



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman
Council Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 253-5851

Staff Report

File #: 16-1018, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-2.

CC - (1) Presentation and Discussion of General Plan Update: Process and Product Possibilities; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.

Meeting Date: July 10, 2017

Contact Person/Dept: Ashley Hefner/CDD

Phone Number: (310) 253-5744

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☐ **Action Item:** ☐ **Attachments:** ☒

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:**

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (07/05/17)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (06/19/17)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) receive a presentation and discuss the various options for production and adoption of a General Plan Update; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND

The General Plan is the City's long-range planning framework that is used to guide land use policy, development and mobility decision making. The purpose of the presentation is to examine the various General Plan components, the analytic and public engagement methods used to prepare it, and the final General Plan Update documentation.

The presentation consists of three parts: 1. Introduction, 2. Process, and 3. Products.

1. The Introduction section describes why an update is necessary and explores how the City can plan more creatively and comprehensively so that the plan is a useful long-range policy and decision making guide.

2. The Process section discusses the steps in "planning to plan," based upon a preliminary

schedule, and reviews the range of possibilities for the consultant selection and public engagement.

3. The Products section identifies the various ways the plan is documented technically, analytically, graphically and legally.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

State law requires a comprehensive, long term general plan be adopted for the physical development of the city. The City's existing General Plan includes the seven state-mandated elements: 1) Land Use, 2) Circulation, 3) Housing, 4) Conservation, 5) Open Space, 6) Noise, and 7) Safety (Seismic Safety and Public Safety are currently two separate elements) - as well as an optional Recreation Element. Culver City's General Plan has never been comprehensively updated, and individual element approval dates range from the 1968 Recreation Element to the 2014 Housing Element.

General plans should be updated regularly to incorporate new laws, regulations, and practices, and to address best available technical information and changing community needs. The State mandates that Housing Elements be updated not less than every five years and encourages entire general plans be comprehensively reviewed at least once every five years. Keeping a general plan updated and consistent with the community's goals is vital. As the California Supreme Court points out, the general plan is the "*constitution for future development*." General plan policies are the foundation of land use decisions in the City.

As a long-term roadmap for navigating change in Culver City, the General Plan provides an opportunity to guide the City toward a more sustainable future; the process and its outcome can also create significant value for the community. For example, the Plan might include a governance section with policies geared towards achieving less siloed and more integrated City operations. Such a framework could increase effectiveness of staff work efforts and efficiency of development project review, and better coordinate public space projects to maximize benefits.

Process

The City Council authorized the establishment of the Community Development Department Advance Planning Division in the 2016-17 General Fund Budget in order to prepare the General Plan Update. Staffing and office space modifications to make room for staff were completed in early 2017. Since then, Advance Planning staff has been:

- Conducting initial research and documenting existing General Plan Elements and other pertinent adopted governing documents - including both the City's and those of other agencies - that require conformance;
- Benchmarking best practices for advance planning and community engagement strategies (Attachment 1 includes a matrix of case studies);
- Meeting with City departments to gain institutional knowledge and establish ongoing

interdepartmental coordination in producing the update;

- Beginning analysis of existing policies, including identifying inconsistencies, obsolete or superseded information, and policy gaps due to new issues or regulation;
- Gathering existing conditions data; and
- Identifying methods to document goals.

Consultant selection will be one of the first steps in the process. An engaging and thoughtfully designed selection process will help the City identify the best qualified consultant team. The City Council may want to consider issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), identifying a targeted set of initial respondents for further review, before proceeding with a Request for Proposals (RFP). Evaluation of respondents can then proceed with the usual in-person interviews, but might also include a practical component, such as a case study problem, a public workshop, or a short design study.

Public engagement will be a critical component to the success of this process. The possibilities for engagement activities range from formal to informal, structured to open-ended, and traditional to novel. Public hearings and workshops are just the beginning; and the City Council may want to consider other outreach possibilities including:

- Community-led (story mapping)
- High profile panels or roundtables
- Stakeholder interviews (city interviews, community interviews)
- Designing in place (walking tours, virtual reality)
- Online engagement (interactive website, social media strategy)
- Art based (film events, public art installations)

Identifying and effectively engaging with a diverse representation of community stakeholders is key to clarifying community values and attaining meaningful data. Successful understanding of the community's values will build consensus around the General Plan vision; inform the General Plan goals, policies, and actions; foster community ownership of the General Plan, and inspire long-term community engagement. Community stakeholders include:

- Business Improvement Districts
- Chamber of Commerce
- Community groups and nonprofits
- Developers
- Employers and workers
- Institutions
- Renters and homeowners
- Schools
- Regional agencies and partners

Also representing the community are elected officials, those members of the City Council, committees, commissions, and boards. The update will be guided by the City Council's Strategic Plan, reflecting on goals already identified including:

- Increasing civic engagement
- Enhancing restoration and utilization of Ballona Creek
- Improving transportation circulation and reducing congestion
- Promoting workforce diversity and development
- Identifying new revenue sources to maintain financial stability
- Enhancing City of Culver City's reputation as a City of Kindness

Products

The final goal is adoption of a comprehensive update to the City's General Plan. The updated General Plan will include the seven State-mandated elements, and may include additional topics such as urban design, sustainability, healthy communities/quality of life, economic development, recreation, and/or water quality. The State encourages additional topics be included to reflect the unique needs and opportunities of each community. City Council will consider which optional elements to include based on community input throughout the public engagement process.

There are many ways to structure a General Plan. They have traditionally been organized by element, but recent State guidance also encourages cities to consider the benefits of thematic structures: *"The General Plan is the perfect space for innovation, reflecting the unique character of each community. Cities and counties may create new models of organizing their general plans, based on the needs and priorities identified during public engagement"* (California State Draft General Plan Guidelines).

Culver City's existing General Plan is organized by element, whereas, for example, the City of Fullerton's is organized thematically by: built environment, economy, community, and natural environment. Regardless of which structure is determined to be preferable the General Plan Update should be clear, legible, and usable; action oriented; and structured to reflect the community engagement process.

Historically, there is a tendency for a city's General Plan to sit on the shelf. Culver City has the opportunity to prepare a plan that is used every day by the City in the planning process. To that end, the plan format should be flexible and adaptable to changing community needs, new technologies, and new ways of doing business in the City.

The City Council has discretion to develop a plan that is design forward and visually compelling, making it relevant to the people who live and do business in the City. However, it is also important to make sure the plan content is accessible to those whose access or use of technology is limited, and so content could also be produced in hardcopy, PDF, web-based digital, book, magazine, or other formats.

The General Plan is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and adoption of an Environmental Impact Report will be required for CEQA compliance. In order to support the analysis conducted in the report, several possible technical studies may be required, including mobility, parking, economic, sustainability, health, air quality, greenhouse gases, and noise. These studies may also inform policies in the General Plan. In summary, the final products will include the technical studies, the Environmental Impact Report, and the General Plan document.

Next Steps

Staff will conduct any necessary follow up to address the City Council's concerns or interests and return with additional information as required, as well as a draft project schedule which will be used to further inform the drafting of the RFQ/RFP.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

There is no fiscal impact associated with receiving this presentation.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2017-07-10_ATT_Case Study Benchmark Matrix

MOTION

That the City Council:

1. Receive and discuss a presentation regarding various options for production and adoption of a General Plan Update; and
2. Direct the City Manager as deemed appropriate.