



## Planning Commission Staff Report

Date: October 15, 2008

Item 6.a

**SUBJECT:** Review of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the General Plan Update

**PURPOSE:** To provide an opportunity for the Commission to: (1) receive an overview of the Draft EIR prepared for the General Plan Update; (2) receive public comments on the Draft EIR; and (3) provide Commission comments on the Draft EIR.

**ATTACHMENTS:** 1. Draft Environmental Impact Report (previously distributed)

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### BACKGROUND

On April 15, 2003, the City Council directed staff to begin preparation of a comprehensive update of the City's General Plan which had been last updated and adopted in 1996. The first two years of this process were spent gathering community input regarding the issues to be discussed and resolved in the General Plan. During 2005 and 2006 numerous workshops with the Planning Commission and City Council were held to discuss background information on land use and circulation issues; in 2007 the City Council reached a consensus on a preferred land use map and a preferred traffic circulation network. From 2005 to 2008, the Planning Commission and City Council reviewed and commented on drafts of each General Plan Element.

In 2005, the City of Pleasanton hired PBS&J as consultants to assist in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report on the Draft General Plan, in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and the Draft General Plan are now available for public review.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Draft General Plan establishes a planning framework and policies to shape future growth and conservation through the 2025 planning horizon. When adopted, it will replace the 1996 General Plan for all elements, except the Housing Element which was adopted in 2003. The proposed General Plan includes the 11 elements included in the 1996 General Plan as well as two additional elements addressing the topics of water and energy.

Key issues addressed in the Draft General Plan include: preserving and enhancing the quality of life of the community; the concept of sustainability, including sustainable development, sustainability of natural resources, and the long-term economic and fiscal sustainability of the city; and growth management. At build-out the General Plan would accommodate 29,000 housing units and approximately 32 million square feet of commercial, industrial and office development. If “placeholder” development assumptions for East Pleasanton are included, approximately 35 million square feet of commercial, industrial and office development could be accommodated.

## **EIR DESCRIPTION**

An EIR is an informational document, the purpose of which is to make the public and decision-makers aware of the environmental consequences of a project. It is also intended for use by responsible agencies in considering any actions they must take or permits they must issue as a result of implementation of the General Plan.

The DEIR on the General Plan consists of six main sections:

- A project summary which includes a summary of impacts and mitigation measures for each topic discussed, for the proposed General Plan, buildout of the 1996 General Plan, and buildout of the General Plan alternatives.
- Chapter 1: Introduction which discusses the purpose of the EIR and the environmental review process.
- Chapter 2: Project description which discusses the physical development anticipated by the plan and the project objectives.
- Chapter 3: Environmental Analysis including existing conditions, thresholds of significance, impacts at buildout, and potential mitigation for all the potential significant impacts.
- Chapter 4: Other CEQA Considerations, including a discussion of unavoidable environmental effects, significant irreversible environmental changes, growth-inducing effects, and cumulative impacts
- Chapter 5: Alternatives to the Proposed General Plan which discusses the “no project” alternative (build-out of the 1996 General Plan) as well as alternatives to the proposed General Plan.

The DEIR was prepared by the consultants and City staff with background information and impact analysis provided by the consultants. This process provided the opportunity to review and mitigate potential impacts and to incorporate a few additional policies and programs into the Draft General Plan rather than identifying mitigation measures for all impacts separately in the Draft EIR. As a result of this process, additional programs were added to the Draft Public Safety Element (Policy 17 and programs related to release of hazardous materials as a result of construction and trenching), the Draft Public Facilities and Community Programs Element (Program 26.16 related to project waste diversion plans), and to the Draft Conservation and

Open Space Element (Program 5.3 related to protocols if historic or prehistoric finds are made as a result of construction or grading).

## **EIR PROCESS**

The process for requiring, preparing and adopting an EIR is outlined in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. It consists of the following primary steps that have either been conducted to date by the City or are scheduled for the future:

1. Determination by the lead agency (City of Pleasanton) that the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment and thus, requires the preparation of an EIR (December 2005).
2. Circulation of a Notice of Preparation of an EIR to all pertinent agencies and the general public. The purpose of the Notice is to inform the public that an EIR is going to be prepared and to provide 30 days for interested parties to request that the document address relevant matters of environmental concern to them. (December 28, 2005 to February 8, 2006).
3. An environmental scoping meeting for members of the public to discuss the potential impacts and the environmental review process with City staff and to provide comments on environmental matters to be addressed in the DEIR. (January 30, 2006).
4. Preparation of the DEIR by City staff and consultants in accordance with CEQA Guidelines and in response to all comments provided by agencies and other parties to date. (Draft EIR available September 22, 2008).
5. Circulation of the DEIR to agencies and interested members of the public for 45 days. (September 22 through November 6, 2008).
6. Public meeting convened by the Planning Commission to receive comments from the public and the Planning Commission on the DEIR. (October 15, 2008).
7. City staff and environmental consultants prepare the written “Response to Comments” document that addresses all written comments received by the City during the 45-day review period and verbal comments made at the October 15, 2008, Planning Commission meeting. (November and December 2008).
8. Public hearing by the Planning Commission to formalize its recommendations to the City Council regarding the certification of the Final EIR (DEIR and Response to Comments documents.) (TBA January 2009)

9. Public Hearing by City Council regarding the certification of the Final EIR (FEIR) documents. (TBA March 2009).

A 45-day comment period for agencies and members of the public to submit written comments on the DEIR extends through November 6, 2008. Responses to all verbal comments received at the October 15, 2008 Commission meeting and all written comments submitted by November 6, 2008, will be addressed by the EIR consultants and City staff in the FEIR, which will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council at public hearings.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

The DEIR addresses a wide range of potentially significant environmental impact areas, including:

- Land Use and Agricultural Resources
- Population, Employment, and Housing
- Utilities
- Geology and Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Visual Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Material
- Transportation
- Public Services and Recreation
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Biological Resources
- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Cultural Resources

The Draft EIR describes impacts in each of these topical areas and summarizes these impacts in the Summary section. The following paragraphs describe the two significant impacts which are identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Report:

- Increased motor vehicle traffic due to implementation of the proposed General Plan build-out would cause an increase in traffic at study intersections that would be substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system. This impact would be significant without mitigation (i.e., intersection improvements). Mitigation measures are available to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level at all impacted intersections. However, General Plan Policy 5 and Program 5.1 would exempt gateway intersections from the City's LOS D standard and, as a result, the potential mitigations may not be implemented. This would result in a significant effect on gateway intersections at Owens Drive and Hopyard Road, Stanley Boulevard at El Charro Road, Stoneridge Drive at El Charro Road, and Stoneridge Drive at Johnson Drive.
- Development due to buildout of the proposed General Plan would result in an increase in a residential population lower than that estimated in the newest air quality plan (*2025 Ozone Strategy*) but an increase in vehicle miles traveled. This would lead to increases in air pollution due to cumulative development in the Planning Area that would conflict with implementation of the current air quality plan. This is a significant impact, and

limiting population based on the housing cap while allowing and encouraging business development would be a cumulative impact that is intrinsic to the existing General Plan and the General Plan alternatives. No mitigation measures are available to lower this cumulative impact to a less-than-significant level.

As a result of these two issues, the City would need to adopt a Statement of Overriding Consideration at the time of certification of the EIR and adoption of the General Plan.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

A Notice of Completion/Availability for the Draft EIR was sent to all relevant agencies and jurisdictions, as well as to all persons on the General Plan interest list. The notice described the project, the comment period and the date and time of the meeting to hear public comment on the Draft EIR.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Commission take the following actions:

1. Receive comments from the public regarding the completeness and adequacy of the DEIR; and
2. Provide Planning Commission comments with regard to the completeness and adequacy of the DEIR.

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