



Agenda Item

DATE: MAY 7, 2015

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: JOAN MALLOY, ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE DRAFT GENERAL PLAN BACKGROUND REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY; AND THE ASSETS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES SUMMARY REPORT

Over the last several months, City staff and the consultant team have been working on the preparation of the draft General Plan Background Report and the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report that will inform future phases of the General Plan update process. The following provides an overview of these documents and the role they will play in future phases of the General Plan update.

BACKGROUND

Background Report

Every city and county in California must have a General Plan, which is the local government's long-term blueprint or "constitution" for future development. The General Plan represents the community's view of its future as it relates to a variety of quality of life issues and expresses the community's development goals. The General Plan contains the information and policies upon which the City Council and Planning Commission base their decisions and implementation programs that carry out the policies. Union City last updated its General Plan in 2002.

The General Plan is presented as a collection of "topical elements," of which seven are mandatory. The seven State-mandated elements are: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. State law also allows cities to add additional elements. In addition to the mandatory elements, Union City included in its 2002 General Plan an Economic Development Element; Youth, Family, and Seniors Health Element; and Community Design Element.

The General Plan is a long-range planning document. Typically, a General Plan is designed to address the issues facing the city for the next 15 to 25 years. Union City last updated its General Plan in 2002 with a planning horizon of 2020. In June 2014 Union City initiated a two-year process to update the City's 2002 General Plan. The General Plan Update will look ahead to 2040.

As a first step in updating the General Plan, the City prepared a draft Background Report to capture a "snapshot" of current (2014) conditions and trends. The Background Report provides a detailed description of a wide range of topics about the city, such as demographics, economic conditions and projections, land use, community health, public facilities, environmental resources, and hazards. Attached to the staff report is an Executive Summary of the draft Background Report, which summarizes the key findings from each chapter (Attachment 1).

The policy direction contained in the General Plan is based, in part, on data and information collected as part of the plan's preparation. This information and data is contained in the Background Report. The Background Report is one part of the General Plan and provides decision-makers context for making policy decisions. The second part of the General Plan is the Policy Document, which includes goals, policies and implementation programs. Together the Background Report and Policy Document form the General Plan.

The Background Report is purposely policy neutral. Policy direction is provided in the Policy Document. The Background Report also serves as the environmental setting section for the Environmental Impact Report prepared for the General Plan.

The Consultant team and City staff are in the process of finalizing the draft Background Report for public review. It is anticipated that the document will be available by mid-May. At that time, an email will be sent to the Planning Commission with an on-line link to the document. Due to the large size of the Background Report (several hundred pages), hard copies will only be provided upon request.

The Background Report will remain in draft form until adoption of the General Plan, which is anticipated to occur in June 2016. City staff will be accepting public comment on the document until that time. In addition, the draft Background Report will be updated in the next few months to include a new chapter that contains background information for the five focus areas that will be evaluated during the land use alternatives phase of the project.

Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report

Attached to this staff report is the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report (Attachment 2), which is designed to focus community attention on key issues and opportunities that have major policy implications as Union City considers how to grow and change over the next 25 years. The report summarizes and builds on the input received from the community workshop, online townhall forum, General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), Planning Commission, City Council, as well as City staff. A comprehensive summary of this feedback can be accessed on the General Plan update website (<http://www.uc2040.com/meetings/>). Information and data from the draft Background Report also informed the contents of this report. The purpose of the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report is to stimulate discussion and inform future efforts including preparation of the Focus Area Land Use Alternatives Report and General Plan Policy Document.

This report does not draw conclusions or suggest the manner in which the City should proceed in the development of General Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs. Rather, it provides a summary to facilitate further discussions on important topics facing the City. The report serves as a foundational tool in the General Plan update process and supports the preparation of the General Plan, but it will not be adopted by the City Council with the Background Report and Policy Document.

The Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Report focuses primarily on major citywide issues and opportunities, whereas the General Plan Policy Document will touch on all of the issues and opportunities that have been brought up during this process.

DISCUSSION

The draft General Plan Background Report and the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report will inform future phases of the General Plan update process.

The primary focus of the meeting is to familiarize the Planning Commission with the information contained in the draft Executive Summary Background Report and the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report and to solicit feedback on topics that the Commission feels are important and may have been inadvertently left out or not adequately addressed.

The GPAC will be reviewing the attached documents at their meeting on Wednesday, May 6, 2015. Staff will provide the Planning Commission a summary of the feedback received at the GPAC meeting.

RECOMMEDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission review the attached draft Background Report Executive Summary and the Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report and provide any feedback as detailed in the discussion portion of the staff report.

Prepared by:
Carmela Campbell,
Planning Manager

Attachment 1: Background Report Executive Summary
Attachment 2: Assets, Issues, and Opportunities Summary Report