



**DATE:** Tuesday March 15, 2016  
**TO:** Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)  
**FROM:** Elena Lee, Senior Planner, Planning & Community Environment Department  
**TITLE:** Land Use and Community Design Element Discussion (PART 2 of 4)

This staff report provides suggestions to guide the detailed review of policies and programs in the Land Use and Community Design Element. Following on the CAC's initial discussion of land use priorities in December 2015, this meeting is the first of two meetings devoted to a detailed discussion of policies and programs in the element. A fourth meeting to review a full preliminary draft of the Land Use and Community Design Element is also scheduled.

We encourage folks to review the materials carefully and provide written comments on the Land Use & Community Design Element to me before 10AM on the morning of the meeting if possible. Then oral comments at the meeting can focus on your top priorities and the written comments can be used to inform the work of the Land Use Subcommittee. I will be reaching out to the subcommittee to schedule one or more meetings as soon as possible.

### **What to Expect At the Meeting**

After roll call and oral communications, staff will provide a quick overview of the City Council discussion on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and the revised schedule, which is still a work in progress (Attachment A). Staff will also invite the CAC to send a delegation to the City Council meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup> regarding housing issues.

Discussion of the draft Land Use and Community Design Element will begin with a summary of key points from the initial CAC discussion of priorities for the element in December 2015. The summary will focus on points of consensus as well as areas requiring further discussion. For the purpose of discussion tonight, staff has made some initial updates to the policy framework for land use and community design based on past City Council and CAC comments. These updates are shown in track changes in Attachment B - Preliminary Draft Policy Framework for the Land Use and Community Design Element. A summary of previous Council direction is included in Attachment C. While the existing Comp Plan has been used as the base document for these



tracked changes, CAC members should remember to review the PTC recommendations for this element, as well as ideas received so far via the digital commenter (Attachment D).

Following the overview, staff will invite the Sustainability Subcommittee to summarize the key issues for Land Use and Community Design that they identified in their discussion on March 19, 2016. Each member of the full CAC will then have two minutes to share their thoughts, focusing primarily on areas where further discussion is required to reach consensus. CAC members are also invited to comment on ideas received via the Digital Commenter in Open City Hall, where community members have been sharing input for updating the policy framework of the element in response to many of the key issues identified by the CAC in December.

Finally, the Co-Chairs will lead a process to vet any identified areas of controversy, with the goal of building consensus around recommendations for staff on edits to the policy framework.

### Point of Consensus

Based on CAC comments from December, several members expressed support for:

- Promoting a mix of housing options and types as a key to a diverse community;
- Using coordinated area plans as a tool for guiding change in targeted areas; and
- Regional collaboration on big issues like housing.

Staff has made some initial edits to the policy framework to reflect this direction. Those edits are shown in track changes in Attachment B. Additionally, several CAC members expressed support for regulating basement construction practices in ways facilitate groundwater recharge and for regulations that would define a desired retail mix. Staff suggests that the former topic should be discussed together with issues related to hydrology, flooding and water quality in the Natural Environment Element later in the process. Retail mix is a topic that could be addressed in the Business and Economics Element or in Land Use and Community Design. Please let us know what you think.

### Areas Where Further Discussion is Required

The discussion of the CAC's priorities for the Land Use Element revealed a range of views on several key topics, including:

- **Need for new mixed use designations** - Some members suggested that a mixed use designation with limited office uses could be appropriate in certain areas of the city, while others preferred a mixed use designation that only retail and housing. Staff edits have indicated one possible way to proceed on this issue, but further discussion is required.



- **Height limits** - Some members did not support raising the current building limit (current 50 feet), while others expressed the view that a slightly higher building height limit might make sense in some areas of the city.
- **Commercial growth limits** - There was some strong support for a cap on office space; however, others felt that growth control should be balanced with growth enablement and still others took the view that growth limits are too short-term for a long-range plan. Staff edits have indicated one possible way to proceed on this issue and the City Council has indicated their desire to take the lead on any edits to Policy L-8.
- **Housing opportunity sites** - Views differed on whether to focus on implementing the current housing element, to shift housing sites to more transit-proximate locations, or to consider additional housing sites. This issue will be discussed by the City Council on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

Focusing the discussion on these topics in particular will help provide clear guidance for updating the element to staff and should also in meaningful discussion among CAC members.

## Staff Requests

Please review your packet materials ahead of the March 15 meeting, paying particular attention to Attachment A, which contains the current adopted policy framework for the Land Use and Community Design Element, edited to reflect CAC comments from December. As noted earlier, we would like to receive any written comments you have by 10AM on the day of the meeting so we can provide copies to the CAC.

You may also wish to refer to the Staff Report from December 15, which provides important contextual information for land use in Palo Alto (see Attachment E - December 15, 2016 CAC Staff Report).

### Attachments:

- Attachment A – Revised Schedule
- Attachment B – Preliminary Draft Policy Framework for the Land Use and Community Design Element
- Attachment C – Summary of Previous Council Direction for the Land Use and Community Design Element
- Attachment D – Digital Commenter Input
- Attachment E – December 15, 2016 CAC Staff Report
- Attachment F – Draft Action Minutes for February 16, 2016 CAC Meeting
- Attachment G – Draft Verbatim Minutes for February 16, 2016 CAC Meeting