



Planning Commission Agenda Report

March 28, 2018
Item 6.b.

SUBJECT:	P18-0050
APPLICANT:	City of Pleasanton
PROPERTY OWNER:	Various
PURPOSE:	Scoping Session and Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report for the Downtown Specific Plan Update
LOCATION:	Downtown Specific Plan Area
GENERAL PLAN:	Medium Density Residential; High Density Residential; Retail/Highway/Service Commercial, Business and Professional Offices; Public and Institutional; Parks and Recreation; Public Health and Safety; Wildland Overlay
SPECIFIC PLAN:	Medium Density Residential; High Density Residential; Downtown Commercial; Office; Public; Park; Open Space
ZONING:	Agricultural District; Central-Commercial District; Freeway Interchange Commercial District; Service Commercial District; Office District; Planned Unit Development District; Public and Institutional District; One-family residential districts including: R-1-20,000, R-1-6,500, Multi-family residential including RM-4,000, RM-2,500, RM-2,000, RM-1,500
EXHIBITS:	A. Notice of Preparation

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold a public hearing and provide feedback as appropriate on the scope and content of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the Downtown Specific Plan Update.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City is preparing an update to the Downtown Specific Plan. The City has determined that an EIR is necessary to evaluate environmental impacts of the project, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and is hosting two public scoping meetings to invite public comment on the scope and content of the EIR.

BACKGROUND

Pleasanton's first Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) was adopted in 1989 and was comprehensively updated in 2002. Subsequently, in 2016, the City Council authorized a further update to the DSP to address recent changes and opportunities in the downtown area. Many of the policies in the 2002 Plan remain relevant and will be retained. The scope of the current DSP update is targeted in nature, focusing primarily on a vision for the Civic Center area, transitions between downtown land uses, and improvements to the streetscape and public realm.

A key component of the DSP update is consideration of alternative land uses for approximately 13-acres of City-owned properties that are the current site of City offices, the Pleasanton Public Library, the Police Station, and other municipal uses. In late 2016, the City Council accepted the Pleasanton Civic Center/Library Master Plan, which envisions the civic center and library at a new location across Bernal Avenue to the southwest, at Bernal Community Park. Approval of the proposed relocation of the civic center and library is subject to voter approval and is therefore not yet final. In the event that relocation is approved, the DSP update will provide a vision and a conceptual land use plan for the redevelopment of the approximately nine-acre existing civic center property and an adjacent four-acre vacant City-owned property, developed with input from the community.

THE PROJECT

The DSP is the community's guide for development in downtown Pleasanton, establishing policies and programs related to land use, circulation, infrastructure, historic preservation, urban design, economic development, and the environment. The overarching objective of the DSP remains improving the viability of downtown while preserving its small-town character and scale. However, in order to address changes and opportunities downtown, the following objectives have been established for the DSP Update:

- Provide clear and consistent policy guidance;
- Provide a framework for new development on significant opportunity sites, particularly the existing civic center site;
- Ensure consistency and integration with recent and ongoing planning efforts;
- Achieve the most desirable mix of land uses, including residential, retail, and office throughout the downtown area, including ground floor uses along Main Street;
- Ensure a high-quality, well-designed public realm;
- Improve connections from Main Street to side streets; and
- Improve the mobility of cars, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians in the downtown area.

With the active involvement of the community and the DSP Task Force, a base plan was developed and presented to City Council. The base plan was reviewed by the City Council on December 19, 2017, and revised in response to its comments. The Task Force reviewed the revised base plan on January 23, 2018. Its key features include:

- A conceptual land use plan that includes a mix of housing, commercial, visitor-oriented and open space uses to provide a vision for the 13-acre cluster of City-owned properties, should the civic center and library relocation be approved by voters;

- Two new mixed-use land use designations to complement the range of residential, commercial, public, and open space uses currently in the DSP, including a pedestrian-oriented *Mixed Use Downtown* designation and a lower intensity *Mixed Use Transitional* designation with operating characteristics that would be more compatible and appropriate for adjacent residential uses (generally, development intensities specified in the DSP update would remain within the existing envelope identified by the City of Pleasanton General Plan, current DSP, and Zoning Ordinance);
- Streetscape improvements to Peters Avenue for the inclusion of bicycle facilities;
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections from First Street to the Alameda Transportation Corridor;
- Strategic relocation of street trees along Main Street to create additional space for pedestrians and outdoor dining;
- Closure of Division Street between Main Street and Railroad Avenue to vehicular traffic to allow for dedicated pedestrian use; and
- Incorporation of enhanced materials and amenities into the streetscape where appropriate (such as colored pavers, signs, plantings, and benches).

CEQA PROCESS

The preparation of a Specific Plan for the Downtown Specific Plan update is a “project” as defined by CEQA, and the City has determined that this project will require an EIR to evaluate its environmental impacts. Key steps and a tentative schedule for the EIR are as follows:

1. Distribute the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR to agencies and interested parties	NOP released March 9, 2018. 30-day comment period from March 9, 2018 to April 9, 2018
2. Hold two public EIR scoping sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 27, 2018 (6 p.m.) as part of the regularly scheduled Downtown Specific Plan Update Task Force meeting • March 28, 2018 (7 p.m.) as part of the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting
3. Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)	Summer 2018
4. Circulation of DEIR for Public Comments (45 Days)	Autumn 2018
5. Prepare of Final EIR (FEIR) and Response to Comments	Winter 2018
6. Hold public hearings to consider certification of the DSP Update EIR.	Early 2019

The EIR serves several functions:

- Satisfies the requirements of the CEQA for the project’s environmental review. The EIR is the informational document that identifies the potential environmental impacts of the proposal, the mitigation measures for these impacts, and potential impacts that cannot be mitigation and are therefore unavoidable.
- As an informational document, the EIR does not formulate recommendations on the project or proposal (e.g., approval, conditional approval, or denial of the plan).
- Once completed, the DEIR will be circulated for public comment for 45 days. Comments received from the public and from the applicable federal, state, and local agencies will be addressed in a “Response to Comments” section of the FEIR along with any necessary revisions to the text of the DEIR. The FEIR will then be forwarded to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will determine whether to certify the EIR as complete according to CEQA requirements.

Scoping

Exhibit A to this agenda report is the Notice of Preparation which was sent to Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and emailed to interested parties. The purpose of the scoping meeting, as part of the 30-day scoping period, is to determine the scope and content of the EIR. Comments on the merits of the plan, while they will be noted, are not typically relevant to the scope of the EIR.

As outlined in the NOP, it is anticipated that the EIR will address the following topics:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural, Tribal, and Historic Resources
- Energy, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Geology and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology, Drainage, and Water Quality
- Land Use, Population, and Housing
- Noise and Vibration
- Public Services and Recreation
- Traffic and Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

Alternatives

In accordance with State law, an EIR must describe and analyze a reasonable range of alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project, but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant impacts of the project. At a minimum, CEQA requires the EIR to include analysis of a “no project” alternative (in this case, continuing to implement the existing land use plan and policies of the existing Downtown Specific Plan); to provide decision makers the ability to compare the impacts of the proposed project against the impacts of not approving it.

The scope of work for the EIR consultant includes evaluation of up to three project alternatives, inclusive of the “no project” alternative. Staff will provide options for potential alternatives to be considered in the EIR for Task Force and public discussion at the scheduled scoping meetings.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of this item was published in The Valley Times. In addition, the City sent the NOP to responsible and trustee agencies, nearby jurisdictions, the Pleasanton Unified School District, and emailed the *Downtown Specific Plan Update Interested Parties* list (currently 462 subscribers).

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

As mentioned in this report, the objectives for the scoping meetings are to solicit public feedback on the scope and content of the EIR, and review possible alternatives to the project.

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