

**CITY OF ALBANY
PLANNING AND ZONING AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: July 24, 2012
Prepared by: ALH

ITEM: 7A

SUBJECT: General Plan Update Process

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Commission receive the tentative outline for the General Plan update and provide feedback to staff.

BACKGROUND

The General Plan is a critical document not only as a central document for prioritizing future land use related city projects, but also as the legal foundation for all City planning approvals and building permits. Many state grant funds require that the City have a valid General Plan, including a Housing Element that is approved by the State Department of Housing and Community Development. The current Albany General Plan was adopted in 1992, and encompasses a time frame from 1990 – 2010.

General Plan Update

Review Process

Staff prepared a tentative outline of the update process. We welcome any Commission recommendations or changes to the tentative outline. It is anticipated that the Planning Commission acting as Steering Committee would guide the process. One regular meeting each month will be designated to start one hour earlier to allow at least an hour and half for discussion of the update. With each meeting, a draft section would be reviewed and feedback provided by the Commission for editing, inclusion, etc. Staff will facilitate the meeting review process and hire an outside consultant to prepare the draft sections.

We anticipate a kick off meeting in the fall of 2012 with Council members and Commissioners to have an opportunity to provide direction and feedback on the update.

The General Plan currently has the following elements:

Current Elements:

- Land Use Element
- Circulation Element
- Housing Element

- Conservation, Recreation & Open Space Element
- Community Health & Safety Element
- General Plan Implementation

As part of the update, the following existing documents would be incorporated into the new document:

- Voices to Visions
- Existing Parks and Recreation Plans
- Recent draft Housing Element
- Active Transportation Plan
- Eastshore State Park General Plan
- Climate Action Plan
- Albany Hill Master Plan
- Arts Master Plan
- Complete Streets study
- Economic Development Strategy
- Gill Tract process

Other Possible Elements for the Update:

- Community Identity
- Human Services
- Economic Development
- Disaster Preparedness
- Capital Improvements/Public Facilities

Staff has also discussed including the following items as part of the update process:

- **“What I like about Albany”**- prepare a page on the City’s website and solicit participation through the Patch, and City Commissions and Committees for citizens to tell us what they like about Albany. This may include text and photos and would be included as part as a briefing document or part of the Community Identity Element, should that element be included.
- A briefing book soliciting on-line participation. Unlike the above listed idea, this may include suggestions for improvement, areas of concern, and policies to improve the City.
- Establish Guiding Principles as part of the document.
- Create a two sided document with a graphic showing land use designations in Albany on one side with corresponding policy on the other side. This may also be used as a mailer.

Timing

The recently released Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requires that jurisdictions in the State of California have an adopted Housing Element by October 2014. As a result, staff expects to initiate the review process in late September/early October 2012 and adhere to a tight two year review schedule for consistency with State requirements.

Project Support

- Utilize our GIS consultant
- Hire an outside consultant to help with document preparation

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

Before policies contained in a general plan are legally effective, the City must undertake an environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. Typically, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is prepared for a General Plan.