements, City-adopted Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines, and the California Environmental Quality Act, most requests for new development require case-by-case review by the Planning Commission (and sometimes the City Council) and oftentimes require the preparation of an EIR to address significant and unavoidable traffic impacts based on the City-established transportation standards and noise, air quality and greenhouse gas impacts. Therefore, updating the General Plan provides the appropriate venue to deal with this "change area" of the City in a comprehensive rather than project-by-project basis and achieve efficiencies in the review process.

Other reasons for updating the General Plan include the following:

- State law provides guidance that the General Plan should be updated every 10 years. (The Land Use and Circulation Elements have not been comprehensively updated in 20 years);
- Issues that were relevant in the 1990s are no longer relevant (i.e., the extension of Sand Hill Road to El Camino Real), while topics which are potentially relevant (i.e., High Speed Rail, Caltrain electrification, Dumbarton Rail Corridor) are not referenced in the Land Use and Circulation Elements; and
- The elimination of Redevelopment Agencies as a tool for affecting change.

Basic Steps and Initial Givens for the General Plan Update

The update of the General Plan will involve multiple phases including work program definition, consultant selection, data collection and analysis, visioning, plan preparation, environmental and fiscal review, and extensive public participation. Upon adoption of the updated General Plan, the work effort would focus on high priority implementation programs identified in the Plan.

Consistent with the City's Community Engagement Model, staff has developed a set of "givens" or principles that would guide the overall development of the General Plan Update. The following principles listed below are intended to be used for the future work on the General Plan.

- Community outreach and engagement will be an integral and robust component of the process to develop the plan;
- Focus will be given to the M-2 (General Industrial) zoning district, especially the evolution of the area and the appropriateness of land uses, intensity of uses, development standards, project review procedures, and use of hazardous materials;
- Throughout development of the General Plan Update, pursue opportunities to establish goals and policies that will support streamlining of the development review process where appropriate;
- Inclusion of new concepts and strategies to address emerging needs, including Greenhouse Gas Reduction, Sea Level Rise, Complete Streets, and Transportation Management Associations;
- Land use and traffic projections for potential growth would be to the Year 2040 for general consistency with other local and regional plans; (e.g., Urban Water Management Plan, City/Council Association of Governments (C/CAG) Traffic Model, etc.);
- Development of the General Plan will be informed by an Environmental Impact Report and a Fiscal Impact Analysis; and
- General Plan will comply with State law.

Establishing the Work Program

Staff intends to reach out to City Commissions on the scope of work. The following summarizes the target meeting dates for staff presentations to City commissions that have a charge/mission related to the physical development of the City:

Commission	Meeting Date
Transportation	Wednesday, January 8 at 7:00 p.m.
Bicycle	Monday, January 13 at 7:00 p.m.
Parks & Recreation*	Wednesday, January 22 at 6:30 p.m.
Environmental Quality*	Wednesday, January 22 at 6:30 p.m.
Planning	Monday, January 27 at 7:00 p.m.
Housing	Wednesday, February 5 at 5:30 p.m.
<i>*Note: The agendas for the meetings will be structured to avoid conflict and allow participation on the topic at both meetings.</i>	

In addition, staff intends to coordinate a session with the Chamber of Commerce and owners of substantial property in the M-2 area (i.e., Bohannon, ProLogis, Tarlton, TE Connectivity, and Facebook) and a session with the Belle Haven neighborhood given the focus on the adjacency to the M-2 area.

Staff will present information and seek input from various groups on items such as the following:

- Givens or principles for preparation of the General Plan;
- Report out on status of current Land Use and Circulation Goals, Policies and Programs;
- Provide resources, opportunities for educational series on topics like multi-modal level of service, examples of best practices/recently adopted General Plans, and a summary of lessons learned from past Menlo Park planning experience;
- Provide a listing of existing policy documents and background material that is currently available (e.g., Urban Water Management Plan, Climate Action Plan, etc.);
- Options for communicating with and engaging the community, including branding; and
- Whether there is a strong desire for any optional Elements (e.g., neighborhood character, health, etc.) or specific topics or geographic areas on which to focus during the update process.

After receiving feedback, staff intends to present a draft work program/RFP, which incorporates input from the Commissions, for Council consideration at the February 11, 2014 City Council meeting. The work program will include a recommendation or options related to community outreach and the potential formation of an outreach and oversight committee, steering committee, task force or some other type of body. In addition, staff will recommend a process, including a timeline, for screening the proposals and selecting the consultant team.

Commission Input to Establish Scope of Work and Timeline

Staff is seeking input on a few key items that have the potential to affect the scope of work and timeline of the project. Input regarding the geographic focus of the update,

coupled with the extent of potential changes to land use and intensities (floor area ratio), will affect the overall timeline.

Citywide vs. M-2 Area Focus

In order to shorten the timeframe for being able to implement potential changes to the M-2 Area, staff is considering a concurrent General Plan Update and an M-2 Area Plan. Since 1994, the City has pursued a number of studies and implemented programs to help guide development in the M-2 area. Attachment E summarizes the list of activities. The Area Plan would be similar to a Specific Plan in that it would include detailed updates to zoning requirements. An excerpt of the M-2 Zoning District regulations is included as Attachment F. This approach would require an understanding that the General Plan Update for the rest of the City would be focused on creating a more user friendly format of the Land Use and Circulation Elements along the lines of the recently updated Housing Element and the Open Space, Conservation, Noise and Safety Elements. This approach would recognize that certain topics like residential single family development review or certain retail nodes/corridors could be identified through the General Plan Update process, but that these items would be pursued as implementation programs.

Standards of Significance for Environmental Review

The City intends to consider the potential adoption of standards of significance for traffic other than vehicular Level of Service (LOS), such as Multi-Modal LOS. To consider such a change would require study, evaluation, and a decision on which standard to use. Once the preferred standard is determined, then the City could conduct the environmental review for the change to the standard and the environmental review for changes associated with other aspects of the General Plan Update simultaneously. This two-step process will add time. Alternatively, the creation of the new standards could be an implementation program and the new standards would be used for individual project review.

Circulation Map

Attachment G includes the City's existing circulation map. The map identifies the streets that are currently classified as arterial, collector and local streets, although the existing operations of the street may function differently. As part of the General Plan update, the City intends to explore a new street classification system, to better accommodate various modes of transportation and potential physical development of the City.

Extent of M-2 Area Changes

Another factor that will affect the scope of work and the timeline is the extent of changes contemplated for the M-2 Area. Staff has identified three basic options for

consideration with the M-2 Area related to land uses and intensity of use (FAR), each of which would involve a certain amount of visioning:

Option 1: Pursue an analysis based on the maximum build out under existing uses of general industrial, office, and R&D and intensities (45-55% FAR) allowed in the current General Plan

Option 2: Pursue an analysis based on potential changes in land use, such as hotels, retail, services, and potentially residential in select areas so long as there is no increase above current General Plan intensity levels as measured through a metric such as vehicular trips.

Option 3: Pursue an analysis based on changes in land use and an increase in intensity.

The three options can be summarized as follows:

	Land Use	Intensity
Option 1: No Change to Land Use or Intensity	General Industrial, Office, R&D	45/55% Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
Option 2: Land Use Changes Only	Option 1 + Retail, Hotel, Residential	Option 1 Equivalency of Trips
Option 3: Land Use & Intensity Changes	Same as Option 2	Increased FAR/Trips

Project Specific General Plan Amendment Requests

The City is currently processing applications for General Plan Amendments related to Fire Station #6 at 700 Oak Grove Avenue and the SRI Modernization project at 333 Ravenswood Avenue, and these will continue to be reviewed separately under the existing General Plan. However, staff would encourage any property owner contemplating General Plan Amendments over the next five years to come forward with those requests during the initial scoping of the General Plan Update over the next few months so that these can be considered in the scope of work. Following the commencement of the update process, staff would recommend that any applications

for General Plan Amendments require initial Council review to enable staff to focus on the General Plan Update.

Timeline

The geographic focus of the update, coupled with the extent of potential changes to land use and intensities (floor area ratio), will affect the overall timeline. Staff believes a goal could be created to establish a timeframe of two years after consultant contract signing for a limited scope focused on the M-2 area given the need for visioning, environmental review, plan adoption, etc. At the other end of the timeline spectrum, the update of the 1994 Land Use and Circulation Elements took six years to complete given the need to redo parts of the analysis. The preparation of the El Camino Real Downtown Specific Plan took five years from initiation to adoption given the extensive public outreach, visioning, and review. In order to complete the General Plan Update in a timely fashion, the community, Council and staff will need to share a goal and work closely together with a common purpose.

Advisory Body

Members of Commissions may have the opportunity participate in an advisory body for the General Plan Update process. At this time, the composition and role of the body has not been determined. Staff would return to the Commission with additional information and request for participation if needed after receiving Council direction.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting, with this agenda item being listed. In addition, the City sent an email update to subscribers of the General Plan Update project pages. This page will provide up-to-date information about the project, allowing interested parties to stay informed of its progress and allow users to sign up for automatic email bulletins, notifying them when content is updated or meetings are scheduled.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. [Land Use and Circulation Element Policy Document](#) (Background Report Omitted)
– Previously Distributed Under Separate Cover
- B. [Open Space and Conservation, Noise and Safety Element Policy Document](#)
(Background Report Omitted) – Previously Distributed Under Separate Cover
- C. [Generalized Land Use Map](#)
- D. [Proposed M-2 Area Plan Boundary Map](#)
- E. [Summary of Planning Activities Applicable to M-2 Area Since 1994](#)
- F. [M-2 Zoning District Regulations](#)
- G. [Circulation Map](#)