



# ***PLANNING DIVISION***

## **STAFF REPORT**

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**TO:** PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** Julie Caporgno, Planning Manager      **DEPARTMENT:** Planning

**AGENDA DATE:** April 19, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Plan and Timeline

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Department of Planning and Community Environment recommends that the Planning and Transportation Commission discuss and forward to Council the work plan and timeline for completion of an amendment to the current 2010 Comprehensive Plan that will extend its horizon year through 2020; update the land use map; modify, if appropriate, Comprehensive Plan policies and programs; and update the environmental analysis.

### **BACKGROUND**

On February 13, 2006 the City Council authorized staff to work with the Planning and Transportation Commission to develop a Comprehensive Plan Work Plan to amend the existing Comprehensive Plan to no later than 2020. The focus of the amendment would be to ensure that sufficient public services are available to serve new housing development and that sufficient land for neighborhood-serving retail uses is preserved. The Council cited concern that current housing development was exceeding the pace of growth envisioned when the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1998 and identified the need to evaluate the effects of conversion of non-residential land to residential uses and subsequent loss of tax dollars and neighborhood serving retail uses. The Council also expressed concern regarding the impacts of increased housing on public services such as parks, libraries and schools.

### **DISCUSSION**

The City's Comprehensive Plan, last comprehensively updated in 1998, identifies the physical form for development of the City through 2010. The update process took seven years to complete and consisted of a thorough re-evaluation of City policy in addition to updating data and growth projections. When adopted in 1998, it was anticipated that the Plan would provide the City with a community vision for 15 years and that the next update process would begin in

2010.

Since 1998, development has occurred throughout the City including development not anticipated by the Plan. The focus of recent new development has been multi-family housing as opposed to office, which dominated growth during the late 1990's. Recently several sites previously planned and developed with non-residential use have been approved or are undergoing the development review process for new housing development. Sites particularly along the San Antonio Road Corridor area, such as the two Trumark projects, the CJL/Bridge/Build site and the Mayfield/HP site straddling Mountain View and Palo Alto, are examples of this development transition from industrial job-oriented uses to housing occurring in Palo Alto. The overall housing growth analyzed in the Comp Plan EIR was approximately 2450 additional units Citywide by 2010; to date, approximately 2000 units have been approved in the City with the potential for another 800 to be approved by 2010.

#### Key Issues

The Council direction to staff regarding development of the work plan for the Comprehensive Plan amendment focused on the following elements:

- Revise base conditions and update growth projections;
- Update the land use map and land use designations;
- Review appropriate Comprehensive Plan policies and programs; and
- Update the environmental analysis and significance thresholds.

This staff report is organized to discuss each of those elements separately. The report also describes the proposed process for the amendment preparation including public outreach, involvement, staffing and timeline for completion. Attached to this report is a bulleted work plan and timeline for plan accomplishment.

#### Base Conditions and Growth Projections

Significant planning studies have been completed since 1998 that should be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan base conditions, development assumptions and growth projections. Data from the 2000 census is complete, the 2000 Stanford University Community Plan was adopted envisioning growth for the University through 2025, the City approved a new Citywide transportation model using ABAG projections and 2000 census data, the City approved the SOFA Coordinated Area Plan, and the City entered into the Mayfield Development Agreement with Stanford, which included an EIR analysis of the full build out of the Stanford Research Park.

A realistic level of growth for the City will need to be determined in order for the Plan to retain its relevance and extend its efficacy for the next ten to fifteen year period. Using ABAG's projections and census data, an annual increase in growth sufficient for the City to continue to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) should be projected.

#### Land Use Map and Land Use Designations

Both the East Meadow Circle/Fabian Way/West Bayshore area and the existing Fry's Electronics site and adjacent properties should be evaluated to determine the appropriate land uses,

development intensity and scale for each area. These two areas are anticipated to redevelop within the next ten to fifteen years.

The amendment should also consider restricting or disallowing housing in all or select non-residential designations if allowing housing under designations such as retail is jeopardizing implementation of the non-residential Comprehensive Plan land use.

### Policies and Programs

Generally overall policies and programs contained within the current Comprehensive Plan reflect community goals and needs; therefore, a limited approach to amending policies and programs should be undertaken. The focus of review should address policies that pertain to the conversion of non-residential land to residential uses. Policies that limit loss of retail serving uses should be added or strengthened.

Any amendment to the Comprehensive Plan will need to comply with all regional and state requirements regarding housing. Staff recommends against any changes to the Housing Element as part of the amendment process since the current Housing Element was approved by the state in 2003 and remains applicable. Any proposed changes to the Housing Element would require state review and acceptance. The next Housing Element will be mandated around 2008, subsequent to completion of this amendment.

### Environmental Analysis

An EIR will be prepared to analyze all environmental impacts resulting from the proposed amendment. In addition to evaluating the impacts on the environment from the project as required by CEQA, the EIR for the project will thoroughly evaluate service needs to schools, parks and libraries resulting from all growth anticipated through the year 2020.

Amending the Comprehensive Plan also affords an opportunity for the City to formally adopt environmental significance thresholds as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan. The adopted thresholds will subsequently serve as the significance criteria for all discretionary review in the City and should provide a level of consistency, predictability and objectivity in the City's assessment of environmental impacts. Staff proposes adoption of a set of thresholds based on current City policy and the CEQA Guidelines. These thresholds will be forwarded to the City Council for acceptance when the consultant contracts for the amendment are considered by Council. These thresholds will be used in the Program EIR for the Comprehensive Plan amendment.

### Public Process

The adoption of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan entailed large-scale community participation over a seven year period that resulted in community-wide consensus for future growth. The Council direction in the Colleague's Memo was to use the Planning and Transportation Commission as the vehicle for periodic public review through study sessions that would serve as community meetings. Staff is proposing quarterly study sessions with the Planning and Transportation Commission during the development of the amendment in the first year of the process. In addition, focus groups would provide input on specific topics.

**TIMELINE AND STAFFING**

Staff anticipates that the focused work plan as proposed can be completed in two years. This is a general estimate which will be further refined after selection of an EIR consultant and the project team. In order to meet this schedule, all changes to the Comprehensive Plan would need to be identified in the first year. In other words, the project would need to be fully defined prior to preparation of the bulk of the EIR analysis. Although the EIR would take a minimum of one and a half years, the EIR consultant could be working on the existing conditions for the first six months while the Comp Plan changes are being finalized.

This timeline is also predicated on the completion of the ZOU by spring of 2007 since staff from the ZOU would transition to the Comp Plan amendment team. The work plan would be undertaken by City staff augmented by consultant resources. An EIR consultant, an economic analyst, a facilitator for public meetings and an urban design consultant would complete the project team.

The preliminary schedule depicted below provides a general estimate of the time required for completion of the amendment based on the process identified above.

<b>PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT TIMELINE</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
June 5, 2006	Council approves work plan, timeline and budget
September 2006	Council approves consultant contracts; Council accepts significance thresholds
February 2007	Base data updated integration new information from studies, etc.
July 2006 to June 2007	Quarterly or more frequently as necessary Planning and Transportation Commission study sessions to define amendment
June 2007	EIR consultant completes EIR existing conditions
July 2007	Council approves amendment parameters including future growth rate and policy, land use map and designation changes
March 2008	EIR circulates
July 2008	EIR certification; amendment approval

**COMP PLAN STATUS REPORT**

Staff is recommending that the Planning and Transportation Commission review this year's Comp Plan Status Report in conjunction with the work plan. This report shows the status of the implementation of the various programs adopted in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The Status Report should be helpful to the Commission in providing an overall perspective of the direction and completion of the programs adopted by the City in 1998.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This work plan is not considered a project under CEQA.

**ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS**

Attachment A: Work Program

Attachment B: February 13, 2006 Colleague's Memo (PTC members only)

PREPARED BY: **Julie Caporgno, Advance Planning Manager**

DEPARTMENT/DIVISION HEAD APPROVAL:

  
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**Andy Coe, Interim Deputy Director**



**Comprehensive Plan Amendment  
Work Plan**

1. Update Base Conditions and Growth Projections

- Incorporate recent planning studies/new data into base conditions
- Identify a realistic growth rate for development through 2020

2. Amend Land Use Map and Land Use Designations

- Prepare land use evaluation for East Meadow Circle/Fabian Way/ West Bayshore area
- Prepare land use evaluation for existing Fry's Electronics site and adjacent properties
- Evaluate existing definitions for non-residential land use designations and determine if housing should be restricted or disallowed under those designations

3. Review Pertinent Policies and Programs

- Focus on policies that allow conversion of non-residential land to residential uses
- Add or strengthen policies that limit the loss of retail serving uses
- Avoid changes to the Housing Element

4. Environmental Analysis

- Prepare Environmental Impact Report for amendment
- Provide thorough analysis of service needs to schools, parks and libraries resulting from project growth through 2020
- Integrate CEQA significance thresholds used in EIR in appendix to Comprehensive Plan amendment



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF PALO ALTO**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Council Members Yoriko Kishimoto and LaDoris Cordell

**DATE:** February 6, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The City's Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 1998 and identifies the physical form for development of the City through 2010. The update process for the current Comprehensive Plan took seven years to complete, which consisted of a thorough re-evaluation of City policy in addition to updating data and growth projections. Since the 2010 horizon year for the current Comprehensive Plan is only four years away and it has been almost eight years since adoption of the Plan, we consider it is time for the City to update the Plan to address growth in the City beyond 2010.

Since 1998 considerable development has occurred throughout the City including development not anticipated to occur by the 2010 horizon year of the Plan, and changing market conditions have resulted in development pressures for certain land uses. The focus of recent new development has been multi-family housing as opposed to office, which dominated growth during the late 1990's. Recently several sites planned and developed with non-residential use have been approved or are undergoing the development review process for new housing development. Sites particularly along the San Antonio Road Corridor area, such as the two Trumark projects, the CJL/Bridge/Build site and the Mayfield/HP site straddling Mountain View and Palo Alto, are examples of this development transition from industrial to housing occurring in Palo Alto. In addition, the Mayfield Development Agreement with Stanford calls for new housing to be developed in the Stanford Research Park within the next 10-15 years. None of these changes were envisioned in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan growth projections. Members of the public have also expressed concerns that new development is straining infrastructure since project impacts are evaluated on a case-by-case basis with limited assessment of overall infrastructure capacity.

In order to address these issues, we are proposing that the Council initiate an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The amendment should address changes that have occurred since 1998 and also project a realistic level of growth for the City for the next ten to fifteen years. This will enable the Plan to retain its relevance and extend its efficacy for a ten to fifteen year period. We consider that generally overall policies and programs contained within the current Comprehensive Plan remain applicable; therefore,

we think a much more focused and limited approach to updating the Plan than that undertaken in 1998 should only be necessary. Updating the Plan will also provide an opportunity for the City to formally adopt CEQA significance thresholds through their incorporation in the Comprehensive Plan. Subsequent to adoption, these thresholds will be used for consistently assessing environmental impacts for all discretionary review projects within the City. They will also provide the basis for assessing impacts in the environmental impact report for this Comprehensive Plan amendment.

This Colleagues Memo requests that the Council direct staff to develop a scope of work, timeline and budget for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan that would extend the current Comprehensive Plan through the year 2020. Staff should return to Council in six months with a work scope that identifies a process to effectively incorporate revised growth assumptions and policy changes that have occurred since 1998, update programs that have implemented, and incorporate CEQA significance thresholds that allow for a moderate level of growth. The work scope should also identify a public process for evaluating potential growth assumptions that will be addressed in the analysis and include Council participation.