

**Council Meeting: October 20, 2009****SUBJECT: 2009-0799 – General Plan Consolidation****REPORT IN BRIEF**

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize the consolidation of the General Plan from a 22 document plan into a single-document plan. The purpose of the consolidation is to achieve a General Plan that is more user-friendly, less subject to inconsistencies due to preparation over time, reduce costs to the city and increase community participation in long-range planning efforts. Staff also recommends that the Council approve an Advisory Committee made up of a cross section of community interests. To accomplish this cross section staff recommends that Boards and Commissions as well as the City Council select the appropriate number of members to serve on an advisory committee.

BACKGROUND**History of the Sunnyvale General Plan**

In the early 1980s the City adopted a multi-document format for the General Plan. This format was desired to support an integrated system of city management that connected the various functions of the city government including long term planning (General Plan) and budget. This concept was part of the Planning and Management System (PAMS). The original idea was to prepare 29 documents (covering all of the city's services) within a 5-year period and to update four or five Sub-elements annually; however due to other demands on city resources this pace was never realized. In fact, the final sub-element to be prepared from the original list, the "Solid Waste Sub-element," was not completed until 1996. Over time the Council has added topics, combined topics and deleted topics resulting in the current 22 document format.

A key feature of the General Plan is that it goes well beyond the State of California requirement to plan for the physical growth of the community. It is intended to provide a clear linkage between long-range plans for services and activities and the long-term financial plan. The Action Statements of the early General Plan documents translated into budgeting and programming.

In the 30 years of PAMS many changes have been made in the format of the City's budget and the organization of departments and in the format of the

General Plan documents. In addition, state and regional requirements for resource management and general plan content have changed.

Status of the Sunnyvale General Plan

The oldest document of the General Plan, the Support Services Sub-element (which is part of the Public Safety Element) was adopted in 1988. It and twelve other documents are more than 10 years old. Although the General Plan is posted on the city's website, the documents total over 2200 pages, and if one wished to purchase all 22 documents it would cost over \$400. Staff finds that while there is an abundance of information on the community and it is rich with policy, the Sunnyvale General Plan is unwieldy and not user friendly. Each of the general plan documents include much of the same background information and many of the policies are repeated in several documents. Action statements became activities within operating budgets. As budgets were modified the intended direct link to the general plan was lost.

In May 2007 the City adopted the Community Vision, which now serves as the overarching element of the General Plan, upon which each of the functional elements and sub-elements will be based. The functional elements are the remaining documents/topics of the General Plan. The Community Vision was a direct product of an extensive community visioning process, and reflects the desires and aspirations of Sunnyvale residents and businesses regarding the future of their city. Staff noted that the Community Vision will simplify revision of the General Plan elements and sub-elements for many years into the future. The concept is that each of the "functional" elements will be able to utilize the background and vision information to simplify the preparation and update of the functional elements.

Since the adoption of the Community Vision, staff has explored ways to simplify the update to the General Plan and to continue to engage the community in long-term planning. The concept of a single-document format (a comprehensive general plan) was discussed on October 6, 2009 at a City Council/Planning Commission Joint Study Session. The study session covered an overview of the concepts and rationale behind General Plan Consolidation (see Study Session Summary, Attachment A).

EXISTING POLICY

7.3 Legislative Management Sub-element of the General Plan

GOAL A: Assess community conditions and make appropriate changes to long-range, mid-range and short-range plans.

Policy A.1 Utilize the General Plan as the City's principal long-range planning tool; utilize the Resource Allocation Plan and Program Outcome Statements as the City's principal mid-range planning tool; and utilize

the Council Study Calendar as the City's principal short-range planning tool.

Policy A.2 Establish advisory committees and boards and commissions as necessary to assist Council in planning and policy development.

California Government Code

General Plans

§ 65300 Plan required

Each planning agency shall prepare and the legislative body of each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning. Chartered cities shall adopt general plans which contain the mandatory elements specified in Section 65302.

§ 65351 Public involvement

During the preparation or amendment of the general plan, the planning agency shall provide opportunities for the involvement of citizens, public agencies, public utility companies, and civic, education, and other community groups, through public hearings and any other means the city or county deems appropriate.

DISCUSSION

The multi-document format for the Sunnyvale General Plan was an important step in establishing long term plans for city services. These plans help staff provide services and help staff, boards/commissions and the City Council in evaluating policy. It has been increasingly difficult to maintain the multi-document format for the general plan and many of the documents are over 10 years old. While the State of California allows General Plans to exceed the minimum requirements, there are also expectations that general plans are up to date, internally consistent and accessible to the public. Staff is particularly concerned that the documents are not up to date and are difficult to use.

General Plan Consolidation

Staff is recommending that the General Plan be consolidated into a single-document. Consolidation would be tiered off the Community Vision of the General Plan and would be the first step in creating a Comprehensive General Plan. Staff sees the merits of a single-document general plan as:

- **Clear vision and direction**

All General Plan policy information would be available in one place, tiering from the Community Vision.

- **User-friendly**

A single-document, fully integrated, general plan will allow the public to better understand city policy.

- **Publicly accessible**
A compact document is more readily available to the public and less costly. Current advances in technology will allow on-line versions that provide more options in accessing information.
- **Efficient update process**
A single update can occur every 10 years (more often for the housing element as required by state law), saving staff time and other city resources.
- **Effective policy tool**
The size and organization of the general plan can affect access and understanding of city policy.
- **Timely and current**
The consolidation and integration of policy into the Community Vision format will simplify the update process. After integration the update process is more efficient, and all topics can be updated at the same time, at ten year intervals.
- **Comprehensive**
The current General Plan is comprehensive. The new format would still be comprehensive, although some policies may be reserved for other formats and not part of the General Plan.
- **Integrated and internally consistent**
A 22-document format presents additional challenges in maintaining consistency, and also in integrating policies and implementation.

At the joint study session on October 6, 2009 City Council and Planning Commission members raised concerns with the loss of words in a new format, especially with the use of more graphics. The final goals and policies should be written in plain language with sufficient substance to fully convey the meaning. Any graphics will be there to supplement the text of the general plan (and not vice versa).

Attachment B includes a list of general plans that are judged to be user friendly, easy to read, and provide good guidance for decision making. Several of these documents are not available in paper format.

Participation in the General Plan Consolidation Effort

The California Government Code requires that General Plan preparation include opportunities for the public to be involved. The consolidation effort should involve staff and the public. Staff is recommending a staff working committee and an advisory committee as well as general public outreach. Although it is not required staff recommends that meetings be posted in accordance with the Brown Act.

Staff Technical Task Force

The staff technical task force would take the first efforts at sorting through existing goals, policies and action statements, meet with the advisory committee, and follow up with recommendations of the advisory committee. Staff members would be selected by the City Manager.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee will help select desirable substance and organization of the general plan. The committee will also assist in identifying the “look and feel” for a single-document general plan (both printed and on-line versions). Boards and Commissions are a good choice to assist in this effort because they represent a good cross section of community interests. These citizens have demonstrated an interest in the policy setting and long-range planning efforts of the City. Large committees can be difficult to manage, therefore staff is suggesting that boards and commissions represent a cross-section of policy interests in the community.

The representatives would need to attend about four advisory committee meetings. Materials would be provided to the committee members in advance of the meeting to provide some time for review before committee discussion. Meetings would be open to the public and the agenda will allow time for public comments. Advisory committee representatives would be responsible for informing their respective board on the progress of the consolidation efforts.

At the October 6, 2009 study session questions were raised about how to approach selection of a representative when board and commission membership may expire, yet a member is interested in this effort. Several suggestions were provided

1. Only select members whose terms will not expire
2. Select an alternate to carry on should selected representative not be able to continue
3. Allow the selected representative to serve even if his/her term expires

There was also comment about City Council participation in the advisory committee. No questions were posed at the study session on how this might be structured. Options include:

1. No Council representation on the advisory committee
2. Select one or two council members to participate
 - a. Make selection at the October 20, 2009 meeting
 - b. Defer selection of Councilmember until January

Community Outreach

To fully engage the community, staff proposes workshops with the larger community, including residents, businesses, and other agencies. Initially, the outreach efforts will be coordinated with two workshops that have already been

scheduled for input on the Land Use and Transportation Element and Climate Action Plan. Additional workshops to gain public comments will be held once the committee has developed a draft recommendation. These workshops will be held at different locations in the city to encourage maximum participation. Staff will also actively outreach to interested organizations to gain further input. Progress information will be available on-line and the options for feedback to staff and the committee will be provided. In addition, periodic updates would be provided to Boards, Commissions and the City Council.

Affect on Study Issue Process

Councilmembers expressed concerns that the consolidation and maintenance of a general plan could affect the Study Issue Process. The concerns are that this effort is outside the study issue process and that staff time for this effort would take away from time that would otherwise be spent on study issues.

Staff time for Initial Consolidation

Councilmembers raised a concern that this request is coming mid-cycle of the study issue process and may set a poor precedent. Staff believes that the timing for making this decision is important so that the effort can be coordinated with the Land Use and Transportation Element update. Time that staff may have devoted to other general plan updates this coming year would be devoted to the consolidation. Council has already decided that General Plan updates would be initiated by the City Manager, outside of the study issue process.

Staff time and costs to update General Plan

Another concern is that while working on the 10-year update to a comprehensive general plan there would be less staff time available for study issues. Overall, staff anticipates that more study issues will be possible with a single-document general plan. For example, as currently structured staff members from the Planning division are continually assisting in the preparation and processing of general plan documents; this detracts from time available for working on other study issues (i.e. about 100 hours per general plan document—an average of 150 hours per year the last few years). For the lead departments an average of 500 hours (sometimes as consultant hours) is needed to update an element or sub-element. While during the actual time of the general plan update, there may be less time available to work on study issues, the overall affect is more time for policy studies. The costs to reproduce the general plan will also be reduced.

General Plan Amendments (between comprehensive updates)

At the joint study session there was also a question about the ability to amend the General Plan between updates. Just as the City currently accepts applications to amend the land use map, or initiates policy studies that could result in amendment of the General Plan, the new format would still enable

various levels of amendments to be considered. The benefit of a consolidated General Plan is that incremental or periodic plan amendments affecting related policies in multiple elements can be done more efficiently to maximize internal consistency. The housing element law requires updates every eight years; the new format would need to consider how best to accommodate this more major revision.

FISCAL IMPACT

Staff time for the consolidation of the general plan would be covered by existing operating budgets. Future updates to the general plan would also be covered by operating budgets, with technical assistance paid for out of special projects. The same level of technical assistance may be needed, but there are potential savings if they are managed under a single contract. The city currently budgets about \$10,000 per year for copying drafts and printing final general plan documents. Over ten years \$100,000 is required; this amount would be substantially less with a single-document format for the general plan. There would also be a savings with a single document comprehensive general plan, on environmental review, documentation and filing fees.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's Web site.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Authorize the consolidation of the General Plan into a single document with assistance from an advisory committee consisting of representatives from Boards/Commissions and City Council (two Planning Commissioners, one Board/Commission member for other 8 boards/commissions and two City Councilmembers).
 - a. Boards/Commissions will nominate and select from their current members in November/December, based on members' interest and availability over the next 18 months. Allow member to continue to serve on the General Plan Consolidation Advisory Committee even if their term expires. Each Board and Commission should also select an Alternate;
 - b. City Council will select their representatives in January 2010 after the seating of new Councilmembers and selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor.
2. Authorize the consolidation of the General Plan into a single document with assistance from an advisory committee with

modifications to the representations or selection criteria described in Alternative 1.

3. Do not authorize the consolidation of the General Plan into a single document.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Alternative 1.

Reviewed by:

Hanson Hom, Director, Community Development
Prepared by: Trudi Ryan, Planning Officer

Approved by:

Gary M. Luebbers
City Manager

Attachments

- A. Summary of Joint City Council and Planning Commission Study Session, October 6, 2009
- B. Examples Single-document General Plans

CITY OF SUNNYVALE
Joint City Council and Planning Commission Study Session
Summary
Consolidated General Plan
October 6, 2009

The City Council met in joint study session with the Planning Commission at City Hall in the West Conference Room, Sunnyvale, California on October 6, 2009, with Vice Mayor Moylan presiding.

City Councilmembers Present:

Mayor Anthony Spitaleri
Vice Mayor Christopher Moylan
Councilmember John Howe
Councilmember Ron Swegles
Councilmember Melinda Hamilton
Councilmember David Whittum
Councilmember Dean Chu

City Councilmembers Absent:

None

Planning Commissioners Present:

Nick Travis, Vice Chair
Chuck Hungerford
Larry Klein
Brandon Sulser

Planning Commissioners Absent:

Bo Chang, Chair
Dianne McKenna
Harriet Rowe

City Staff Present:

City Manager Gary Luebbers
City Attorney David Kahn
Assistant City Manager Robert Walker
Director of Community Development Hanson Hom
Director of Finance Mary Bradley
Director of Public Works Marvin Rose
Planning Officer Trudi Ryan
Assistant to the City Manager Coryn Campbell

Visitors/Guests Present:

Approximately nine members of the public

Call to Order: 5:30 p.m.

Study Session Summary:

Community Development Director Hanson Hom made a presentation on a new approach to the General Plan, consolidating it into one document. City Councilmembers and Planning Commissioners commented or asked questions. Topics included:

- How specific topics might fit into the new format
- Importance of timely updates and public input
- What happens to policy not in the General Plan
- Relationship to Community Vision, Climate Action Plan and Land Use and Transportation Element
- Level of effort and schedule to update
- How it will be made more user-friendly
- Affects on the Study Issues
- Affects on staff and other resources
- Relationship to other cities' general plans
- City Council participation
- Assurance that policy is clear and well documented and no loss of direction
- How reader will be able to move between related items
- Potential loss of community engagement in long term planning
- Terms of board/commission members and membership on advisory committee
- Participation of full boards/commissions and the general public
- Organization, indexing and web accessibility
- Historical overview and context
- Ability to amend the General Plan between update cycles

Adjournment: 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Trudi Ryan, Planning Officer

Examples of Comprehensive General Plans

1. City of San Leandro (2002)
<http://www.ci.san-leandro.ca.us/CDGenPlan.asp>
2. City of Rancho Cordova (2006)
<http://www.cityofranhocordova.org/Index.aspx?page=104#a1>
3. City of Riverside (2007)
<http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/2008-0909/>
4. City of Lincoln (2008)
<http://www.ci.lincoln.ca.us/generalplans/>
5. City of Sacramento (2009)
<http://www.sacgp.org/>