



REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION City of Sacramento

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915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2671

INFORMATIONAL
March 15, 2007

Members of the Planning Commission

Title: General Plan Update - Report on the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept and Next Steps

Location/Council District: Citywide/All

Recommendation: 1) Review and comment on the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept Map and Features diagram and 2) Recommend that Council direct staff to proceed with preparation of a Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative.

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Presenters: Bob Overstreet, Strategic Projects Executive, 808-1190; Thomas Pace, Long Range Planning Manager, 808-6848.

Department: Planning

Division: Long Range Planning

Organization No: 4912

Description/Analysis

Issue: As a follow-up to the City Leadership Workshop held on February 20 with the Council and various City Leadership groups, staff and consultants have prepared a conceptual map and features diagram to guide preparation of a Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative (Attachment 3). The concept map represents preliminary conclusions regarding land use for major opportunity areas and key challenges. These conclusions received strong support by participants at the City Leadership Workshop.

On March 20, 2007 staff will request that Council review the conceptual map and features diagram and direct staff to proceed with preparation of a Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative. Staff will return to Council by June 2007 to ask that Council accept the Preferred Alternative and initiate preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Prior to returning to Council, staff will also be presenting the Draft to various City Boards and Commission, City Leadership groups and other stakeholders for review and input.

Policy Considerations: This report is consistent with both the City’s overall Strategic Plan goal and the General Plan vision of becoming “The Most Livable City in America”.

Environmental Considerations: There are no environmental considerations associated with this report. (Not a project under Section 21065 of CEQA and CEQA Guidelines Section 15378 (b)(4)). Once a Final Preferred Land Use Alternative has been selected by Council, the environmental review process for the General Plan will begin.

Commission/Committee Action: Staff presented the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept Map and Features Diagram to the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) on February 26. The GPAC indicated concurrence that the Map and Features diagram is consistent with the input received at the City Leadership Workshop. Staff will report back orally on any comments or direction provided on March 15 by the Planning Commission.

Rationale for Recommendation: Council’s acceptance of the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept Map and Features Diagram confirms prior analysis and outreach conducted on major issues and opportunities for the future growth and land use, and will help shape staff’s next phase of work on the creation of a detailed Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative.

Respectfully submitted by: _____

JIM MCDONLD AICP
Senior Planner

Recommendation Approved:

Thomas Pace
Long Range Planning Manager

Table of Contents:

Report pg. 2

Attachments:

- 1 Background pg. 5
- 2 Outline of General Plan Process and Work Program pg. 9-10
- 3 Recommended Preferred Growth Concept Map and Features Diagram pg. 11-12

Attachment 1

BACKGROUND

Since 2004, a great deal of work has been completed for the 2030 General Plan in terms of gathering background data and information, obtaining public input, defining our Vision and Guiding Principles, and mapping out some choices for the future. A summary of work completed to date, including the overall timelines, is shown in Attachment 2

At this stage, staff is bringing forward a Recommended Preferred Growth Concept to Council, which is the culmination of many months of review and discussion among City staff, the public, and the City leadership. This Concept is the first step in working towards identifying and accepting a Preferred Land Use Alternative, which will consist of a set of detailed land use maps that shape how the General Plan goals, policies, environmental review process, financing strategy, and implementation strategy are crafted during the remainder of the project.

FROM VISION TO GROWTH CONCEPT

The following outlines how staff arrived at the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept that is being presented to Council.

Consistency with SACOG Blueprint and City Smart Growth Principles

The 2030 General Plan is being developed under the direction of Council based several existing City and regional policies:

- The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint Project, which was completed in 2004; and
- The City's Smart Growth Principles, adopted by Council in 2001.

Under the Blueprint's Preferred Scenario, the general consensus of policy makers and citizens was a preference for a different pattern of growth to accommodate nearly one million new people expected to reside in the region by 2030. The Blueprint strategy identified a need to funnel significant growth within the borders of existing cities and their immediate adjacent areas, rather than continuing sprawl outwards into agricultural lands and open spaces in our six-county region.

Technical Background Report

As part of the first phase of the General Plan process, staff gathered a large volume of technical background data on existing conditions within the City. The results of this were documented in the Technical Background Report, which was accepted by Council in November 2005. Part of the background data gathering process included a population growth forecast, which concluded that over 200,000 additional residents and approximately 140,000 additional jobs are likely to be added to the city by 2030.

Growth Areas

In planning to accommodate the significant growth forecast for the city, staff and consultants first identified which areas might grow and change, and which areas in the community would remain relatively unchanged. Both technical data and public input helped shape that analysis. Public input received during the first round of Town Hall Forums in 2005 assisted staff in defining the opportunities and constraints that exist in the many

different neighborhoods and districts throughout the city and its adjacent areas. The Technical Background Report and Planning Issues Report also contributed valuable information to the land use analysis.

Staff identified three basic types of “Opportunity Areas” that could accommodate significant growth or change by 2030. These include:

- *Greenfields*: New growth areas that currently contain little or no development (e.g. Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, and Delta Shores) that are adjacent to the city’s edges.
- *Major Infill Areas*: Areas with the most potential for new infill development or reuse and intensification based on their location, function and potential market demands (e.g. Railyards, Richards Boulevard, and Downtown).
- *Underutilized and Reclaimed Lands*: Areas throughout the city in which there are large tracts of vacant, underutilized or reclaimed land (e.g. the East Area), or areas with high concentrations of parcels likely to be redeveloped (e.g. many of the city’s older commercial corridors).

Draft Growth Scenarios

In early 2006, staff produced several Draft Growth Scenarios which depicted different configurations of key opportunity areas that could accommodate the projected growth through 2030. The scenarios are summarized as follows:

- Scenario 1: The city continues to build out under the existing General Plan designations and policies, as modified by numerous amendments since 1988. This Scenario would not accommodate projected growth identified in the Technical Background Report, and would not be fully consistent with the Blueprint Recommendations, Vision and Guiding Principles, or the City’s Smart Growth Principles.
- Scenario 2: Projected growth would be accommodated in both Major Infill Areas and some New Growth Areas, resulting in a more compact footprint than Scenario 3.
- Scenario 3: Projected growth would be accommodated in Major Infill Areas but even more so in all the New Growth Areas identified, resulting in a significantly larger urban footprint than Scenario 2.

Scenarios 2 and 3 were both based on the SACOG Blueprint Recommendations, the Vision and Guiding Principles, and the City’s Smart Growth Principles, which guided staff’s analysis of vacant and underutilized lands and opportunity areas. The scenarios were also influenced by public input received in the first round of Town Hall Forums in 2005.

The scenarios were presented for public review during the second phase of Town Hall Forums in May/June of 2006. Staff and consultants then reviewed community input, as well as input received from the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and various stakeholders. A Fatal Flaw Workshop for City staff was held in October 2006. The outcomes of the Fatal Flaw Workshop, which identified issues and implications associated with the land use scenarios, were included in a Technical Memo that was completed in January 2007. Along with the Technical Memo, a series of White Papers on the major Opportunity Areas were reviewed by the GPAC, TAC

and Policy Team. Preliminary conclusions were included within the White Papers, and were brought forward into the City Leadership Workshop in February 2007.

RECOMMENDED PREFERRED GROWTH CONCEPT

The preliminary conclusions, derived from all the preceding work, received strong support in the City Leadership Workshop on February. Staff is now moving those forward as the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept depicted in Attachment 3. The Concept Diagram consists of a map of features from the Land Use Scenarios, as well as new conclusions regarding areas and issues that were not previously addressed. The Concept Features list accompanying the map summarizes the staff recommendations and includes a graphic representation of the direction provided during the Leadership Workshop.

- New Growth Areas

The Concept proposes New Growth Areas in the Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, the East Area, and Delta Shores. These areas are expected to accommodate significant new growth in the form of new mixed-use villages. Some of the New Growth Areas might develop more quickly than others, due to ongoing studies regarding open space and habitat issues in the Natomas Basin for example.

- Regional Center

Downtown Sacramento and its adjacent neighborhoods are at the center of the region. The Concept includes continued emphasis on the revitalization and growth of the Central Business District (CBD) in downtown Sacramento and its diverse neighborhoods, but also includes significant investment and growth in two other Major Infill Areas adjacent to downtown: the Railyards and Richards Boulevard areas. Redevelopment of these areas would result in new mixed-use urban neighborhoods and districts with a variety of development types, new greenspace amenities near the Sacramento and American Rivers, and significant investment in intermodal transportation options.

Opportunities also exist to create synergy with changes happening in West Sacramento on the west side of the Sacramento River, where revitalization and growth of urban neighborhoods just across the river will also contribute to and complement the approach to the Regional Center.

- Sub-Regional Centers

A new concept called Sub-Regional Centers would create significant new mixed-use employment, commercial and residential centers at four key locations throughout the city. These Centers would function as “satellites” to the Regional Center, and would be located around the following 4 areas: 1) Arco Arena, 2) Arden Fair/Point West, 3) 65th Street at Folsom Blvd, and 4) Florin Road in the vicinity of the 24th St light rail station and Franklin Blvd.

Sub-Regional Centers would be designed in a manner that is compatible with and accessible to existing neighborhoods, but also provide residents of outlying neighborhoods and other areas access to jobs and services within the city but outside of the downtown area, thereby reducing the commute pressure on downtown. The Sub-Regional Centers

would be located near the confluence of major transportation arterials, including both freeways and transit stations.

- Transit Centers

Transit Centers are envisioned to be mixed-use centers containing a mix of housing, retail, office, and other uses that are transit-supportive. While the mix of uses in Transit Centers may be similar to other mixed-use centers described in the Concept, the key difference is that Transit Centers are focused around existing and proposed light rail stations along major transit corridors. In some cases, existing Transit Centers that have been planned prior to the General Plan Update overlap with Sub-Regional Centers, such as at the 65th Street Station area, in which case the General Plan envisions that the planned uses and urban form established by the Transit Center plan will set the stage for a Sub-Regional Center that contains a more intensive employment focus.

- Employment Centers

Employment Centers include an integrated mix of office and other commercial businesses, retail, housing, and public amenities. The focus and defining feature of these types of mixed-use centers is on employment-generating uses that serve and are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. Employment Centers will also be accessible by multiple modes of transportation and will allow for pedestrian connectivity among places where people work, shop and live. The key difference between Employment Centers and Sub-Regional Centers are that Employment Centers would be less intense in terms of intensity of use or scale of buildings. Sub-Regional Centers would be more similar to a “mini-downtown”, whereas Employment Centers would function more like a typical office or business park but still retain a mix of uses and transportation options.

- Commercial Centers

The concept for Commercial Centers places an emphasis on revitalization of existing Centers, but also encourages the development of new Commercial Centers, as mixed-use, multi-modal areas that would provide a range of uses and functions rather than single-use, automobile-oriented shopping centers. Expanded transit options, reorientation of site layout to enhance transit accessibility, incorporating more pedestrian-friendly design features, and planning for a greater mix of uses within the Centers are part of the strategy to making Commercial Centers more sustainable over the long term. New Commercial Centers can also be combined with employment-generating uses to provide for more synergy and diversity than typical shopping malls or “power centers”, for example.

- Mixed Use Corridors

Building on the City’s Commercial Corridor Revitalization Strategy and other ongoing planning and redevelopment efforts, the Concept emphasizes adding multi-story buildings with a mix of uses at key nodes or intersections along the City’s older commercial corridors. Many of these corridors travel through or form the boundaries around the city’s established neighborhoods, but have become less attractive and suffered from disinvestment over time. By providing for a greater mix of residential, office, and retail uses; and through emphasizing pedestrian orientation and expanded transit services; revitalizing commercial corridors is a key component to creating more complete neighborhoods.

- Parks and Open Spaces

The Concept Map depicts a series of interconnected greenways, parks and open spaces along the Sacramento and American Rivers, and also intersecting and connecting with various neighborhoods and districts throughout the city. Key features include an expanded American River Parkway near Richards Boulevard, maintaining an open space buffer in appropriate areas of the Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, and new/expanded parks and open spaces in the Delta Shores and East Area.

Although the Concept Map does not show existing or proposed neighborhood, community or regional parks at this time, the General Plan will allow for continued creation of new parks, the preservation and maintenance of existing parks and other critical open space areas for habitat preservation and buffer lands to sensitive areas, and so forth. Parks and open spaces are acknowledged to be a critical issue as the Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative is developed and will be addressed as the policy development phase begins.

- Other Areas

Several areas are depicted on the map that are either special districts or are considered for joint planning with the County or other regional partners. Examples include the Fruitridge-Florin Unincorporated Area in the southeast area of the city, where there are opportunities for the City and County to coordinate on corridor revitalization, infrastructure analysis and improvements, and other efforts. The Robla residential infill area, located adjacent to the Robla Employment Center west of Raley Boulevard in North Sacramento, is an example of an area where a need for more focused area-wide planning is needed in terms of land use and infrastructure.

- Areas with Minimal Change

Many areas of the City are not projected to experience significant change on an area-wide basis, but would still improve and evolve based on new policies or implementation programs identified in the Plan Elements later in the process. Infill development would still be encouraged where appropriate, and some changes in land use or intensity of development might be defined through subsequent planning processes. For example, additional parks or other types of public gathering places, new public transit services, or new neighborhood retail amenities might be added in many existing neighborhoods that are not expected to experience significant change.

The bottom line is that most of the city's existing neighborhoods are not expected to experience significant change, but as voiced by many stakeholders throughout the process thus far, the General Plan should include policies and programs that would allow some areas to be enhanced or improved. Many neighborhoods would benefit greatly from more detailed planning processes that are not necessarily within the scope of the General Plan, but could be addressed at the macro-level by defining goals and policies that would lay the framework for more detailed community or neighborhood plans. Staff will begin to address this during the policy development phase.

NEXT STEPS

It is recommended that Council accept the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept and direct staff to begin the preparation of a detailed Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative, which will be based on the features outlined in the Growth Concept and will consist of the following:

- Detailed maps that depict proposed land use and urban form categories for all parcels within the General Plan Policy Area, which includes all land within the City's existing boundaries, as well as adjacent areas outside the City's limits that are within the Policy Area outlined on the Recommended Preferred Growth Concept Map (Attachment 3);
- An accompanying report/booklet on the proposed land use and urban design designations that correspond to the detailed maps. The report will explain how the land use and urban form designations will work together to guide development that is consistent with the Vision and Guiding Principles adopted by Council.

Staff proposes to bring forward the Draft Preferred Land Use Alternative to Council in May for consideration and acceptance. Once Council selects a Preferred Land Use Alternative, staff and consultants will initiate work on the Environmental Impact Report and continue work on developing the policy framework for all Elements of the Draft Plan.

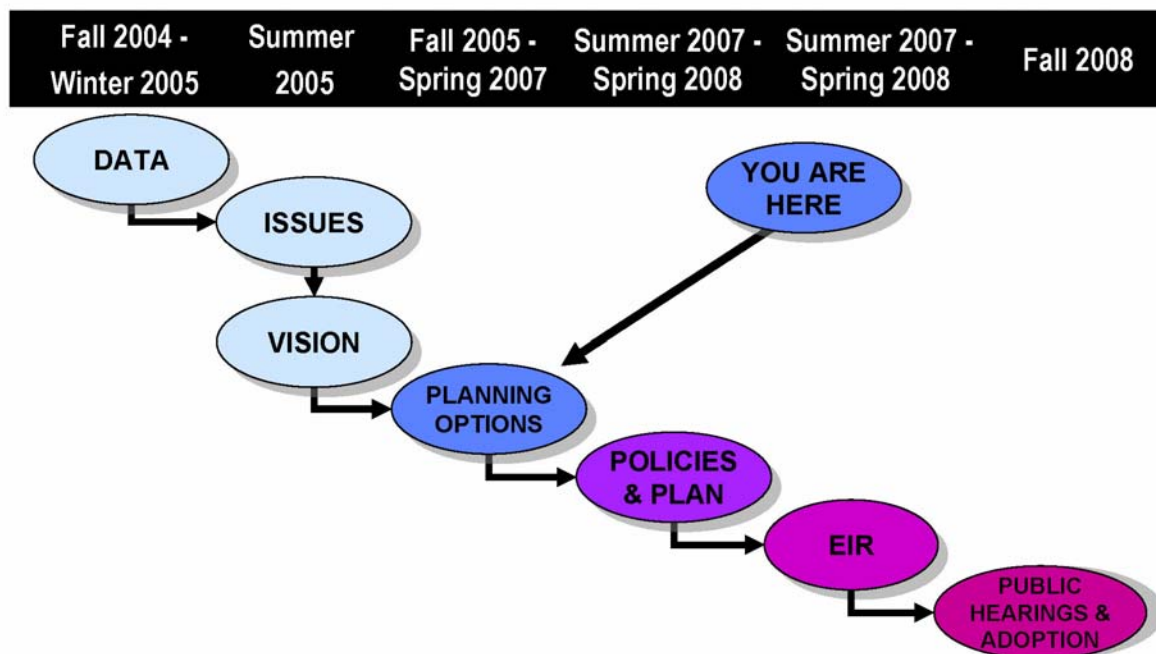
Efforts to engage and involve the public during the remaining phases of the project will also continue, particularly in educating the public about the Preferred Land Use Alternative and outlining draft the goals and policies in the various Elements of the Draft Plan as it is developed. Staff anticipates that a Community Congress will be held in the early fall of 2007 to outline the Preferred Alternative and an outline of the Draft Plan goals and policies, as well as additional public meetings or open houses to be scheduled after the Community Congress but prior to Plan adoption.

The public will also be given the opportunity to participate in the environmental review process of the proposed 2030 General Plan, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

ATTACHMENT 2

OUTLINE OF GENERAL PLAN WORK PROCESS

Work on the 2030 General Plan has been ongoing since 2004, and has resulted in a great deal of information and public input. A graphic illustration of the process to date is shown below.



Key milestones in this process have included the following:

- The First Phase of Town Hall Forums, held in May/June 2005, in which over 1,200 City residents helped staff shape the Vision and key values and aspirations of what Sacramento will look like in 2030;
- A Technical Background Report accepted by Council in November 2005 that lays out a great deal of technical information about the city, including a population and growth forecast that notes the City will grow by approximately 200,000 persons and 140,000 additional jobs by 2030;
- A Planning Issues Report accepted by Council in November 2005 that summarizes many of the key issues identified by community stakeholders in the first round of Town Hall Forums as well as City staff, the General Plan Advisory Committee, and many others;
- The Vision and Guiding Principles document, which the Council adopted in November 2005, that sets out the City's key values and aspirations for Sacramento and were designed to serve as the benchmarks for the remainder of the General Plan process;

- A set of Growth Scenario Maps in early 2006, which were designed to be consistent with the Blueprint, the Vision and Guiding Principles, and issues and concerns raised by participants in the Town Hall Forums in 2005;
- The Second Phase of Town Hall Forums in June 2006 in which the public was given an opportunity to engage in discussion about the Land Use Scenarios, and evaluate the pro's, con's and tradeoffs associated with different scenarios of growth and change;
- A Workshop on the "Fatal Flaws" associated with the Land Use Scenarios in October 2006 in which the Policy Team, Technical Advisory Committee, and staff and consultants evaluated the differences and potential "fatal flaws" associated with the scenarios;
- A Public Opinion Survey in late 2006, which provided a scientific, comprehensive assessment of opinions of a sample of 1,500 City residents on many important issues raised during the Visioning and Land Use Analysis processes to date;
- The City Leadership Workshop, a historic town hall meeting on February 20, 2007 in which the Mayor, City Councilmembers, City Manager, Charter Officers, Department Heads, and members of over 15 City Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Committees provided input and direction on staff's preliminary conclusions regarding Key Challenges and Opportunity Areas for growth and change over the next 25 years.

ATTACHMENT 3
RECOMMENDED PREFERRED GROWTH CONCEPT
MAP AND FEATURES DIAGRAM