



**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE  
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN AND  
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ELEMENT**

**Tuesday, September 20, 2016**

Rinconada Library – Embarcadero Room  
1213 Newell Road, First Floor  
Palo Alto, CA 94303  
5:30 PM to 8:30 PM

**DATE:** Tuesday, September 20, 2016  
**TO:** Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)  
**FROM:** Elena Lee, Interim Planning Manager,  
Planning & Community Environment Department  
**TITLE:** CAC – Land Use and Community Design Recommendation and Natural  
Environment Element Discussion

### **What to Expect at the Meeting**

This meeting will cover both the final scheduled CAC discussion on the Draft Land Use and Community Design Element before it is forwarded to Council, and the first CAC discussion on the Natural Environment Element. The agenda allots approximately 1.5 hours for the Land Use Element discussion and 1 hour for the Natural Environment Element. The background and outstanding issues for each Element are described separately, below.

The meeting will begin with a public comment period, followed by full CAC discussion of the Land Use Element, with the goal of collecting final comments before the Element is forwarded to Council. Following the Land Use discussion, the CAC will initiate a discussion of the organization of and key issues in the Natural Environment Element, with the goal of framing more in-depth discussion of revisions to that Element by both the Natural Environment subcommittee and the full CAC in October and November.

### **Land Use and Community Design Background**

To date, the CAC has had six meetings to discuss the Land Use and Community Design Element, the Land Use subcommittee has met seven times, and the Sustainability has met three times on this Element. At the August 16 meeting, the full CAC reviewed and discussed the Draft Land Use and Community Design Element. The full CAC discussed a range of policy issues. The August 16th packet, including the draft element, is available at this location: <http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/cac/citizens-advisory-committee/#August 16, 2016>.

Based on that discussion at the CAC, the following next steps were identified:

- The range of growth management policies and programs included in the Draft Element appears to accurately represent the range of options that should be forwarded to the Council for discussion, although some CAC members have submitted written comments addressing specific components of the growth management policies and programs.
- Five issues needed more work and were assigned to the Land Use and/or Sustainability subcommittees for further discussion:
  1. Housing affordability
  2. Urban forest
  3. Coordinated Area Plans
  4. Basements
  5. Performance Measures

The Sustainability subcommittee met on September 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss issue #5, performance measures, and the Land Use subcommittee met on September 8<sup>th</sup> to formulate recommendations for issues #1 through 4 and provide additional input on #5. Outcomes of these discussions are summarized below.

The attached Draft Land Use and Community Design Element has been revised to reflect the input from the full CAC on August 16 as well as the subcommittee input described below. In addition, minor wording changes to policies and programs have been made in response to written comments received at or before the August 16 meeting and for the 2 subcommittee meetings. Proposed wording changes that would have potentially significant policy implications are listed below under Outstanding Land Use Element Issues; these changes have not been made. Members of the CAC who want to discuss these comments can raise them at the meeting. All of these comments will be forwarded to the City Council.

At this meeting, the full CAC will reconsider the revised Draft Land Use Element and recommend that the Draft Element be forwarded to the City Council for review and feedback.

## Update from the Sustainability Subcommittee

The Sustainability Subcommittee met on September 6 (staff report [here](#)) to focus on what were previously called development performance measures and community performance measures in the August 16 draft.

At the full CAC meeting, we heard two general categories of comment on the performance measures in the current Draft Element.

1. In the Land Use Element, articulate the purpose(s) the performance measures are intended to achieve and the topics the performance measures should address. Include a program that will create the performance measures through a future, dedicated process, and remove the

specificity in the current draft in favor of a program that directs the City to create the performance measures, or

2. Add more detail and specificity to the performance measures in the current draft.

The Sustainability subcommittee reviewed policy and program wording that responded to each of these options and developed draft policy language for . This draft policy language was also reviewed by the Land Use subcommittee at their September 8 meeting. The attached Draft Land Use and Community Design Element (Attachments A and B) includes two options for policies L-1.17 and L-1.18 that reflect these two approaches. Both options delete the former Policy L-1.19 because it implied that the performance measures would apply only to market rate development; in discussion with both subcommittees, members agreed that the performance measures should apply to all development. **Both options will be forwarded to the Council for consideration as part of the Draft Element.**

Subcommittee discussions also resulted in changes to the “performance measures” terminology:

- “Development ~~performance measures~~” became “development requirements”
- “Community ~~performance measures~~” became “community indicators”

Development Requirements:

- Are imposed on new development at the time of approval (whether as a result of changes to the zoning ordinance or through conditions of approval).
- Are not applied to existing development.
- Support and add to existing development standards required of all new development.

Community Indicators:

- Evaluate the progress toward greater sustainability, quality of life, and livability of the community as a whole, including existing and new development
- Reflect the outcomes of changes in behavior, new technologies, etc., over the planning period, not only the outcomes of new construction.
- Measure progress over time to help the community understand its performance, recognize successes, and tailor efforts to areas where improvement is still needed

For Option 2, Table L-1 in the attached Draft Element presents the revisions to the development requirements suggested by subcommittee members from both the Sustainability and the Land Use subcommittees. The subcommittees took the approach of adding all suggested new development requirements. They did not delete any requirements, although some members did suggest some deletions. The thinking was to create a comprehensive list that the Council could consider and make a decision on what indicators to include.

Table L-2 (which would also be part of Option 2 only) presents the revisions to the community indicators suggested by both Sustainability and Land Use subcommittee members. Community indicators include some of the same indicators proposed in the Draft S/CAP.

The potential measures, metrics, and monitoring frequency in Table L-2 are based on CAC input as well as data that is thought to be readily available. Before the Draft Element goes to Council, staff and the consultant will review Table L-2 to confirm or ascertain what data is available, how often it is updated, and how expensive it might be to obtain the data. Prior to Council review, it may be necessary to make some revisions to specific measures or frequency based on data availability, but staff will strive to retain the spirit and intent of a given measure even if the data source has to be revised.

## Update from the Land Use Subcommittee

The Land Use subcommittee met on September 8 (staff report [here](#)) to discuss further refinements to the policies and programs addressing the topics listed above. The subcommittee staff report consolidated all policies and programs on each identified topic, and the subcommittee reviewed the wording and made the following suggestions, as reflected in the attached Draft Element:

- **Housing affordability:** The subcommittee emphasized the importance of distinguishing between “affordable housing” and “housing that is affordable.” Several subcommittee members equated “affordable housing” with the City’s Below Market Rate (BMR) program. The BMR program requires developers of projects with five or more units to dedicate a minimum percentage of units (15 percent on projects under 5 acres, 20 percent on projects over 5 acres) to be affordable. The units in the BMR program have resale and affordability controls for 59 years, and these covenants renew each time the property title is transferred.<sup>1</sup> The adopted Housing Element includes a program to apply BMR requirements to projects with three units or less, down from the current five unit minimum (See Programs H3.1.1 and H3.1.2). The Housing Element also acknowledges a concern raised by subcommittee members that excessive BMR requirements can stifle housing development because the cost of the project as a whole may not be able to be recouped solely from the sale of the market-rate units. In general, the subcommittee stressed that the Comp Plan should acknowledge a broader category of “housing that is affordable” due to age, size, design, location, or other characteristics, but is not legally required to be affordable to a certain income level. Subcommittee members suggesting adding a new program to address displacement, as well as adding displacements as a new community indicator.
- **Urban forest:** In the Land Use and Community Design Element, the urban forest is primarily addressed as a component of Palo Alto’s unique character and identity and as a component of the design and appearance of the City. The subcommittee suggesting new policies to

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<sup>1</sup> [City of Palo Alto 2015-2023 Housing Element](#), page 50.

acknowledge and continue the City's current practice of incorporating the City's forestry staff into the development review process for all projects; recognize the urban forest as part of the City's infrastructure; involve owners in tree maintenance; and establish a program for planting memorial trees honoring community members. It is important to note that the Natural Environment Element also includes a Goal N-3, "A Thriving 'Urban Forest' That Provides Ecological, Economic, and Aesthetic Benefits for Palo Alto," with a number of policies and programs that support the implementation of the Urban Forest Master Plan and the protection of trees as a natural resource.

- **Coordinated Area Plans:** Coordinated area plans are intended to guide development in a specific area of the city. While a coordinated area plan is a valuable tool for building a shared vision for the future, developing one is a time- and resource-intensive undertaking. Over the course of two full CAC meetings in March and April 2016, the CAC considered the effort and time required to develop a coordinated area plan and formulated policies to prioritize the Fry's Site and South El Camino Real for coordinated area plan processes, as these locations represent the areas of greatest opportunity for positive impact. However, at the August 16 CAC meetings, some members expressed that additional areas should be identified for Coordinated Area Plans, specifically all of the California Avenue area (not just the Fry's site), Downtown (including connections between the Transit Center and University Avenue), and all of El Camino Real (not just the southern segment). Subcommittee members echoed these comments with a particular focus on California Avenue and Downtown. The policies and programs under Goal L-4 have been revised to reflect this input. Program L4.6.2 [L78] addresses a Downtown Coordinated Area Plan and Program L4.8.1 [L81] addresses a California Avenue Coordinated Area Plan.
- **Basements:** Basements, excavation and dewatering continue to be prominent topics of concern in CAC discussions and public comment. CAC members have offered written comments including potential language to consider. The subcommittee raised several new ideas, including: pumping groundwater should be considered a taking from other residents; prohibit basements within the 100-year flood zone; do not allow basements to include bathrooms, kitchens, or running water; and a concern about commercial basements in Downtown that are located underneath sidewalks and preclude tree planting. The subcommittee supported revising Policy 3.9 [L62] and expanding Program 3.8.1 [L63] into a multi-part program to assess existing and future floodplains and areas where groundwater levels may be affected by sea level rise and develop a program to avoid or mitigate the various potential impacts of basements while balancing their potential benefits. There will also be policies on excavation and dewatering in the Natural Environment Element as described below.

The subcommittee also expressed that staff should bring forward a proposal for the Council to take action to further limit or regulate basement construction prior to Comp Plan adoption, given the urgency of the issue. Some members favored a moratorium until more rigorous regulations are in place.

- **Airport:** The subcommittee heard a summary of a staff-level meeting with Andy Swanson, and incorporated the revisions reflected under Goal L-10 of the Draft Element, including the revisions to clarify the potential location of a new terminal, updating the Airport Layout Plan (instead of preparing a new master plan), monitoring noise complaints and reporting on them annually, and enhancing the open space and habitat value of the airport. City staff is consulting with the City Attorney’s office regarding whether PAO can eliminate the sale of leaded fuel; it is not within the City’s jurisdiction to prohibit the use of leaded fuel.

In addition, the Land Use subcommittee reviewed an update on the Sustainability subcommittee’s work on the performance measures and provided additional input. A key change recommended by the Land Use subcommittee is to change the name of the community performance measures to community indicators, as described above.

## Outstanding Land Use Element Issues

The following CAC member comments, most of which were submitted in writing prior or at the August 16th CAC meeting, September 6th Sustainability subcommittee meeting, or September 8th Land Use subcommittee meeting, raised substantive ideas. Most involve wording changes to policies that have been discussed and revised, and these comments would change the meaning of those policies. Others address very specific issues that are not usually included in a Comp Plan. If CAC members would like to discuss any of these or add options for policy language for consideration by the full CAC, please bring them up during the meeting so that they can be vetted with the full group. All of these issues will be forwarded to the City Council for their consideration.

1. Clarify Policy L-1.8 [L12] and/or revise it as follows: “Sites within ~~or adjacent to~~ existing commercial areas and corridors are suitable for hotels. ~~Give preference to housing versus~~ Prohibit hotel use on sites adjacent to single family neighborhoods.”
2. Regarding the conversion of non-residential development potential in CC and CS zoning districts to residential FAR, add the words “Net loss of retail uses shall not be allowed” to Program L1.13.4 [L22].
3. Replace the word “development” with the word “unit” in Policy L-3.8 [L61] regarding the relationship of new multi-family development to the street.
4. Under Goal L-4, add “traffic lights” to the list of priority street improvements.
5. Under Goal L-4, Downtown should be classified as a “multi-neighborhood center” instead of a “regional center.”
6. Delete Program L4.7.1 [L80], which calls for both preserving adequate parking supply and reusing parking lots at the Stanford Shopping Center.
7. Add a new program under Policy L-6.8 [L111] to develop special regulations for Eichler neighborhoods.
8. Remove the language prohibiting office uses described in both Program L6.13.1 [L120] and the Mixed Use Land Use Definition.
9. Under Goal L-9 regarding parks and outdoor gathering spaces, delete the last sentence in Policy L9.6 [L169] “Ensure that each residential neighborhood has such spaces.”
10. Move policies related to planning for school impacts from the Community Services and

Facilities Element to the Land Use Element.

11. Add a new policy requiring a Conditional Use Permit for any new or expanded private school.
12. Delete clause in Program L-4.8.2: “Create regulations for the California Avenue area that encourage the retention of smaller buildings to provide spaces for existing retail, particularly local, small businesses, including to allow for their replacement or rehabilitation.”
13. Add text to specifically prohibit housing in Charleston Plaza.
14. Remove Policy L-7.7 [L134] to streamline future design review processes for historic structures.
15. Require historic structures to comply with existing parking requirements if/when the use changes. (Policy L-7.11 [L141])
16. Delete the sentence in Policy L-8.6 [L158] that the City will “Recognize public art and cultural facilities as a community benefit.”
17. CAC members have suggested that Comp Plan policies be added to encourage the City and Stanford to agree on traffic reductions if the Research Park is exempted from annual growth limits. Two possible options for wording have been submitted. If the full CAC directs, relevant text could be added as a new program under Policy L-1.15 (which presents the option of a citywide annual limit with an exemption for the Research Park), or developing the detail of this program could wait until the Council has weighed in on the various annual limit policy options.

## Natural Environment Element Background

In Palo Alto, the existing Natural Environment Element encompasses three of the seven mandatory Comprehensive Plan Elements: Open Space, Conservation, and Safety. These three Elements have been the focus of much of the legislative changes relating to General Plan law over the past ten to fifteen years. This section of the staff report presents the focus for the CAC’s review of the Natural Environment Element at this first meeting, an overview of possible ways of organizing this Element and the Safety Element, a list of Key Issues raised so far, a list of revisions made to date, and a summary of relevant City plans and studies.

### Focus of the CAC Review of the Natural Environment Element

On August 30, a joint meeting of the Natural Environment and Sustainability subcommittees was held to launch the review the Element as a whole, with a focus on identifying the key issues for discussion by the CAC today. The CAC is being asked to comment on those key issues and the organization of the Element. There is a quite a bit of background information below on how this draft was put together and relevant city plans and policies. While it is important for the CAC to have this information, the most important information for members to review and comment on is the organization and the key issues described below. The goal is to identify the key issues and any missing issues. There will be two more CAC meetings to go into the details in the Natural Environment Element. The dates and topics for those meetings are described below under Next Steps.

### Organization

The organization of the Natural Environment and Safety Elements has been discussed by the Council, the PTC, staff, and the subcommittee and will be a topic for further CAC discussion on September 20. As

a starting point for discussion, the table in Attachment J presents varying policy organizational structures that have been proposed and the organization that is recommended.

## Key Issues to Address

The Natural Environment subcommittee discussed the key issues described below on August 30:

- **Overall issues:**
  - When a program has been completed (e.g. the preparation of a specific document or plan), delete the program itself but ensure that a related policy remains as a statement of community values. Programs that call for the City to “maintain” something are ongoing and can never be considered complete.
  - There remain a number of instances in the revised Element where programs are actually policies.
  - Don’t capitalize Best Management Practices or similar terms unless referring to a specific, adopted document.
- **Open Space (Goal N-1).**
  - Subcommittee members introduced the concept of **ecosystems in the City** and suggested that the Comp Plan acknowledge the role of landscaping and natural areas in the urbanized part of Palo Alto, which form a continuum of natural areas from protected open spaces to the most intensively developed parts of town. Some subcommittee members expressed concerns about potential negative impacts on open spaces from trails. The subcommittee discussed that the current Open Space Development Criteria can be deleted from the Comp Plan because they have been incorporated into the Zoning Code, but some members would like to see additional policies limiting the size of homes in Open Space zones and requiring all native landscaping.
  - **Stanford HCP.** The Stanford University Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), most recently revised in 2013, addresses the protection and management of federally listed and special-status species, labeled "Covered Species," that occur or potentially occur on Stanford lands. The HCP plan area includes some lands within the Palo Alto city limits, and portions these lands, such as the Lagunitas Reservoir and undeveloped areas west of Foothill Expressway, have been identified as habitats for Covered Species. The Comp Plan Update would substantially affect special-status species if it would allow development in these areas. Due to these overlapping plan areas, the degree to which policies and programs related to foothill and riparian ecosystems should be coordinated to the Stanford HCP remains subject to subcommittee discussion.
  - **Bird-Friendly Design.** The built environment can pose specific dangers to local bird populations, in the form of increased collisions with windows and other man-made structures. Policy and/or programs that promote bird-safe design in development projects were suggested for both the Land Use and Natural Environment Elements.
- **Creeks and Riparian Areas (Goal N-2).** Subcommittee members expressed the desire to better understand jurisdictional management of Palo Alto’s waterways and riparian corridors, as well

as how to better define these corridors in order to establish more effective conservation policies.

The Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) is responsible for the protection of natural water courses and habitat in the Santa Clara Valley. State legislation authorizes SCVWD "to enhance, protect, and restore streams, riparian corridors, and natural resources," including those in Palo Alto. SCVWD reviews plans for all development projects near streams to ensure that storm drain and wastewater systems will not impact water quality. It also requires permits for certain types of excavation and development within SCVWD easements. Finally, SCVWD reviews projects for conformance to SCVWD flood control design criteria, stream maintenance and protection plans, and groundwater protection programs. In 2007, Palo Alto formally adopted the "[\*Guidelines and Standards for Land Use Near Streams: A Manual of Tools, Standards, and Procedures to Protect Streams and Streamside Resource in Santa Clara County\*](#)" created by the Water Resources Protection Collaborative, a group of representatives from the water district, cities, the County, business, agriculture, streamside property owners and environmental interests convened by SCVWD. These guidelines and standards are incorporated into the City's [Stream Corridor Protection Ordinance, Section 18.040.140 of the Zoning Code](#). This ordinance applies to areas within 50 feet of the top of a stream bank and establishes requirements for construction, planting, lighting, and irrigation within the stream corridor.

At the August 30 meeting, some CAC members expressed a desire to consider extending the streamside review area beyond 50 feet. Subcommittee members recommended adding policies regarding water quality in creeks, more clear recognition of the differences between urban/channelized and more natural creeks, and emphasizing the concept of restoration whenever and wherever possible.

- **Urban Forest (Goal N-3).** Subcommittee members discussed ways to expand and strengthen policy related to the urban forest. Ideas included new policies or programs targeting:
  - **Stronger Protections.** Consider policies aimed at no net loss of tree canopy and prioritize on-site rather than off-site replacement of any trees lost. There was some concern that policies aimed at reducing invasive tree species could be used to cut down healthy mature trees. Some members felt that all mature trees, not only native species, should be protected.
  - **The Understory.** Members highlighted the fact that ground cover and vegetation is as vital to the health of the urban forest as is the treetop canopy, and needs to be preserved and enhanced.
  - **Resilient Ecosystem.** Some members would like to see a focus on returning the urban forest and understory to something more similar to historic/native plant communities, particularly oaks, in order to be more adaptable to future climate change.
  - **Education and Information.** Ongoing commitment to the urban forest will demand citywide education programs. In addition, some subcommittee members would like to

see greater transparency and clarity on the City's tree inventory, replanting schedules and tree-related information more generally.

- **Downtown Tree Health.** Palo Alto's downtown street trees suffer specific stresses, such as compacted soil or basements under sidewalks that limit or preclude tree planting. Downtown trees may benefit from targeted support policy or programs.
  - **Urban Forest as Infrastructure.** Recognizing the urban forest as a component of Palo Alto's infrastructure could provide a new way of framing the urban forest as an asset to be protected, maintained, and increased.
  - **Coordination.** Members mentioned the importance of coordinating not only with PAUSD, but also with other agencies and organizations like Caltrans, Caltrain, and PG&E, so trees in Palo Alto are not removed excessively or unexpectedly.
- **Water Resources (Goal N-4).**
    - Many policies covering stormwater, wastewater, and water supply relate as strongly to the city's infrastructure as to its natural environment, and thus could potentially be located in the Infrastructure section of the new Safety Element rather than in the Natural Environment Element.
    - **Recycled Water:** Consolidate and focus policies and programs addressing support for, expansion of, and commitment to, water recycling. Add policies to promote the use of recycled water for irrigation and other non-potable activities, and improve the city's treatment of recycled water to reduce salinity (rather than encouraging salt-tolerant species).
    - **Stormwater:** Expand street sweeping programs to neighborhoods it is not currently in effect, such as Evergreen Park and College Terrace. Current policies and programs regarding impervious surfaces may be too prescriptive and may not adequately reflect the diversity of possible design solutions to respond to site-specific soil conditions.
    - **Excavations:** The trend of basement construction has proven to be a significant concern to many Palo Alto residents. The subcommittee discussed potential water- and flood-related adverse impacts. Policies and programs should be added under Goal 4 to establish basement construction regulations intended to reduce impacts to groundwater supply, water quality, stormwater drainage capacity, and wastewater infrastructure.

Some subcommittee members recommended a new policy that water pumped from excavations not be lost. According to the City's 2016 [Guidelines for Dewatering During Basement or Below Ground Garage Construction](#), the dewatering process must adhere to a set of requirements, including 1) the use of fill stations so that others may use water for irrigation; and 2) a plan that demonstrates how a maximum amount of pumped water will be safely used.

This work on basements needs to be coordinated with policy language on basements in the Land Use Element.

- **Air Quality (Goal N-5).** Current policies are heavily focused on wood burning stoves. Since the last Comp Plan, wood stove regulations have evolved in response. For this update, policies in support of clean, healthful air needs to be updated and expanded to better target current pollutant sources of concern including automobiles, trucks, construction and industrial activity outside of Palo Alto (such as the Lehigh Cement Plant in unincorporated Santa Clara County).
- **Hazardous Materials (Goal N-6).** There was general consensus among subcommittee members to change the name of this section to hazardous *materials* rather than hazardous *waste* and to add policies addressing household hazardous materials. The Council has directed that Goal N-6 be moved to the new Safety Element; it is expected to be the topic of further discussion during future Safety Element meetings.
- **Solid Waste (Goal N-7).** The subcommittee did not identify any key issues or changes regarding solid waste at this time. The Council has directed that Goal N-7 be moved to the new Safety Element; it is expected to be the topic of further discussion during future Safety Element meetings.
- **Noise (Goal N-8).** Aircraft are one of the principal noise sources in Palo Alto. Of particular concern is noise from over-flights associated with SFO and how those aircraft operations may have changed over time, resulting in changing/worsening noise effects. Similarly, community concern over noise associated with City-operated Palo Alto Airport has increased since the last Comp Plan Update. Airplane noise-reduction advocacy groups such as Sky Posse Palo Alto have brought attention to the perception that Palo Alto is disproportionately affected by SFO overflight noise, and that the City must take proactive measures toward aircraft noise abatement. The City is participating in a “Select Committee on South Bay Arrivals” formed by the FAA in response to growing concern from South Bay communities. Most of this concern is focused on the FAA's future “NextGEN” Air Transportation System, which will use satellites to facilitate increased and denser air traffic. Palo Alto also commissioned its own [study](#) of aircraft overflight noise, performed by consulting firm Freytag & Associates Inc. The evaluation found that planes fly lower, faster and more frequently, resulting in increased noise.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) uses three noise metrics to measure the effect of noise on the environment:

1. Single Event: The measure of the highest sound level occurring during an individual aircraft overflight;
2. The maximum level of the single event plus its duration;
3. The cumulative noise levels from multiple flight events.

For more information on the metrics and measurements used by the FAA to monitor aircraft noise, the FAA suggests the Noise Quest website noise modeling information page:

<http://www.noisequest.psu.edu/noisebasics-noisemodels.html>

- **Light pollution (new topic).** Subcommittee members discussed ways to integrate effective controls of light pollution.
- **Energy (Goal N-9).** Members questioned the term “smart grid” in a policy under this goal. The [US Department of Energy](#) explains that the “grid” is the network of wires, substations, transformers, switches, and other infrastructure that carry electricity, and a “smart grid” uses computers to allow two-way digital communication technology to devices associated with the grid. Each device on the network can be given sensors to gather data (power meters, voltage sensors, fault detectors, etc.), and the utility’s network operators can then adjust and control each individual device or many devices from a central location in response to changing demand, supply, and other conditions. Some members expressed concern about the feasibility of S/CAP goals to encourage all-electric buildings. A new policy was suggested that City of Palo Alto Utilities will not purchase energy from projects that impact endangered species **Natural Hazards (Goal N-10) and Community Safety and Emergency Management (new Goal N-11)**. The subcommittee did not discuss these as they are anticipated to be part of future Safety Element discussions.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions (new Goal N-12).** A series of legislation passed since the time of the last Comprehensive Plan Update seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in California, and the targets/parameters established in this legislation influences local policy. These laws include, but are not limited to:
  - **Executive Order S-03-05.** Signed in 2005, this Order sets ambitious GHG reduction targets for the State, including reducing statewide GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.
  - **Assembly Bill 32.** This Bill, the Global Warming Solutions Act, was passed in 2006, and follows the 2020 tier of emissions reduction targets established in Executive Order S 3 05.
  - **Executive Order B-30-15.** Signed in 2015, this Order sets a goal to reduce GHG emissions within the state to 40 percent of 1990 levels by year 2030, and requires various legislative updates to ensure that climate change is accounted for in state planning and investment decisions.

A major component of climate change- and GHG-related policy in the Natural Environment Element will be achieving internal consistency with Palo Alto’s S/CAP. Building on the 2007 Climate Action Plan, the S/CAP responds to new legislation with a series of policies to reduce the city’s greenhouse gas emissions and overall carbon footprint, facilitate the shift away from single-occupant vehicles, and ensure a more resilient community in the face of climate-related risks such as sea-level rise. As noted above, a Draft S/CAP was released in April. At that time, the City Council:

- adopted the S/CAP goal of 80% reduction below 1990 levels by 2030,
- voiced support for the framework and guiding principles of the S/CAP,

- directed staff to develop a process for integrating the S/CAP into the Comp Plan Update. The staff reviews the S/CAP for consistency as part of the work on every element.

Currently, S/CAP Action Teams made up of City staff are working on fleshing out the implementation of the strategies in the Draft S/CAP. The work of these Action Teams is tentatively scheduled for public review in fall 2016.

## Revisions to Date

Prior to the August 30 subcommittee meeting, staff and consultants incorporated the following updates into the policy framework of the Natural Environment Element. The resulting policies and programs still need to be consolidated and organized to address redundancies. This step will be completed during future meetings. The goal of the first round of revision and review is to daylight major issues and major gaps.

- **Council direction** from their December 14, 2015 motion (Attachment H). The Council provided direction on the vision, goals, and organization of the existing Natural Environment Element, including adding a Goal on Climate Change and Climate Adaption and moving Natural Hazards (Goal N-10), Hazardous Waste (Goal N-6) and Solid Waste (Goal N-7) to a new Safety Element.
- **PTC revisions.** In the case of the Natural Environment Element, the PTC made substantial recommendations to incorporate staff input from the numerous City departments involved in protecting Palo Alto's natural environment and avoiding or responding to hazards. PTC input also captured a number of changes needed to make the element more current in response to recent legislation, adopted City documents (such as the Urban Forest Master Plan), and emerging planning trends. For these reasons, a greater number of PTC revisions have been brought forward for CAC consideration and discussion than was the case with prior elements.
- **Staff comments** from the Public Works, Utilities, and Community Services Departments. Staff reviewers included:
  - Public Works
  - Community Services
  - Utilities
- **New policies and programs** to reflect the Draft S/CAP. Both the S/CAP and the Natural Environment Element address the following topics:
  - Solid Waste
  - Water Resources
  - Energy and Renewables
  - Climate Change
  - Climate Adaptation
  - Resiliency
- **EIR mitigation measures**, re-worded to be consistent with the tone and level of detail of other Comprehensive Plan policies and programs. Where the EIR identified that specific policies or programs should be included in the Comp Plan, those appear in the attached draft of the Natural Environment Element policy framework.

- State legal requirements for planning for flood hazards, fire hazards, and sea level rise.
- Deleted programs that have been completed and policies that are no longer applicable (e.g. urban forest policies that have been superseded by the adoption of the Urban Forest Master Plan).

## Relevant City Plans, Studies, and Policy Documents

The policy direction and findings of the following plans and studies, either adopted or underway, must be considered in the development of a coordinated, effective Natural Environment Element. Some of these efforts may relate directly to a new Safety Element, but are also relevant to the Natural Environment Element and so are included here. Relevant links are provided in each bullet heading.

- [Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Facilities Master Plan \(Master Plan\)](#). The goal of this Master Plan, currently set for adoption in early 2017, is to provide guidance for meeting future recreational, programming, and environmental and maintenance needs, as well as establishing priorities for future park renovations and facility improvements.
- [Urban Forest Master Plan \(UFMP\)](#). The UFMP, adopted in 2015, establishes long-term management goals and strategies to foster a sustainable urban forest in Palo Alto. The UFMP addresses topics such as the state of Palo Alto's tree canopy, best management practices, interdepartmental coordination, and tree-related City regulations..
- [Tree Technical Manual](#). The Tree Technical Manual establishes specific technical standards and specifications deemed necessary to implement the City's 1997 Tree Preservation and Management Regulations, and to achieve the City's tree preservation goals.
- [Baylands Master Plan \(BMP\)](#). Originally adopted in 1978 and last updated in 2008, the BMP is a long-range plan for "treating the Baylands as an integrated whole and balancing ecological preservation with continued commercial and recreational use."
- [Sustainability and Climate Action Plan \(S/CAP\)](#). A Draft S/CAP was released in April; see [Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#), below, for more discussion.
- [Urban Water Management Plan \(UWMP\)](#). As required by the Urban Water Management Planning Act, all cities are required to update their UWMP every five years and submit it to the California Department of Water Resources for review and approval. The 2015 UWMP, adopted by the City Council in May 2016, includes an assessment of the reliability of the City's water sources, an analysis of water demand and alternative water supply sources, a description of water conservation efforts, and a water shortage contingency plan.
- [Water Integrated Resources Plan \(WIRP\)](#). Originally adopted in 2003 and updated in 2016, the WIRP discusses the variety of potable water supply resources and planning. It includes an assessment of alternative potable water supplies, and assesses recycled water as a tool to reduce potable water demand.
- [SAFER Bay Levee Improvements](#). The San Francisquito Creek JPA is currently conducting a levee improvement design project for the Bayfront levees between San Francisquito Creek and Redwood City. The *Strategy to Advance Flood protection, Ecosystems and Recreation* or "SAFER Bay" will develop a Bayfront levee system design that provides 1% (100-year) protection from tidal flooding, assuming three feet of sea level rise over the next five decades.
- [Local Hazard Mitigations Plan \(LHMP\)](#). Palo Alto is currently developing a city-specific version of the County's LHMP, a plan required by federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The Plan will build on a comprehensive vulnerability/risk assessment to develop a series of policies and

actions to mitigate the city's top hazards of earthquake, flood, sea-level rise, wildfire, drought and extreme heat.

- [Foothills Fire Management Plan](#). The goal of this 2009 management plan is to reduce losses from wildland fire in Palo Alto's Wildland Urban Interface area, including the foothills west of the Foothills Expressway and Junipero Serra Boulevard.
- [Vulnerability Assessment](#). Recent legislation, notably Senate Bill 379 (2015), requires that local climate adaptation and safety policy be based on a formal vulnerability assessment. As noted above, the ongoing LHMP is based on such an assessment. Throughout 2016, the LHMP team has identified and assessed top city hazards, inventoried its major assets and established a community risk profile.

## Updated CAC Schedule

At the August CAC meeting, the CAC discussed the schedule for completing the review of the Comp Plan, with its estimated May 2017 completion date. It was clear from that discussion that the CAC will lose a number of members at the end of 2016.

The attached schedule is an update of the August schedule with several changes that allow the current CAC members, with their valuable background and expertise on the Comp Plan, to complete as much of the review of all the elements as possible before the end of 2016.

- The Recommendation on the Land Use Element was continued from the August meeting and is scheduled to occur at the September meeting
- This schedule shows completion of a Recommendation to the Council of the Natural Environment Element and the Safety Element in December 2016. The number of subcommittee meetings and CAC meetings to review these Elements remains the same. By organizing the topics at each meeting, the goal is to be able to efficiently complete the review.
- The Business and Economics Subcommittee has been moved up to start their review of the Business and Economics Element in December 2016. This review will need to continue until 2017. This is the only Element where the Council recommendation is not scheduled for completion in 2016.

## Next Steps

The City Council is tentatively scheduled to review the Draft Land Use and Community Design Element in November 2016; a date has not been set. The CAC will review the Land Use and Community Design Element as part of a review of the Comp Plan as a whole once the Council has completed their review of all Elements.

The policy framework of the Natural Environment Element will be further revised based on the CAC's initial recommendations. The revised framework will be then be reviewed by the Natural Environment subcommittee at a second meeting in early October and at a third meeting in late October or early November. The CAC will meet to discuss the Natural Environment Element twice more, on October 18

and November 15. In order to ensure that the group has adequate time to cover the many topics that are the target of policy in the Natural Environment Element, staff suggests that the subcommittee and CAC break up the in-depth discussions of the Element at the September and October meetings as follows:

**October: (Subcommittee date 10/5, CAC date 10/18):**

1. Air Quality
2. Noise
3. Energy
4. Climate Change and Climate Adaptation
5. Light Pollution

**November (Subcommittee date TBD, CAC date 11/15):**

1. Open Space
2. Creeks and Riparian Areas
3. Urban Forest and Understory
4. Water Resources

The CAC will then meet to meet to consider a recommendation on the Draft Natural Environment Element on December 13.

## **Attachments**

- A. September 20th Draft Land Use and Community Design Element – clean
- B. September 20th Draft Land Use and Community Design Element – tracked
- C. Minutes from the August 16th CAC meeting
- D. September 6 Sustainability subcommittee meeting written communication – provided as link only: <http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/cac/citizens-advisory-committee/#September 6, 2016>
- E. September 8 Land Use subcommittee meeting written communication – provided as link only: <http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/cac/citizens-advisory-committee/#September 8, 2016>
- F. Summary of Airport Operations
- G. Natural Environment Element Policy Framework
- H. Council direction on Natural Environment Element from their December 14, 2015 motion
- I. August 30 Natural Environment subcommittee written communications – provided as link only: [http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/At-Places-packet-rev\\_20160830-1.pdf](http://www.paloaltocompplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/At-Places-packet-rev_20160830-1.pdf)
- J. Proposed organizational outlines, Natural Environment and Safety Element.
- K. CAC comments received for September 20
- L. Schedule