



## Planning Commission Staff Report

Date: September 27, 2006

Item 6 a.

**SUBJECT:** General Plan Update – Draft Community Character Element

**PURPOSE:** Review and consider the Draft Community Character Element; provide direction to staff for any amendments prior to City Council review

### **I. BACKGROUND**

The Community Character Element is an optional element in the General Plan and is not required by state law. This element was included in the Pleasanton General Plan for the first time in 1996 and addresses topics related to urban design and the social aspects of Pleasanton's unique identity, including the City's edges, streetscapes, architectural style and character, arroyos and canals, special interest areas, public improvements and maintenance, and community programs and activities. Attachments 1 and 2 provide marked-up and clean copies (respectively) of the Draft Element.

### **II. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE 1996 CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

In summary, the proposed changes to the background text of the Draft Community Character Element include:

- General editing, updating and reorganizing of background material from the 1996 General Plan. This includes changing the two sections of the original element (Existing Community Character and Urban Design Enhancement Plan) into six new sections: Purpose, Overview, Special Interest Areas, Public Improvement and Maintenance, Existing Programs and Implementation, and Relationship to Other Elements.
- Adding a paragraph on how the concept of sustainability relates to community character.
- In the Overview section adding information about future community character challenges and updating information in Streetscapes and Patterns, and Architectural Style and Character.
- In the Special Interest Area section adding information on Historic Resources, and adding sections on Residential Neighborhoods, Commercial Areas, and Agriculture. The information on City Entryways in this section is also updated.

- In the Public Improvements and Maintenance section, information is added on Arroyos and Canals, Bus Shelters, Soundwalls and Berms, and Utilities. This section also addresses landscape character and discusses some landscape maintenance issues.
- The Existing Programs and Implementation section includes information on community programs and activities and the Community of Character program. This section also provides an overview of existing plans and programs that add to Pleasanton's identity including the Downtown Design Guidelines, the Green Building Ordinance, the proposed Downtown Public Art Master Plan, City Entry Enhancements, and the Community Trails Master Plan.
- A new section discusses the relationship of the Community Character Element to the other elements of the General Plan.

The following proposed changes to the Goals, Policies and Programs in the Draft Community Character Element are shown in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2:

- An additional overall goal (Goal 1) to preserve and enhance Pleasanton's community character.
- Adding references to programs under Policy 2 and Policy 3 regarding the Downtown Specific Plan and the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Amending Program 4.1 to recognize the impacts of community events on local businesses.
- Under Arroyos and Canals: moving former Policy 6 to the Draft Conservation and Open Space Element; broadening the application of new Policy 6 to all city arroyos; adding a new Program 7.3 regarding landscaping and fencing of the arroyos and canals.
- Under City Entryways and Edges: Program 9.1 is amended to add a reference to discouraging signage and franchise colors at major street entryways; and Policy 10 and programs are added which relate to retaining a visual separation between Pleasanton and Livermore along Stanley Boulevard.
- Under Streetscapes several programs are added related to adding and enhancing landscaped areas on streets, adjacent to freeways, and as screening for walls and fences. Policy 12 and associated programs related to repair and maintenance of soundwalls and fences has been added. Policy 15 and associated programs related to bus shelters, and Policy 16 related to the appearance of utility boxes have also been added.
- Under Commercial Areas and Residential Neighborhoods, policies and programs related to the improved appearance and function of shopping centers, improved signage and the appearance and maintenance of residential neighborhoods have been added.
- A goal, policies and programs on Public Art have been added.
- Under Community Activities, Program 24.1 has been rewritten to recognize the impacts of street closures on local businesses, Programs 24.2 and 24.3 have been added to encourage various types of community events.

The City's Geographic Information System Department is preparing new diagrams to illustrate existing community character and future enhancement plans. These will be forwarded to the Planning Commission at a later date.

### **III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Review and consider the Draft Community Character Element (Attachment 1 and Attachment 2); provide direction to staff for any amendments prior to City Council review.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Draft Community Character Element (underline and strikeout)
2. Draft Community Character Element (clean copy)

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