TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
DEPARTMENTS: PUBLIC WORKS, PLANNING & COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT
DATE: DECEMBER 6, 2004
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR COUNCIL DIRECTION TO PROCEED WITH CONCEPTUAL DESIGN AND INITIATE A COMBINING ZONING DISTRICT FOR THE CIVIC CENTER POLICE (PUBLIC SAFETY) BUILDING PROJECT – CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECT PE-98020

RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends that the Council direct staff to proceed with conceptual design and initiate a combining zoning district for the Civic Center Police (Public Safety) Building Project, Capital Improvement Program Project PE-98020.

BACKGROUND
The 1997 feasibility study prepared by Ekona Architecture and Planning identified numerous deficiencies with the current police facility. In addition to a lack of space, the building does not conform with current State legal standards and codes, is operationally deficient; and it does not meet many programmatic needs including property and evidence, detention, facility support and warehouse functions. The study confirmed that the Police Department was in violation on a number of codes and was unable to comply with certain standards relating to prisoner processing (keeping minors and adults separated) and evidence processing, handling, and storage. A May 2004 report by the Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury confirmed the deficiencies, including the lack of storage space for evidence items and proper ventilation for narcotics and other evidence. The study also found that the existing electrical service and infrastructure was inadequate, has no capacity for expansion, and would have great difficulty accommodating new technologies. In the event of a major earthquake, it could render the current facility inoperable, including the City’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and 9-1-1 Dispatch Center.

On July 29, 1997 Council authorized staff to initiate the formal process needed for site selection and construction of a new public safety building (CMR:342:97). In response to this Council direction staff did extensive public outreach, identified a short list of four potential sites, did preliminary environmental assessments and economic analysis of the four sites, looked at a split facility option, prepared building diagrams and a developed and refined an architectural program for this project. In
November 2001, Council approved a contract amendment #3, with Ross/Drulis/Cusenbery Architects (RDC) for conceptual design that included the following tasks:

- assess the current police facility at the Civic Center site
- evaluate four building scenarios at the Civic Center site
- evaluate utility infrastructure
- evaluate communications and life safety systems
- develop seismic design criteria meeting essential facility standards
- complete an environmental assessment and certification
- complete the conceptual design of the preferred option
- continue to meet with the community
- obtain the necessary approvals from the various City commissions and boards

In July, 2002 (CMR 314:02), staff presented information to the Council on the four potential options for the expansion and renovation of the current police facility including the conceptual drawings, cost estimates, and a preliminary environmental assessment. Staff and the consultant determined that the most operationally efficient and cost effective building at the Civic Center site would be a four story building. This option would entail the demolition of the existing structure, removal of the council chambers roof, the expansion of the first floor and mezzanine levels and the addition of a second and third floor. This option is the least expensive alternative when compared to the other sites in the City. Construction cost estimates provided to Council in 2002 dollars ranged from $38 to $45 million. It is important to note that initial projections at the beginning of this project included space needs of over 66,000 square feet. Staff has reduced the space needs to approximately 50,000 square feet, the minimum amount of space that would meet the full programmatic requirements of the department for the next 20 to 30 years.

DISCUSSION
Conceptual design work to-date has consisted of:
- a preliminary needs analysis
- development of a preliminary environmental assessment
- preparation of cost estimates
- development of massing diagrams
- development of green building design alternatives

Dimensions such as building height, setbacks and floor area ratios (FAR) require further verification during this conceptual design phase (see Attachments A and B). The projected building height is approximately 60 feet above the surrounding sidewalk. Staff is prepared to proceed with the completion of the concept design for this project upon Council direction.

The Civic Center Building, constructed in 1970, is located in the Public Facilities (PF) Zoning District. The Civic Center administration, including the police building, is a permitted use in the PF Zone. The Civic Center parking structure is considered an accessory use to the Civic Center. The last major update to the PF zoning district in Title 18 (Zoning Ordinance) of the Palo Alto Municipal Code was in 1978. The PF zoning district addresses many public facility uses and sites throughout the City of Palo Alto, which are less intense in building size, height and massing than the existing Civic Center.
Building. Therefore, the development standards for the PF zoning district that were primarily developed after the Civic Center was built are more restrictive than what currently exists on the Civic Center site. Table A, below, illustrates the existing PF standards with the Civic Center building as well as the proposed police building expansion and comparison with the surrounding Downtown Commercial (CD) zoning district. The existing PF development standards need to be modified for the Civic Center site in order to address:

- the current and future programmatic needs
- the operational and technological deficiencies
- the inability to meet current codes and standards required for a police building

Staff is proposing that the City Council initiate the preparation of a Civic Center Combining District that would be applied as an overlay zone to the PF zoning to accommodate the police building expansion concept plan. The Civic Center Combining District would only be applicable to the Civic Center site and no other PF facility in the City, including the Downtown Library. The Combining District would allow specific flexible development standards, including Floor Area Ratio (FAR), building height, building setbacks and parking, as follows:

- **Floor Area Ratio.** FAR represents the total (gross) floor area of all buildings on site in relation to the site area. It is the method used in the Zoning Ordinance to describe the bulk or mass of building volume on a specific site. The higher the FAR ratio of the building to the site (i.e., 1.0 to 1.0) often results in more massing and scale as it relates to the height of the building. The proposed FAR for the Civic Center Combining district would be 1.5:1. The PF zone currently allows a maximum FAR of 1.0:1. However, the Civic Center building has an existing FAR of 1.11:1. The increase in FAR for the police building would not substantially increase the massing or bulk of the entire Civic Center buildings relative to the site because of the existing high-rise tower element on the site.

- **Building Height.** The proposed combining district would allow the building height for the proposed police building to be increased to a maximum of 60 feet. Although the existing mid-rise portion of the Civic Center is approximately 35 feet in height and the high-rise portion is approximately 130 feet in height, the PF zone allows a maximum building height of 50 feet. Therefore, although still substantially less than the height of the existing Civic Center, this flexible development standard would provide for the expansion of the police building. In addition to the maximum building height of 50 feet, the PF zone also has a building height standard of 35 feet for any portion of a site that is within a 150 foot radius of any low density, multi-family or applicable Planned Community (PC) zoning district. The Civic Center site, specifically the police building, is within 150 feet of two multifamily zoning sites, a Multi-Family (RM-30) and a PC zone, (see Attachment A). Both multi-family sites are located on opposite corners of streets (Bryant Street/Forest Avenue and Ramona Street/Forest Avenue) and are three story buildings.

- **Building Setbacks.** The existing Civic Center building including the parking podium wall is essentially built out to the back of the sidewalk with some limited landscaped buffers. The PF zoning, however, requires a minimum of a 20-foot setback from property line. Insofar as the existing building does not meet this setback requirement, and both the Civic Center and sidewalk
public right-of-way are City-owned properties, the proposed Civic Center Combining District would provide no requirements for setbacks for the police building expansion. Although the architectural analysis does include setbacks for landscaped buffers at some locations, the maximum 20-foot setback requirement could not be met. It should also be noted that the CD district that adjoins three sides of the Civic Center site has no requirements for building setbacks. The anticipation is to design the facility with a 15-foot landscape buffer for the main building. However, the main entrance will require this element to be set at the property line. Considerations for landscaping and buffers will be addressed through the Architectural Review Board (ARB) process.

- Parking. Staff is anticipating adding a parking development standard to the Civic Center Combining District because the project does not propose to add new parking. However, this item is still being analyzed. The central issue for parking requirements is how to determine the most efficient parking needs for the police building. The existing PF zone would require a parking ratio of one space for each 250 s.f. for the new police building. A joint use facility may have the parking requirement reduced by up to 20% of the total parking requirement.

The police building represents a unique use with respect to parking requirements. Based on a program use, it may result in less parking than required for the PF zone. Two examples to illustrate this are: 1) the uses of some of the building area for property and evidence processing and storage, detention facility, locker and workout rooms, and the City’s Emergency Operations Center and the Emergency 91-1-1 Dispatch Center; and 2) staffing rotates on a 24 hour period rather than the typical employee hours of an administrative office. Therefore, staff is still analyzing the most efficient application of parking standards to be included in the Civic Center Combining District and programs that would address any new parking requirements.
## Table A - ZONING SITE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS COMPARISON TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS</th>
<th>EXISTING CONDITIONS</th>
<th>PUBLIC FACILITIES (PF)</th>
<th>COMMERCIAL DOWNTOWN (CD)</th>
<th>CONCEPTUAL PROJECT CIVIC CENTER COMBINING DISTRICT (CCCD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAR</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.5 (Proposed project FAR is approximately 1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height mid-rise</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50 feet</td>
<td>50 feet</td>
<td>60 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height within 150’ of RE,R-1,R-2, RM,PC/SF or MF</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35 feet</td>
<td>Equal the most restrictive residential district</td>
<td>60 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setbacks as applicable</td>
<td>Back of sidewalk</td>
<td>20 feet from adjoining streets</td>
<td>No Requirement, except 10 ft if opposite RE, R-1, R-2, RM, PC/SF or MF</td>
<td>No Requirement (ARB review for landscaping and buffer design)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Civic Center Garage Joint Use</td>
<td>1 space/250 gross sf with 20% reduction for joint use facilities</td>
<td>1 space/250 gross sf</td>
<td>None provided. In-lieu parking fees for additional sf as determined by: 1 space/250 gross sf plus 20% reduction, or as determined by increased program use, whichever is less.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Due to the project delay over the last two years, the current scope of services with RDC will require a consultant amendment next spring to cover fee increases, and additional studies necessary to certify the environmental assessment. These studies were not initially required, but will be necessary and will include a shadow study, a parking study, a temporary staff relocation plan and a traffic study evaluating adjacent signalized intersections. The project conceptual design and environmental certification is expected to be complete by late next year. Staff anticipates the initiation and approval of the combining zoning district will not delay the project schedule as the approval process will run concurrently with the environmental review process.

**RESOURCE IMPACT**

In 1998 Council approved a BAO for CIP PE-98020 police building project, in the amount of $275,000 (CMR 261:98). In 1999, Council approved a BAO for a consultant contract amendment #1 to provide fiscal analyses of four sites and a split-facility study in the amount of $90,028 (CMR:256:99). In 2000, Council approved a BAO for consultant amendment #2 to provide a detailed analysis on the potential use of the Downtown Library site in the amount of $74,000 (CMR 319:00). In 2001, Council approved a contract amendment #3 for Conceptual Design, Phase 2 in the amount of $380,000 (CMR 375:01). Current total expenditures are $819,028. In April 2004, staff updated Council on the project, informing them that progress had been suspended due to the economic downturn the City was experiencing. A consultant amendment is anticipated in Spring 2005 to complete this conceptual design phase.

Currently there is no funding plan for the proposed police building project. As this facility is considered new infrastructure, current Council policy is that “new facilities require new funding sources.” Staff is reviewing several potential funding options which include working with a newly formed resident group, the Palo Alto Police Foundation, analyzing potential new revenue sources such as a 911 service fee, a business license tax or an increase in the transient occupancy tax. Other potential sources could include issuance of new City Hall Renovation Certificates of Participation (COPs) using rents for leased space as a funding source. Staff is planning to proceed with the work needed to achieve a 30 percent design that will be used to determine the level of funding required for the police building project. Staff will return with specific funding plan options at the time.

**PROJECT REVIEW**

1. This project was initially funded in FY 1996-97.
2. This project has been reviewed various times as noted in Attachment C.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This request is consistent with existing City policies.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The project is subject to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study will be completed during this conceptual design phase. Initial environmental analysis indicates that a Mitigated Negative Declaration would be required for the proposed project. Areas of potential impacts that would be analyzed include sun/shadow impacts, short-term construction (including noise), visual and traffic impacts and the temporary relocation of the Police Department.

**ATTACHMENTS**