



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: November 28, 2022

ITEM TITLE: Receive a Presentation on the Focused General Plan Update, Which Includes Amendments to the Land Use Element, Community Safety and Services Element, and Minor Changes to the Circulation, Noise, and Environmental Management Elements and Associated Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance in Response to the Housing Element Update.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a presentation on proposed amendments to the San Carlos General Plan's Land Use Element, Community Safety and Services Element, including minor changes to the Circulation, Noise, and Environmental Management Elements and proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance in response to the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There are no fiscal implications associated with receiving this presentation.

BACKGROUND:

As defined by the California Government Code, a "General Plan" is a long-range visionary document that establishes a framework for how a city will grow and change over a span of typically 20 years. The current General Plan for San Carlos was adopted in 2009 and covers subsequent years to 2030. The San Carlos General Plan establishes goals, policies, and actions guiding growth, conservation, and enhancements in the city. In California, General Plans serve as a "constitution" or blueprint for all future development. General Plans are required to have chapters or "elements" that discuss land use, circulation/mobility, open space, conservation, noise, environmental justice, air quality, safety, and housing. San Carlos' General Plan is titled *San Carlos General Plan: Envision 2030*.

The City is currently in the process of updating two of its General Plan elements: (1) the Housing Element and (2) the Community Safety and Services Element. Both are *required* to address State law mandates. The Housing Element focuses on the provision of adequate housing for all current and future San Carlos residents. The City's Community Safety and Services Element, which will be renamed Environmental Safety and Public Services Element, focuses on reducing potential short-term and long-term risks related to fires, floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, climate change, and other hazards. Changes to the Housing Element and Environmental Safety and Public Services Element necessitate changes to other General Plan elements including the Land Use Element (and Land Use Map), Circulation Element, Noise Element, and Environmental Management Element to ensure consistency among all the Elements within the General Plan. Revisions to the Housing Element also necessitate changes to San Carlos' Zoning Ordinance

and Zoning Map. All revisions have been analyzed in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that has been prepared in compliance with CEQA requirements. This EIR is now undergoing public review and available for public comment prior to the City Council's consideration of whether to adopt the proposed modifications to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

On September 26, 2022, the City Council held a study session on the Draft Housing Element. The purpose of this informational session is to share other modifications to the General Plan and Zoning resulting from the proposed updates to the General Plan's Housing Element and Environmental Safety and Public Services Element. A significant driver of all of these changes is the State's requirement to plan for additional housing in San Carlos.

DRAFT LAND USE ELEMENT CHANGES

The following is a summary of changes made to the Land Use Element. These changes were made to ensure consistency with proposed changes to the Housing Element.

POLICY LU-1.6 Consider reduced parking requirements for multi-family residential and mixed-use projects within the TOD corridor. ~~Reduced parking requirements may be permitted only if a parking study is submitted demonstrating that the reduced parking is adequate to accommodate on-site parking demand associated with the project.~~

ACTION LU-1.8 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to address the new multiple family and mixed use designations.

Land Use Element, Pages 52 – 53

The majority of new housing in San Carlos is expected on infill parcels near Downtown, along the El Camino Real corridor, along Old County Road between Holly Street and Terminal Avenue, and along East San Carlos Avenue. These units will mostly be multiple family residences, such as apartments, townhouses, or condominiums. New single-family residences will likely occur on vacant parcels, as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and as rebuilt or remodeled homes in existing single-family neighborhoods.

An estimate of total housing units, population, and job growth in San Carlos by 2030 is shown in Table 3-3. ~~These numbers are based on the anticipated growth of areas throughout the city that are likely to undergo changes in development patterns over the next 20 years.~~ These projections assume densities that are probable given allowable densities, economic forces, and likely development patterns. The General Plan has the potential to result in approximately 1,436 4,900 additional residential units to be built within San Carlos' city limits between ~~2009 and 2030~~ 2022 and 2030.

TABLE 3-3: HOUSING, POPULATION AND JOB GROWTH UNDER THE GENERAL PLAN

Housing Units	11,960 12,318	1,436 4,900	13,396 17,218
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PG 53

The General Plan will also accommodate growth in commercial, office, mixed use, and industrial land uses. Table 3-4 shows the projected gross square footage increase in commercial, office, mixed use, and industrial uses from 2008 to 2030 for this General Plan.

PG 55

Buildings of varying heights, typically one to two stories, with traditional storefronts are generally built to the sidewalk and address the street. ~~Downtown supports the highest levels of density in San Carlos. The tallest buildings of greatest mass are located in the Downtown area.~~ The picturesque Downtown is an important visual resource for residents, workers and visitors in San Carlos.

POLICY LU-8.2 Ensure that new development ~~is sensitive~~ sensitively transitions to the character of adjacent structures and the immediate neighborhood.

POLICY LU-8.7 Encourage ~~Require~~ new residential development to provide outdoor areas and landscaping or native vegetation, or tree canopy to enhance the surroundings.

POLICY LU-8.19 Residential and mixed use structures shall be designed to be compatible with existing structures in the vicinity, ~~avoid~~ minimize obstructing views from adjacent structures or views of community importance, ~~avoid~~ minimize interference with the right or ability to use solar energy and be consistent with the community design principles.

POLICY LU-8.20 Require all new residential multi-family residential, commercial and industrial projects subject to design review by the appropriate decision-making body for compliance with site planning, architecture, signing and landscaping criteria prior to approval, as permitted by State law.

~~ACTION LU 8.3 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to limit the height of building walls at the street facing property line to two stories on the 600, 700, and 800 blocks of Laurel Street. Additional stories may be permitted if they are stepped back a minimum distance from the ground level building wall.~~

ACTION LU-8.4 Develop objective design standards consistent with State law and amend the Zoning Ordinance and Planning Division application submittal checklist to require information and materials that accurately and sufficiently demonstrate a project's compliance new objective design standards.

(Action 8-6 number changed to 8-5 due to removal of 8-3.)

POLICY LU-9.5 Require buffering, screening, transitional standard, or other measures for new and expanded multi-family residential, mixed use, and/or commercial/industrial developments adjacent to single-family residential neighborhoods to minimize impacts

POLICY LU-9.10 In the event of closure of a school, the primary planned use of these sites remains for school and associated recreation purposes, or housing. The school site should be considered for acquisition by the City.

POLICY LU-9.14 Legally nonconforming multi-family residential structures located within multi-family residential zoning districts may be replaced, restored, rebuilt, or repaired and used consistent with the Zoning Ordinance in effect at the time ~~the structure was originally constructed only upon issuance of a conditional use permit approved by the Planning Commission at the time~~ of the replacement, restoring, rebuilding, or repairing.

ACTION LU-9.2 Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include objective design standards, transitional design standards for multi-family residential buildings and commercial uses adjacent to single-family homes, as appropriate.

~~ACTION LU-9.3 Consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to require courtesy notification of nearby residents for any multi-family residential use or commercial use proposed in immediate proximity to a single-family residential neighborhood.~~

POLICY LU-10.6 Require all new development and significantly modified development in the High and Very High Fire Susceptibility Zones to install and maintain fire prevention design and materials in accordance with Building Codes at the time of the construction/reconstruction.

Modifications to the Land Use Map, page 31 Land Use Element, are also proposed for consistency with proposed changes to the Zoning Map.

DRAFT NOISE ELEMENT CHANGES

This modification was made to consider all areas where new multi-family residential is proposed, not just the downtown area.

POLICY NOI-1.5 B For new multi-family residential development maintain a standard of 65 Ldn in community outdoor recreation areas. Noise standards are not applied to private decks and balconies and shall be considered on a case-by-case basis ~~in the downtown core~~.

DRAFT CIRCULATION ELEMENT CHANGES

The following amendments are required by State Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (AKA CALFIRE).

POLICY CSH-1.1 Widths of streets and highways should be sufficient to address existing and projected traffic volumes, emergency access requirements, while providing positive pedestrian and bicycle experiences.

POLICY CSH-3.5 Street and right-of-way widths should be designed and constructed in accordance with the street standards established in this plan, the City Subdivision Ordinance and Standard Details. However, flexibility for street widths should be permitted with sensitivity to slope, neighborhood character, traffic volume, emergency access requirements, and pedestrian/bicycle needs.

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CHANGES

The following amendment is required by State Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (AKA CALFIRE).

ACTION EM-11.3 Design streets to accommodate all modes of transportation, including emergency vehicles, and provide for a safe and attractive pedestrian experience.

See Attachment 1 for changes shown in ~~red-line~~ ~~strikeout~~ within the existing General Plan. Note: Changes to Safety Element provided under separate cover in Attachment 2.

DRAFT SAFETY ELEMENT CHANGES

The City's Community Safety and Services Element was last updated and adopted in 2009. Since that time, recent State legislation was passed which placed new requirements on how and when cities need to update this Element, specifically, California Senate Bill 379 ("SB379"), California Senate Bill 1035 ("SB1035"), and California Senate Bill 1241 ("SB1241"). The State requires that this Element be updated every eight years, in tandem with the Housing Element update.

This Element, now renamed the Environmental Safety and Public Services Element, is being updated as needed to address climate adaptation and resiliency strategies and ensure consistency with the 2021 Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

The proposed draft Environmental Safety and Public Services Element (Attachment 2) contains goals, policies, and implementation programs that focus on:

- Strengthening the resilience of the community and the built environment against environmental hazards, including geologic and seismic hazards, flooding, wildfire, poor air quality and climate change effects, hazardous materials, and aviation hazards from the San Carlos Airport,
- Providing fire prevention and suppression services,
- Planning for disaster preparedness and evacuation, and
- Providing public services such as schools, police service, fire service, libraries, and community building activities.

The proposed implementation programs address a wide range of City activities including: procedures, permits, agreements, and ordinances; special projects; outreach and education programs; and interagency coordination and consultation with other organizations.

New goals include:

- Goal ESPS-3 Agency Coordination: A resilient San Carlos is well prepared to minimize risks associated with wildfire.
- Goal ESPS-4: Develop a community that proactively prevents wildfires and protects life, property, and infrastructure from urban and wildfire impacts.
- Goal ESPS-8: A community that is resilient against changing climate conditions.
- Goal ESPS-9: The City of San Carlos has a sustainable and resilient water supply despite the potential for more frequent and severe drought conditions.
- Goal ESPS-10: A community that is resilient during and after extreme heat and severe weather events.
- Goal ESPS-11: A community that is protected against sea level rise and safeguards the natural and built environment from inundation due to rising sea levels.
- Goal ESPS-12: A community protected against rising groundwater levels caused by sea level rise.

CAL FIRE Review of Wildfire Policies

As a part of the review process, the wildfire policies are required to be reviewed and approved by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). CAL FIRE reviewed the Element's wildfire policies in early November and the Safety Element has been further revised to reflect these changes. The full text of the proposed Environmental Safety and Community Services Element Update can be found in Attachment 2.

For a summary of CAL FIRE's comments, and the City's response, refer to the table below.

CAL FIRE's Comments and Response

Page/Section	CAL FIRE Comment	Response
Page 207 – Section: Wildfire Hazards. Subsection: Background Information	<p>Provide a clearer definition for “State Responsibility Area (SRA)”; consider using the definition from the Riverside County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP):</p> <p><i>State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) are those lands within California that meet specific geographic and environmental criteria. These are areas where CAL FIRE has legal and financial responsibility for wildland fire protection and where CAL FIRE administers fire hazard classifications and building standard regulations. SRAs are defined as lands that 1) are county unincorporated areas, 2) are not federally owned, 3) have wildland vegetation cover rather than agricultural or ornamental plants, 4) have watershed and/or range/forage value, and 5) have housing densities not exceeding three units per acre.⁶⁰ Similar to the Federal Responsibility Areas (FRAs), where SRAs contain built environment or development, the responsibility for fire protection of those improvements (non-wildland) is that of a local government agency.</i></p>	Edit made
Page 208	Consider moving the Prevention and Awareness section and Protection section to the front of the Element.	No edit - This was a CAL FIRE suggestion, but not a requirement. Staff elected not to make this change because it would impact the numbering of the goals, policies, and programs within this document and within the Draft EIR.
Page 210 – Fire Hazards Severity Zones Map	Use the same colors for Moderate, High, and Very High that are used in the CAL FIRE FRAP maps.	Edit made
Page 213 – Action ESPS- 3.3	Use the term “less combustible native plants.”	Edit made
Page 215 – Action ESPS- 3.7	Remove the phrase “if the policy is unwritten” from the sentence: Adopt a formal written policy regarding the City’s policy allowing rebuilding in the VHFHSZ.	Edit made

Page 215 – Action ESPS-3.8	This is a great policy.	No edit needed
Page 217	Emphasize the importance and value of “home hardening.”	Edit made to include term in Action ESPS-3.18
Throughout	Replace “VHFSZ” with “VHFHSZ” (Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone)	Edit made

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the City’s Zoning Ordinance (Title 18 of the San Carlos Municipal Code) would be initiated to allow for fulfillment of the City’s RHNA by increasing the residential density within certain zoning designations, as well as by creating new zoning designations. The proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments are anticipated to include the multi-family residential and mixed-use categories, which would provide for development of some lower-level commercial/retail, and office. New zoning designations would include Multi-Family and Mixed-Use designations that would allow up to 120 dwelling units per acre. The new, higher density residential and mixed-use zoning designations would occur primarily along the El Camino Real corridor, San Carlos Avenue corridor, and in the Downtown area west of El Camino Real. The proposed amendments also include updating the development/design standards to remove housing development constraints (such as setbacks, height, parking, and open space requirements) and reflect recent changes in State law, and to better reflect current development practices and the new density changes. The Zoning Map will also be updated to reflect these changes (Attachment 6).

The proposed Title 18 and Zoning Map amendments are necessary to support the Housing Element update and include creating a new multiple family residential zone (RM-100) and increasing residential densities in certain mixed use zones as shown in Table 1 below**Error! Reference source not found..**

Table 1: Proposed Zones and Densities			
Existing Zone	Renamed Zone	Existing Density (units/acre)	Proposed Density (units/acre)
MU-N	MU-N-40	20	40
MU-N	MU-N-50	20	50
MU-N	MU-N-120	20	120
MU-DC	MU-DC-100	50	100
MU-D	MU-D-100	50	100
MU-D	MU-D-120	50	120
MU-SC	MU-SC-120	50	120
MU-NB	MU-NB-120	50	120
MU-SB	MU-SB-100	50	100
MU-SB	MU-SB-120	50	120

These proposed amendments reflect the City’s planning for additional multi-unit housing types in the multi-unit zones and in the mixed-use zones. New and amended zoning designations would include Multi-Unit and Mixed-Use designations that would allow up to 120 dwelling units per acre along El Camino Real and San Carlos Avenue.

The purpose of these amendments is to make Title 18 consistent with the goals, policies, and programs of the updated Housing Element for 2023-2031. Amendments to Title 18 are necessary to implement the Housing Element actions/programs as necessary to meet San Carlos' Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

To view the full scope of changes to the Zoning Ordinance, refer to Attachments 3 and 4, and to view the draft Zoning Map, refer to Attachment 6.

Since the Draft Zoning Ordinance amendments were released on October 17, 2022 in conjunction with the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) informational session on this project, requests for clarification and refinements to some of the proposed changes have been made by developers and recognized by staff. Attachment 5 provides an outline of additional items to address within the Zoning Ordinance. These additional items will be reflected in the January 3, 2023 edition of proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance for the PTC's review, and would subsequently come forward for City Council consideration on January 23, 2023.

NEXT STEPS:

Staff will present the entire Focused General Plan Update project, which includes the following eight components to the Planning and Transportation Commission for formal recommendation on January 3, 2023:

1. Environmental Impact Report
2. Housing Element, 2023-2031
3. Land Use Element, including revised Land Use Map
4. Environmental Safety and Public Services Element
5. Circulation Element (minor changes)
6. Noise Element (minor changes)
7. Environmental Management Element (minor changes)
8. Zoning Ordinance Amendments, including amendments to the Parking Chapter, and revised Zoning Map

The Planning and Transportation Commission will consider this item and make a formal recommendation on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. The meeting materials and all documents for this meeting will be available on the City's website on Thursday, December 22, 2022.

Following the Planning and Transportation Commission's recommendation, the Focused General Plan update will be considered for formal adoption by the City Council on January 23, 2023.

The timeline to adopt these changes is driven by a State mandate that Housing Elements be completed *by the end of January 2023*.

Although the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will be in the process of reviewing and commenting on San Carlos' Housing Element, the City will follow through on its obligation to adopt the Housing Element by the end of January. If the State requires substantial changes to the Housing Element, staff will bring these changes back to the Planning and Transportation Commission for recommendation, and City Council for approval to receive certification from HCD, determining that San Carlos' Housing Element complies with all state law requirements.

Respectfully submitted by:
Al Savay, Community Development Director

Approved for submission by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Maltbie', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jeff Maltbie, City Manager

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Draft General Plan Amendments (Land Use, Circulation, Noise, Environmental Management)
2. Draft Environmental Safety and Community Services Element – November 18, 2022
3. Draft Zoning Ordinance Amendments
4. Draft Parking Ordinance Amendments
5. Proposed Additional Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance for January 2023 Edition
6. Draft Zoning Map Amendments