



## OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

Council Meeting Date: April 14, 2015

Staff Report #: 15-063

**STUDY SESSION:**                      **Review and Provide General Direction on Different Strategies for Defining Public Benefit**

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### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council provide general direction on policies to better define “public benefit” in the development approval process.

### POLICY ISSUES

The City Council requested this study session as an opportunity to discuss options for further defining public benefit in our development process. The goal of this study session is to receive City Council feedback on different strategies that the Council would like to see incorporated into long-range planning efforts.

### BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2015, the City Council approved an appropriation to hire Up Urban (now Build Public) to complete work on the Economic Development Plan Update. Included in this action were additional services for facilitating Council review and direction on refining how the City approaches the subject of determining public benefit through the development process.

This discussion is incredibly timely as the City is working to update the Menlo Park General Plan and is slated to review the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan later this year. A similar discussion is taking place in every city in the Bay Area that is working to balance the need to be responsive to the strong market demand for additional development with the natural desire to ensure that additional development enhances the community.

### ANALYSIS

Currently, the City has a well-defined process for determining the public benefit that a developer must provide in exchange for development rights in excess of the base level development allowed within the El Camino Real/Downtown Specific Plan area. While this is a well-defined process, it does not have a well-defined outcome, e.g. public parking facilities, public open space, in-lieu payments, ongoing revenue generation, public

improvements beyond the determined project impact mitigations, etc. The lack of an outcome has reduced some of the clarity that the Specific Plan hoped to create for the community on what to expect in exchange for additional development.

The goal of tonight's study session is to provide examples of how other cities have defined public benefit, what new tools are available to cities, and how Menlo Park can provide more clarity to the community on what to expect in exchange for supporting additional development.

The City Council's feedback will form the basis for recommendations in the Economic Development Plan and will be incorporated into long-range planning efforts.

### **IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES**

This study session has no additional impact on city resources.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The study session is not subject to CEQA.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

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