REQUEST FOR Planning Commission Action



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING DATE:

NOVEMBER 9, 2020

TITLE:

PUBLIC HEARING – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT NO. 2020-03 AND GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2020-06 FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE TO THE SANTA ANA GENERAL PLAN

Prepared by Vince Fregoso, AICP

Executive Director

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APPROVED ☐ As Recommended			
☐ As Amended			
☐ Set Public Hearing For			
DENIED			
☐ Applicant's Request☐ Staff Recommendation			
CONTINUED TO			

Planning Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Recommend that the City Council:

- Adopt a resolution certifying Final Environmental Impact Report No. 2020-03 (SCH No. 2020029087), including adoption of environmental findings of fact pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and adoption of a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program;
- 2. Adopt a resolution approving General Plan Amendment No. 2020-06.

DISCUSSION

At the direction of the Mayor and City Council in late 2015, the Planning Division began efforts to complete a comprehensive update to the City's General Plan. The General Plan is a state mandated document that includes goals, policies, implementation measures and maps that will guide Santa Ana's physical growth for the next 25 years. The State of California requires every city to prepare and adopt "a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the city, and any land outside its boundaries which is in the planning agency's judgement bears relation to its planning." The role of the General Plan is often referred to as the "Constitution of the City" as it serves as the guiding document by which all land use related decisions must be derived.

The City's current General Plan (with the exception of the Housing Element) was last comprehensively adopted in 1982 and is now 38 years old. The General Plan establishes a community vision and strategies to guide growth, change and community preservation within the City, providing goals and policies to enhance, preserve and protect the unique qualities that the Santa Ana community values. The General Plan is the single-most important tool used to guide communities achieve their vision. As the General Plan is a policy document, it differs from the Zoning Code in that the Zoning Code will identify specific development standards (setbacks, parking, open space etc.) for each parcel in the City. Upon adoption of the General Plan, staff will begin the process to complete a

comprehensive update to the Zoning Code to ensure consistency between the General Plan and Zoning Code.

A General Plan:

- · Sets the course for decision making
- · Helps balance the interest of residents, business owners and property owners
- Informs and educates the community
- Serves as an effective governance tool for City staff
- Provides guidance for economic decisions
- Ensures the protection of the natural environment
- Identifies implementation actions that should be undertaken to achieve the goals and policies identified in the General Plan

The comprehensive update to the General Plan document, known as "Golden City Beyond – A Shared Vision for Santa Ana," is comprised of two separate documents:

- The General Plan (comprised of three Sections and 12 Elements)
- Environmental Impact Report

Community Outreach

General Plan Advisory Group

Following direction from the City Council in 2015 to comprehensively update the General Plan, in late 2015, a 17-member General Plan Advisory Group (GPAG) was established to provide guidance to City staff and the consultant team early in the process. The GPAG was critical in developing goals and policies that would serve as the foundation of the General Plan elements. The GPAG was also tasked with functions such as formulating a community vision, identifying area-wide and community-wide land use planning issues, and prioritizing economic development activities. The GPAG was comprised of representatives from various commissions, residents, business owners, interest groups, youth and property owners to represent the community's interests. Over the past few years, the GPAC has held several meetings, providing direction to staff on key matters that are now embodied in the updated General Plan.

Development of Core Values

A variety of community issues and considerations were identified through the different community outreach activities. With this community input, and with the input of the GPAG, a Draft General Plan Policy Framework was created in December 2018. Included within the Framework was a set of Community "Core Values" that were created to reflect the voice of the collective Santa Ana community and to express its environmental justice principals. These Core Values: Health, Equity, Sustainability, Culture and Education, serve as the backbone of the goals, policies and implementation items found throughout the General Plan Elements. Public Outreach

Since starting the General Plan update process in late 2015, the City has sought to meaningfully engage all residents of the community, looking for best practices and community partnerships to reach all residents, especially those that have not traditionally engaged in the public decision making process. The General Plan Outreach Program included a series of over 60 Community Workshops starting in 2015, informational "pop-ups" at community events, presentations to focus groups, and the convening of a General Plan Advisory Group. Moreover, translation services were offered during the meetings, and videos of workshops were archived and made available for those unable to attend.

The City's General Plan is a community-wide vision document that is intended to address and respond to community needs. As such, the comprehensive update to the General Plan required staff to advertise and educate community members about the process to as wide an audience as possible. Over the past five years starting in December 2015, an extensive public outreach campaign to engage the public was conducted to supplement the feedback, input and direction of the GPAG. Public outreach efforts include:

- Over 60 community meetings and workshops
- Individual community workshops within each of the five Focus Areas with over 300 residents, business leaders, and community stakeholders participating in the workshops.
- Distribution of an online community survey with over 650 respondents to collect input on the content of the General Plan
- Approximately 44,000 direct mailers sent to property owners and tenants
- A dedicated webpage (santa-ana.org/general-plan) with continuous updates on the General Plan update process and related documents as well as information about Environmental Justice. Also includes an online web learning tool with a narrated presentation to help educate and increase awareness on Environmental Justice issues.
- Presentations at neighborhood Communication Linkages (CommLink) meetings
- Meetings with Environmental Justice groups (Madison Park Neighborhood Association, Logan Neighborhood Association, Artesia-Pilar Neighborhood Association) on August 31st, October 14th and October 19th
- Attendance at approximately 100 Cares events (daily neighborhood functions and evening City Park events) from late-August through the end of October within Environmental Justice communities to discuss the General plan update with residents
- Development of a video series on the General Plan update
- Planning Commission study sessions on August 24th and September 14th
- City Council study sessions on July 7th and October 20th
- One-on-one meetings with the Planning Commission and City Council

The City continued to participate in outreach meetings and discussions with the community on key issues such as proposed land use changes, open space, and addressing EJ issues facing the community. Councilmembers, the City Manager, the Executive Director of Planning and Building, and City staff have met and will continue to meet with individual neighborhood leaders of disadvantage communities in the Logan and Madison Park neighborhoods as well as walking through the neighborhoods with residents and neighborhood leaders.

PROPOSED 2020-2045 GENERAL PLAN - SANTA ANA: GOLDEN CITY BEYOND

Community Vision Statement

Through a robust dialogue with the community, including residents, business and property owners, and other interested citizens, the City adopted the first long-term Vision Statement. This Vision Statement is not only the foundation for the updated General Plan, but also for all long-term decision making in the City. The Vision Statement memorializes the community's aspirations and describes the "Santa Ana – Golden City Beyond" as embracing the following principles:

- Protect and enhance our cultural and community assets
- Create a land use pattern that promotes healthy and active lifestyles
- Ensure equitable outcomes and land use distributions
- · Create a sustainable and livable city
- Promote lifelong education and prosperity

Format and Content of the General Plan

The proposed General Plan is a comprehensive update and reorganization of the current General Plan Document, with the exception of Housing Element, which is on an eight-year cycle and is scheduled to be updated independently of this effort in 2021 to comply with State law. The State mandated elements (Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety and Housing) are organized into three Sections:

Services and Infrastructure (Section I)

- o Community Element
- o Mobility Element
- o Economic Prosperity Element
- o Public Services Element

• Natural Environment (Section II)

- o Conservation Element
- o Open Space Element
- Noise Element
- Safety Element

Built Environment (Section III)

- Land Use Element
- o Historic Preservation Element
- o Housing Element (to be updated in 2021)
- Urban Design Element

A recent State law, SB1000, requires local jurisdictions with disadvantaged communities within the City that are updating their General Plan to identify objectives and policies to reduce unique health risks in disadvantaged communities. Further, SB1000 requires cities to identify policies to promote civil engagement in the decision making process and prioritize improvements and programs that address the needs of disadvantaged communities. The law provides two options for accomplishing

the goals of SB1000: Adopt a separate Environmental Justice Element, or integrate the objectives of SB1000 into the various elements of the General Plan. Because the environmental justice topic touches all aspects and all elements of the General Plan, it was determined early in the process to incorporate environmental justice components as policies woven into the fabric of the various Elements, elevating their importance and prominence in each Element.

As shown in the list on the previous page, the City also elected to prepare additional optional elements (Community, Economic Prosperity, Public Services, Historic Preservation and Urban Design) to address special and unique community priorities. Outlined below is an overview of the 11 Elements that are being updated:

Community Element

The Community Element is a new element of the Santa Ana General Plan. The element reinforces the city's values of recreation, culture, education, health and wellness, and cultivates opportunities for improved quality of life for all residents. The goals and policies of this element can be realized through partnerships with local agencies and organizations on facilities, activities and events throughout Santa Ana

This Element functions in tandem with other elements of the General Plan, such as Open Space, which contains policies related to parks and recreation facilities. Dozens of plans and programs implemented by the City and other agencies and organizations overlap with the goals and policies of this Element, such as the Community Arts and Culture Master Plan, which establishes goals and strategies on topics such as cultural equity, infrastructure for the arts, communitywide access, youth programming, and place making.

There are 3 goals, 27 policies and 16 implementation items associated with this element. This element is not mandated by State law and is an optional element.

Mobility Element

The Mobility Element, known as the Circulation Element in the current General Plan, is the City's blueprint for moving people, goods, and resources throughout the community. Moving beyond mere functionality, the City seeks to improve the quality of life in Santa Ana by providing more complete streets, offering ways to be more active, and conserving natural resources. In planning the City's transportation system for the 21st Century, the City is also making the community safer, more affordable, and more livable.

Santa Ana envisions a balanced multimodal transportation system that supports community values. These values include a vibrant local economy, healthy neighborhoods, health and wellness, and an attractive environment. Context sensitive design solutions strengthen the livability, vitality and safety of our neighborhoods, districts, and corridors.

There are 5 goals, 46 policies and 45 implementation items associated with this Element. This Element is one of the State mandated elements.

Economic Prosperity Element

The Economic Prosperity Element, identified as the Economic Development in the existing General Plan, will ensure Santa Ana's local economy. The Element defines Santa Ana's role in the broader regional economy, expands, maintains, and enhances job opportunities, attracts and retains a balance of business types, provides sufficient revenue for public services, and contributes to the overall quality of life experienced by the City's residents.

The goals and policies of this Element will inform and guide decisions across local government. The City intends that its allocation of resources, the operation of its agencies, and the application of its regulatory authority will grow and diversify the local economy. The city further intends that local economic growth and diversification will reduce poverty, increase overall prosperity, improve health and wellness outcomes, expand housing opportunities, and increase quality of life choices available to City residents.

There are 4 goals, 39 policies and 31 implementation items associated with this Element. This Element is not a State mandated element.

Public Services Element

The Public Services Element, identified as the Public Facilities Element in the current General Plan, provides Santa Ana's diverse population with quality services and infrastructure, including accessible public facilities and enhanced public safety. Anticipated growth will require the City to fulfill community needs and to ensure proper management of those needs. It is important that public facilities and services are equitably distributed and maintained at sustainable levels throughout the community. A wide range of City entities and external agencies work closely together to provide the full spectrum of services and facilities.

There are 3 goals, 38 policies and 40 implementation items associated with this element. This Element is an optional General Plan Element.

Conservation Element

The protection and management of Santa Ana's air, water, and energy resources are essential for a healthy, sustainable and equitable path forward. Additionally, the preservation of the remaining stretches of undisturbed plant and wildlife environment, such as in Santiago Park, is important to residents.

The Conservation Element identifies the community's natural resources and illustrates the benefits for retention, enhancement, and development of these resources towards improving quality of life and the environment as a whole. This Element will guide the City in its efforts to prioritize sustainability and enhance the environment for current and future generations.

The Core Values reinforce the City's commitment to enable all persons to enjoy equal access to healthy environments, healthy food, parks and recreational facilities, and civic engagement opportunities. However, the City recognizes that throughout Santa Ana's communities, some bear a disproportionate burden of pollution and associated health risks. As a result, this element also embraces the concept of environmental justice, which seeks to correct inequity by reducing

pollution and increasing public investment in the communities most affected, while also ensuring their input is considered in decisions that affect them.

There are 4 goals, 38 policies and 39 implementation items associated with this element. This Element is a State mandated Element

Open Space Element

Open space is a limited and valuable resource, providing multiple benefits to those living and working in Santa Ana. Open space provides a place of relaxation and reprieve from the urban environment. Open space also offers places to gather, celebrate, learn or exercise, whether alone, with friends or family, or with other members of the community. Open space is so important that its presence or absence can profoundly shape physical, social, mental and economic health, and overall well-being of the community.

The purpose of the Open Space Element is to identify and preserve open space areas that provide value to the community and enrich the quality of life. Such lands or waters provide value in the form of recreation, health, biodiversity, wildlife conservation and aesthetics. Additionally, open spaces are used for climate change, mitigation and adaption, flood risk reduction, managed natural resources production, agricultural production, and protection from hazardous conditions. The Open Space Element will guide the City in its efforts to plan for open space lands in what is largely a built-out, urban environment. Through this element, opportunities for capturing additional open space in the City will be discussed.

There are 3 goals, 25 policies and 22 implementation items associated with this Element. This Element is a State mandated element.

Noise Element

The purpose of the Noise Element is to appraise noise levels in the community, prepare noise contours to guide land use decisions, and establish measures that address current and future noise impacts. This Element works to ensure that the City limits the exposure of the community to excessive noise levels in noise-sensitive areas and at noise-sensitive times of day. This Element works in tandem with other Elements of the General Plan, such as the Mobility Element, which contains policies related to the mitigation of transportation related noise.

There are 3 goals, 10 policies and 20 implementation items associated with this Element. This Element is one of the State mandated elements.

Safety Element

The Safety Element combines the Public Safety and Seismic Safety elements of the existing General Plan into one document. Public health and safety and protection from the risks of natural and human-induced disasters, emergencies, and hazards are vital in establishing a safe and healthy environment for Santa Ana's residents, workers, and visitors. The purpose of the Safety Element is to eliminate and minimize risks associated with natural and human-generated hazards such as floods, earthquakes, and hazardous materials. By assessing and preparing for levels of risk, the City can endure the range of safety hazards and adapt to changes over time.

This Element works in tandem with other elements of the General Plan, such as the Public Services Element, which contains goals and policies related to police, fire, and health services, as well as emergency planning and resiliency.

There are 4 goals, 25 policies and 26 implementation items associated with this Element. This is a State mandated element.

Historic Preservation Element

The Historic Preservation Element is a new element of the Santa Ana General Plan. Santa Ana was incorporated as a City in 1886 and designated the County seat in 1889. Historic preservation of the City's cultural and architectural heritage is an essential part of the City's economic vitality and identity. Residents take pride in the architectural heritage of the City, including its historical buildings and unique neighborhood character. Sites such as the Old Orange County Courthouse, Pacific Substation, Yost Theatre, and the Spurgeon Building reflect the City's rich cultural history and architectural diversity.

The purpose of the Historic Preservation Element is to provide guidance in developing and implementing activities that ensure that identification, designation and protection of architectural, historical, cultural and archaeological resources are part of the City's planning, development and permitting processes. Through historic preservation policies and programs, Santa Ana's heritage and diversity will continue to be a source of community pride.

There are 3 goals, 21 policies and 28 implementation items associated with this Element. This is an optional element of a General Plan.

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element provides a long-range guide for the physical development of the City, reflecting the community's vision for a high quality of life. This Element guides the distribution, location, and size of new development, ensuring that residential neighborhoods are protected, and future growth is sustainable and minimizes potential conflicts. Through its focus on the pattern of land use, this element is also a tool to promote public health, reduce infrastructure costs, enhance local economies, and address long-term environmental issues such as air quality, climate change and water resources.

The development, use and distribution of land are critical to achieving the City's vision and adhering to the Core Values. As stewards of the land, the City must plan for uses and development that creates a sustainable, healthy and livable City, ensures equitable outcomes and land use distributions, protects and enhances cultural and community assets, and provides opportunities for growth and prosperity. As in other cities, land is a finite and valuable resource. Its use dictates the City's economic and fiscal future.

The Land Use Element preserves existing neighborhoods by directing new growth to major corridors and avoids land use changes in lower density neighborhoods. The five growth areas are identified as Focus Areas. These include South Main Street, Grand /Seventeenth Street, West Santa Ana Boulevard (adjacent to the OC Streetcar line), 55 Freeway/Dyer Road, and South Bristol Street. The proposed Land Use Element will connect existing planning areas in the City (Transit Zoning Code, Harbor Boulevard Mixed-Use Corridor, Metro East Mixed Use Overlay Zone,

etc.,) with the five proposed Focus Areas. Within these Focus Areas, the City anticipates the most potential for development.

There are 4 goals, 42 policies and 41 implementation items associated with this element. This is one of the State mandated elements.

Urban Design Element

Urban design is the process of shaping the physical character and organization of the City and defining the relationship between people and their environment. It respects the history of a place, considers existing organizational patterns and the form and character of existing buildings, supports healthy outdoor spaces, and is mindful of the natural environment. These considerations unite to define a distinct visual quality and sense of place that reflects community values.

The Urban Design Element establishes the long-range vision for the physical development, visual qualities, and sensory experience of the City. This Element, in coordination with other elements of the General Plan, orchestrates a safe, functional and aesthetically pleasing urban environment. Specifically, the Urban Design Element addresses the public realm, building form, and establishes programs and measures to improve the physical setting in which community life takes place while curtailing obsolete, dysfunctional, and chaotic development.

There are 7 goals, 48 policies and 27 implementation items associated with this Element. This is an optional element of the General Plan.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The comprehensive update to the General Plan required extensive environmental review. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and after completion of the Initial Study for the project, it was determined that CEQA required the preparation and certification of a program environmental impact report (PEIR) for this project. The purpose of a PEIR is to identify and disclose the significant effects on the environment of a project, to identify alternatives to the project, and to indicate the way those significant effects can be mitigated or avoided. To determine what potential effects would be caused by the project, the Draft PEIR analyzes issues related to: Aesthetics; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Energy; Geology and Soils; Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Hazard and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use and Planning; Mineral Resources; Noise; Population and Housing; Public Services; Recreation; Transportation; Tribal Cultural Resources; and Utilities and Service Systems. The draft PEIR also studies alternatives to the General Plan update. The draft PEIR analyzes direct and indirect impacts resulting from construction and operation of the proposed project.

On February 26, 2020, a Notice of Preparation was distributed for comment regarding the scope and content of the Draft PEIR. A public scoping meeting was held on March 5, 2020 with 16 persons in attendance and 18 written comment letters received at the conclusion of the 30-day public comment period. The comments were reviewed and addressed as required by CEQA. The comments are included as part of the Final EIR.

Three project alternatives were also analyzed within the document. These included a no project alternative, where the existing General Plan document would remain in effect (Alternative 1); a

reduced intensity alternative with two focus areas (55 Freeway/Dyer Road and South Bristol Street) would be reduced to approximately 50 percent of the maximum densities allowed by their respective land use designation (Alternative 2); and build out of the site to be consistent with the Southern California's Association of Regional Government's (SCAG) RTP/SCS projections, which could result in an approximate 75 percent reduction in both the number of allowable units and commercial/industrial square footage (Alternative 3).

The Draft PEIR determined that the proposed comprehensive update would require mitigation related to air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and tribal cultural resources. On August 3, 2020, the Draft EIR was circulated for review and comment to public, City Council, Planning Commission, local, regional and state agencies, and interested parties for a 45-day public comment review period that originally ended on September 16, 2020. However, due to community request for additional time to review the document, the comment period was extended by an additional 20 days to October 6, 2020. During the review and comment period, staff held a public hearing to receive comments on the PEIR and held a work-study session with the Planning Commission on August 24, 2020, with an additional work-study session held on September 10, 2020.

The City has evaluated the comments received from persons and agencies on the Draft PEIR and completed detailed Response to Comments, revisions to the Draft PEIR including clarifications and/or corrections to typographical errors, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP). The MMRP contains mitigation measures to address impacts to air quality, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and tribal cultural resources. The response to comments, MMRP and Final EIR were published on October 30, 2020 for public review. The Draft PEIR, responses to comments document, revisions to the Draft PEIR, and the MMRP constitute the Final PEIR for the project.

The PEIR identifies five significant and unavoidable impacts associated with this project, which pertain to Air Quality, Cultural Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Noise and Population and Housing. Air Quality impacts stem from the General Plan update being inconsistent with the South Coast Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) as buildout under the plan would exceed the population estimates assumed for the AQMP and would cumulatively contribute to the nonattainment designations of the South Coast Air Basin (SoCAB). Further, construction activities associated with buildout of the General Plan update would generate short-term emissions that exceed the AQMD's significance thresholds and cumulatively contribute to the nonattainment designations of the SoCAB. Buildout would also generate long-term emissions and expose sensitive receptors to substantial concentrations of toxic air contaminants. Finally, construction and operation emissions generated by individual development projects have the potential to exceed the AQMD's local significance thresholds. Cultural Resource impacts result from the proposed General Plan allowing development in areas that have historic resources identified by previous cultural resource surveys, with development in these areas potentially causing the disturbance of historic resources in the plan area. Greenhouse Gas Emissions would result in a decrease in GHG emissions in 2045 but may not meet the long-term GHG reduction goal under Executive Order S-03-05. Due to the potential for proximity of construction activities to sensitive uses, the number of construction projects, and the longevity of the projects, construction noise

could result in a temporary increase in noise levels above ambient conditions. Further, buildout of the General Plan update would expose residents to projects generating traffic noise. Finally, the buildout anticipated by the General Plan update would result in an increase in population and housing units that exceed the Orange County Council of Government projections by up to 38 percent, with no feasible mitigation measure to address the issue.

These impacts cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level, and even with the inclusion of feasible policies and implementation items proposed in the General Plan, adoption of a Statement of Overriding Considerations is required prior to approving the project. A Statement of Overriding Considerations is the process through which decision makers balance the economic, legal, social, and technological or other benefits of the proposed project against its unavoidable environmental impacts.

Airport Land Use Commission Review

The proposed changes to the Land Use Element to adopt the South Bristol and the 55 Freeway/Dyer Road Focus Areas required the General Plan update to be presented to the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) for a determination of consistency with their Airport Environs Land Use Plan (AELUP). On October 15th, 2020 the ALUC determined that the General Plan update conflicts with the goals and objectives of the AELUP and voted 5:0 to find the General Plan update inconsistent with their plan. As a result, on October 16th, 2020, at a special City Council meeting, the Council directed staff to file a Notice of Intent to Overrule the ALUC's determination. This action is tentatively scheduled to be heard by the City Council on December 1, 2020.

Conclusion

The proposed comprehensive update to the General Plan will guide development with the City for the next 25 years. The goals, policies and implementation items within the 11 Elements have been developed through extensive input from the community. Further, extensive outreach on the General Plan update has assisted in shaping the final vision expressed within the Elements. Based on the analysis above, it is recommended that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution certifying Final Environmental Impact Report No. 2020-03 (SCH No. 2020029087), adopt the environmental findings of fact pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program. In addition, staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council adopt a resolution approving General Plan Amendment No. 2020-06.

Vince Fregoso, AICP Planning Manager

Exhibits:

- 1. EIR Resolution, including Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)
- 2. General Plan Amendment Resolution & Exhibits
- 3. Final EIR Link
- 4. Final General Plan 2045 Santa Ana Beyond Link