

City of Albany



TO: ALBANY PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION
FROM: BARRY MILLER, GENERAL PLAN CONSULTANT
SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN UPDATE
DATE: JUNE 24, 2015

REQUEST

This is the 20th Planning and Zoning Commission Study Session on the Albany 2035 General Plan Update. This is the last Study Session prior to release of the Draft General Plan for public review. It is intended to provide an opportunity for final comments on the consolidated and edited Draft goals, policies, and actions. The Study Session is also a “preview” of the Draft Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This item is a Study Session and no Commission action is required.

SITE LOCATION

The General Plan applies to all property in the City of Albany.

BACKGROUND

The Planning and Zoning Commission has been conducting monthly or bi-monthly Study Sessions on the Albany 2035 General Plan Update for the last two years. About half of the Study Sessions have related to the Housing Element—including the 2007-2014 Housing Element, and more recently the 2015-2023 Housing Element Update. The other half have been topic-based, covering a different chapter or “element” of the Plan at each session. At this point, all eight elements of the General Plan have been covered.

The General Plan and EIR are now being drafted and formatted. A late July or early August 2015 release is anticipated, with public hearings taking place in Fall 2015. Adoption of a new General Plan is anticipated in late 2015 or early 2016, depending on the number of hearings and volume of comments received on the Plan and EIR. As has been noted and emphasized many times during the process, the General Plan Update is not proposing major changes to the Land Use Map. It is primarily a restatement and articulation of existing policies, grounded in current data about the city and new forecasts to the year 2035.

CONTENTS OF AGENDA PACKET

The Agenda packet for this meeting includes two large .pdf documents, described below.

Consolidated Goals, Policies, and Actions: “Tracked Change Version”

The first document is a composite of the goals, policies, and actions in all elements of the General Plan. Housing is not included, since it has already been reviewed and adopted. The elements are:

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- Conservation and Sustainability
- Environmental Hazards
- Community Services and Facilities
- Waterfront

The “original” version of each set of goals, policies, and actions was circulated to the Planning Commission as attachments to staff reports throughout 2014 and early 2015. The “tracked” changes show how each set of the first draft goals, policies, and actions has been edited in response to feedback from the Planning Commission, City staff, the public, and other Commissions reviewing the document.

This document is being provided for background reference only. It provides a tool for quickly determining where the previously circulated documents have been edited. As such, it may expedite review.

Consolidated Goals, Policies, and Actions: “Clean Version”

The second document is the same document as the first, but with the changes accepted. It is recommended that the Commission focus its review on this document, as it is easier to read and follow. Section dividers have been inserted at the beginning of each element for ease of reference.

It is important to note that the goals, policies, and actions do not represent the entire General Plan. Each of the elements also includes narrative text on the topic area, which provides the context for the policies. The narrative text discusses existing conditions, provides quantitative and qualitative data, identifies key issues, and provides projections for the future. The narrative section also includes maps, photos, charts, and other graphic elements. In addition, the seven elements of the Plan are preceded by an “Introduction” chapter and a “Framework” chapter. The “Framework” Chapter provides information on Albany’s history, demographics, and forecasts, as well as guiding principles for the rest of the General Plan.

HIGHLIGHTED CHANGES

The text below highlights the prior review process for each chapter and the changes made in response to public feedback. Written summaries of all Commission meetings, including the specific comments received from Planning and Zoning Commissioners, are available on the Project website at www.albany2035.org.

Land Use Element

The Land Use policies were presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission on April 23, 2014. The Commission provided feedback, and public comment was received. Two prior study sessions had been held on land use, including one on the Draft Land Use Map and Categories, and another on the population and employment forecasts. Changes to this chapter relative to the version reviewed last year are relatively minor.

Transportation Element

The Transportation policies were reviewed by the Traffic and Safety Commission on May 22, 2014 and then by the Planning and Zoning Commission on May 28, 2014. Revisions were made in response to both reviews. The Traffic and Safety Commission subsequently requested revisions to the Actions to reflect proposed traffic calming strategies on the streets south of El Cerrito Plaza; these have been incorporated. Revisions have also been made to incorporate staff comments.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element

These policies were reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission on June 12, 2014, and then by the Planning and Zoning Commission on June 25, 2014. Revisions were made in response to both reviews. The revisions also incorporate comments from staff and the public.

Conservation and Sustainability Element

Policies in this element were reviewed by the Sustainability Committee on July 16, 2014 and then by the Planning and Zoning Commission on July 23, 2014. The Sustainability Committee requested extensive revisions, and a reorganization of the goals to make the document more forward-thinking. The Committee subsequently requested that a new greenhouse gas reduction target for 2035 be included in the Plan. This target is included under the revised Goal 3.

Environmental Hazards Element

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed Environmental Hazards policies on November 10, 2014. Comments were relatively minor and have been incorporated to produce a revised version of this document.

Community Services and Facilities Element

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed Community Services and Facilities policies on December 12, 2014. The policies also were reviewed by the School District staff, Alameda

County Library staff, and staff in the Police, Fire, and Recreation and Community Services Departments. Revisions are incorporated in the attached draft.

Waterfront Element

The Draft Waterfront Element was reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission on March 11, 2015. Public comments also were taken on the document during the meeting, and several written comments were received. The March draft has been revised to incorporate feedback from the Commission and the public.

MEETING FORMAT

The Study Session on June 24 is not envisioned to be a “page by page” review of the entire document, but rather an opportunity for Commissioner questions and comments on any specific policies or actions that it feels require further clarification or editing prior to publication of the Draft. The meeting is also an opportunity for the public to comment on the consolidated document before it is released. The next iteration of the policies will be fully formatted, and integrated with the rest of the General Plan.

The Study Session will include a presentation by staff, an opportunity for public comment, and then an opportunity for Commission comment on any of the policies/actions, or on the General Plan as a whole.

ATTACHMENT A: Consolidated General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions—Tracked Changes

ATTACHMENT B: Consolidated General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions---Clean Copy