



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE CLOSURE AND APPRECIATION

Tuesday, May 16, 2017
Rinconada Library – Embarcadero Room
1213 Newell Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303
5:30 PM to 8:30 PM

DATE: Tuesday, May 16, 2017
TO: Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
FROM: Elena Lee, Interim Planning Manager,
Planning & Community Environment Department
TITLE: Final Changes to Natural Environment, Safety, and Business & Economics
Elements; Lessons Learned; and CAC Appreciation

What to Expect at the Meeting

The will be the final meeting of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Update Citizens Advisory Committee. The first item will be recommendation to the City Council of the CAC revisions to the cover, Introduction, Governance Chapter, and Glossary. This staff report also includes a review of online engagement efforts and the role of the Digital Commenter.

Next, the CAC will brainstorm ideas for a future online Comp Plan and/or Comp Plan Users Guide and discuss “lessons learned” from its two-year involvement in the process to provide guidance to those undertaking the next Comprehensive Plan update.

The last one-and-a-half hours of the meeting will be a dedicated to a party for the CAC, in appreciation of the time, energy and resources the group has committed over the course of the Comp Plan update.

Cover Updates

Several images were replaced to remove outdated photos and decrease the number of images of the Baylands. An image of kids on bike was added.

Introduction Updates

- In the second paragraph of the opening statement, “visions of a diverse population” was changed to “input of a diverse population.”

Major Themes of the Comprehensive Plan

Building Community and Neighborhoods

- In the second sentence, “cultural centers” was changed to “community centers” and a more diverse range of organizations was listed.

Reducing Reliance on the Automobile

- A sentence on the inclusion of parking policies and parking management was added.

Meeting Housing Supply Challenges

The third sentence was revised to add “...and this Plan seeks to increase the supply of housing that is affordable.”

Keeping Palo Alto Safe

- “Keeping Palo Alto Safe” was changed to “Keeping Palo Alto Prepared”

Meeting Residential and Commercial Needs

- This paragraph was revised to attract “innovative new small and independent businesses.”
- The fourth sentence was revised to reflect CAC consensus during discussions of the Business & Economics Element, which stressed that language should be updated to reflect collaboration of businesses and neighborhoods to arrive at mutually beneficial solutions.

Use and Organization of the Plan

- A note was added under Table 1 to clarify that Governance and Implementation Chapters, along with other important components of the plan that are not Elements, are not shown in Table 1 but are described below.
- State Optional Elements and corresponding Palo Alto Elements were added to Table 1.
- The text regarding the Vision was revised to delete wording that a vision is not a binding goal and may not be achievable.
- The definition of Program was revised to add that Programs require resources to complete and to shorten the explanation of what Programs are. The role and function of Programs is explained in detail in the Implementation chapter; this section of the Introduction is a briefer overview.

Other Components of the Plan

- The paragraph on the EIR was reinstated, with an introductory phrase added to clarify that the EIR is not a component of the Comp Plan.

How the Comprehensive Plan Was Developed

- Table 2, listing CAC members was deleted. The names of CAC members will be included in the Acknowledgements.

Implementing the Plan

Relationship to Zoning

- This section was deleted. The relationship to zoning can be explained in staff reports for individual projects or decisions.

Governance Chapter Updates

The Comp Plan deliberately uses the term “chapter” in describing this section. As noted on page G-1 of both the existing and CAC draft Governance Elements, the Governance chapter is not a “Plan ‘element’ in the traditional and legal sense.” It provides background information and is advisory.

A series of revisions were made to all sections the Governance Chapter based on the CAC’s April 18, 2017 review. These include:

Framework for Local Decision Making

- The City/School Liaison Committee was added to the trio of City Council standing committees.

Public Participation

- The first paragraph was expanded to include the idea of developing “champions” for the community through ongoing and expanded public engagement.
- A statement about the importance of welcoming diverse populations into civic life was added to the beginning of the third paragraph.
- The Citizens Corps Council was added to Table G-1.
- The last sentence of the section was revised to correct a split infinitive. :)
- Note that the paragraph in strikethrough beginning “The City Council is committed...” from the April 18 meeting packet has been deleted. That paragraph is not in the existing Governance Chapter. Showing it in strikethrough was an error in the April 18 draft. The concepts in the paragraph remain in the Public Participation section in slightly different order and wording.

Civic and Neighborhood Organizations

- The second sentence in the first paragraph regarding involvement at the neighborhood level was reworded and expanded.

Volunteerism

- The first paragraph was expanded to include “...and to developing young volunteers by exploring innovative, hands-on classroom programs coordinated with local schools” at the end.

Structures of Decision Making

- The final sentence was revised from “Most ministerial decisions are made at the staff level and public input is not required,” To “Most ministerial decisions are made at the staff level and do not involve noticing or public input.”

Goal G-1 Public Participation

- **Policy G-1.1** was revised to be more explicit about the role of the PTC and ARB.
- **Program G1.1.1** was moved up to be the first program and expanded to technology-based engagement.
- **New Program G.1.1.2** was added, to continue the release of Council staff reports up to 10 days in advance of hearings.

Goal G-2 Civic and Neighborhood Organizations

- **Goal G-2** was expanded to include cultural, environmental and social service organizations, as well as civic and neighborhood groups.
- **Policy G-2.1** was reinstated and expanded to include cultural, environmental and social service organizations.
- **Policy G2.2** was revised to focus on providing information about coordinating with City staff and City decision-making, and to remove language about specific topics like emergency preparedness and event planning.
- **Policy G-2.3** was revised to call for increased coordination between City staff and non-profit or private civic, environmental, cultural, neighborhood and social service organizations.
- **New Program G2.3.1** was added, for continued support of Town Hall-style meetings in established neighborhood gathering spaces.
- **Previous Program G-10** was deleted as CAC members felt it was too narrowly focused and the program should not define or limit the types of topics the City and residents work on together.
- **Policy G-2.4** was updated to encourage participation by civic, environmental, cultural, neighborhood and social service organizations by providing access to relevant information and data.
- **New Program G2.4.1** was added, calling for the continued use of City facilities by civic, environmental, cultural, neighborhood and social service organizations at discounted rates. This statement reflects current City practice. The City provides a 50% discount for 501(c)3 organizations if they do not charge an entry fee for the meeting or event. The City can also co-sponsor events or meetings if they meet certain residency and benefits guidelines.

Goal G-3 Regional Collaboration

- A specific reference to PAUSD was added to **Policy G-3.1**.
- **Policy G-3.2** was revised to encourage civic organizations to participate in regional programs

Goal G-4 Volunteerism

- **New Program G4.1.2** was added, to coordinate with PAUSD on classroom-based leadership and civic participation programs.
- **New Program G4.1.3** was added, to support the transition from school-based volunteering to civic participation.

- **New Program G4.1.4** was added, to support the efforts of the real estate community and others to include new residents in civic life.

Goal G-5 Managing Change

- **Policy G-5.1** was revised to remove the word “planning,” so that the city will develop collaborative processes for whatever issues arise.
- **Program G5.1.3** was moved to Goal 6, Development Review, due to the fact that it targets “specific development proposals”

Goal G-6 Development Review

- **New Program G6.1.4** was moved here from Goal 5.
- **Program G6.1.5** was moved to the Land Use Element, as the use and development of design guidelines is covered there under Goal LU-6.

Glossary

A number of terms were reinstated or added to the Glossary per CAC request.

Online Engagement and the Digital Commenter

Over the course of the CAC process, the City partnered with researchers from Stanford’s Brown Institute for Media Innovation at the School of Engineering who provided analysis of comments received from the community as part of their own research and academic project work related to crowdsourcing and participatory government.

The Stanford researchers volunteered their time and resources to analyze all of the ideas that were received electronically related to Transportation, Growth Management and Housing, both as part of the Our Palo Alto 2030 Summit, as well as on Nextdoor and within the virtual summit on Open City Hall. They also helped with the concepts that led to the development of the *Digital Commenter* online engagement tool that the City developed with Peak Democracy (the founders of the Open City Hall web portal). The *Digital Commenter* tool, which other cities are interested in replicating, allowed the community to provide comments and ideas on the elements of the Comp Plan as they were provided to the CAC as part of their discussion. The *Digital Commenter* was used extensively to broaden the input into the plan from the larger Palo Alto community, garnering almost 2,000 comments from individuals throughout the process. The tool has contributed significantly to the policy review and refinement process and will be closed following the May 15 City Council meeting.

Stanford utilized their interaction with the Comp Plan process as the basis for continuing research on participatory democracy, and have also beta tested a new predictive tool to test citizen sentiment as a result. In a case study of the Transportation Element, the researchers made the following general findings about the Element in relation to citizen input:

- Parking as an issue of importance and encouraging the use of bikes and public transportation was both suggested by citizens and reflected in the revision
- Citizens also wanted to solve traffic congestion and the revised policies pay great attention to ways to smooth traffic flow.
- Citizens put an emphasis on improving infrastructure for non-motor powered transit. The revised policy does not deal with this substantively (since those improvements are covered in detail in the *2012 Bicycle + Pedestrian Master Plan*).
- Citizens focused on specific improvements in particular areas while the policy focus was broader, and the researchers suggested looking at the details of crowd suggestions during the implementation stage

In addition, the Stanford researchers found that the CAC played an important role in using their expertise and knowledge to improve the current measurement, designs and programs for the Transportation element.

- The CAC focused on the broader development picture and put the public interest as the priority. They also spent considerable time on the current programs, measurement and design.
- The researchers suggested a stronger feedback loop to citizens as part of the crowdsourcing process. For instance, citizens will feel that their voices are valued appropriately if after every crowdsourcing stage, the city could post a summary of comments to citizen suggestions online.

Online User’s Guide/Toolkit

This portion of the meeting is an opportunity for the CAC to offer ideas of the priorities and characteristics of a future Online Comprehensive Plan and/or User’s Guide to the Comprehensive Plan. Some questions to consider:

- What do you think is most important to include in the User’s Guide?
- What features do you think would be most desirable to by residents and potential users ?

“Lessons Learned” Discussion

The CAC has valuable perspectives on the process of developing a Comp Plan. City staff is very interested to hear from CAC members the “lessons learned” over the past two years about public involvement, meeting logistics and facilitation, communication, technical issues, or any other aspects of the CAC experience on the Comp Plan. CAC input can provide guidance to those undertaking the next Comprehensive Plan update.

Next Steps

Although the CAC process is concluding, the City Council and Planning & Transportation Commission (PTC) will continue to work on the Comp Plan through the end of 2017. Meeting dates and meeting materials will be posted on www.paloaltocompplan.org; both the Council and the PTC have their own pages on the site now, similar to the CAC page.

Upcoming Council Meetings

On June 5, the Council will acknowledge the work of the CAC with a formal resolution; all current and past CAC members are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

On June 12, the Council will review the CAC's recommendations on the Introduction, Governance, Glossary, and other final Comp Plan components, and is scheduled to refer the Comp Plan to the PTC for review.

The PTC is currently scheduled to review the Comp Plan at a series of meetings in July through September, 2017, and to refer their comments back to the Council in fall 2017.

Attachments

- A. Comp Plan Cover
- B. Introduction – tracked
- C. Introduction – clean – provided as link only: [\[link\]](#)
- D. Governance Chapter – tracked
- E. Governance Chapter – clean
- F. Glossary - tracked
- G. Glossary – clean - provided as link only: [\[link\]](#)
- H. April 18 CAC meeting minutes – provided as link only: [\[link\]](#)
- I. Communications from Co-Chairs