



NOTICE OF PREPARATION AND PUBLIC HEARING

Program Environmental Impact Report Pleasanton Downtown Specific Plan Update

Date: March 9, 2018

To: Reviewing agencies; interested parties and organizations

From: Ellen Clark, Planning Manager

Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Pleasanton Downtown Specific Plan Update and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings on Tuesday, March 27, 2018, and Wednesday, March 28, 2018

The City of Pleasanton (City) is preparing an update to the City's Downtown Specific Plan. The City has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be necessary to evaluate environmental impacts of the project, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In compliance with CEQA, the City will be the Lead Agency and will prepare the EIR. Attached are the project description, maps of the Planning Area and regional context, and preliminary identification of environmental issues to be analyzed given probable environmental effects of the proposed Downtown Specific Plan.

The City requests your careful review and consideration of this notice, and is soliciting comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR from public agencies and private organizations and individuals. Note that the EIR may be used by public agencies when considering permitting or other approvals. Comments and responses to this notice must be submitted in writing to the Lead Agency Contact (see below) by the close of business on Monday, April 9, 2018. Please indicate a contact person for your agency or organization in your response. Comments may also be provided at the **EIR public scoping meetings**, scheduled as part of the regular meetings of the Downtown Specific Plan Update Task Force (**Tuesday, March 27, 2018; 6:30 p.m.**), and the Planning Commission (**Wednesday, March 28, 2018; 7:00 p.m.**). Both meetings will take place in the City Council Chamber located at 200 Old Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton, California, 94566.

Public Review Period: March 9 to April 9, 2018

For questions regarding this notice or the scoping meetings, please contact the Lead Agency Contact person:

Shweta Bonn, Senior Planner
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1 Project Contact Information

Project Title	Pleasanton Downtown Specific Plan Update
Lead Agency Name	City of Pleasanton
Contact Person	Shweta Bonn, Senior Planner
Address	City of Pleasanton, Community Development Department P.O. Box 520 Pleasanton, CA 94566
Phone	925-931-5611
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Project Sponsor Name and Address (same as lead agency)	City of Pleasanton P.O. Box 520 Pleasanton, CA 94566

2 Project Location

PLANNING AREA LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

Pleasanton is located in Alameda County, one of nine Bay Area counties bordering the San Francisco Bay (Figure 1). At the subregional level, Pleasanton is a part of the Tri-Valley area, along with unincorporated portions of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, the Town of Danville, and the cities of Dublin, Livermore, and San Ramon.

The 307-acre Pleasanton Downtown Specific Plan planning area is generally situated in the central portion of the city (Figure 2). The Planning Area is approximately bounded by the Alameda County Fairgrounds to the west, the Arroyo del Valle and Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) tracks to the north, a generally straight-line projection of Second and Third streets to the east, and Bernal Avenue to the south (Figure 3).

PLANNING AREA CHARACTERISTICS

The key distinguishing characteristics of the downtown planning area are its historic quality and small-town scale. Turn-of-the-century to 1950s-era single-family homes and commercial buildings dominate the landscape and create a sense of history and community that is treasured by the citizens of Pleasanton and visitors alike. Downtown is bisected in a north/south direction by Main Street. The ACE tracks and Alameda County Transportation Corridor tend to segment areas of the downtown to the west and east, respectively. The Arroyo del Valle and its protected open space riparian buffer averages approximately 200 feet in width and flows in a westerly direction along the northern portion of the planning area, eventually draining off-site into the Arroyo de la Laguna. The terrain of the planning area is generally flat with a gradual upslope beginning east of Second Street. The only undeveloped natural area is the Arroyo del Valle.

Existing land uses (and land use designations in the General Plan, the 2002 Downtown Specific Plan, and zoning designations) within Downtown generally include and allow for a variety of commercial uses, varying densities of residential uses, and parks/open space.

3 Project Description

BACKGROUND

Pleasanton's first Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) was adopted in 1989 and was comprehensively updated in 2002. Subsequently in 2016, the City Council authorized a further update to the DSP to address recent changes and opportunities in the downtown area. Many of the policies in the 2002 Plan remain relevant and will be retained. The scope of the current DSP update is targeted in nature, focusing primarily on a vision for the Civic Center area, transitions between downtown land uses, and improvements to the public realm.

A key component of the DSP update is consideration of alternative land uses for approximately 13-acres of City-owned properties that are the current site of City offices, the Pleasanton Public Library, the Police Station, and other municipal uses. In late 2016, the City Council accepted the Pleasanton Civic Center/Library Master Plan, which envisions the civic center and library at a new location across Bernal Avenue to the southwest, at Bernal Community Park. Approval of the proposed relocation of the civic center and library is subject to vote of the people and is therefore not yet final. In the event that relocation is approved, the DSP update will provide a vision and a conceptual land use plan for the redevelopment of the approximately nine-acre existing civic center property and an adjacent four-acre vacant City-owned property, developed with input from the community.

PLANNING PROCESS

The DSP update process began in late 2016. The City and professional services team began the process by preparing existing conditions memoranda on existing land use, urban design, streetscape and mobility, and economic conditions in downtown Pleasanton. Community members were invited to participate in the planning process from the initial visioning stage through the development of alternatives. From March through November 2017, City staff solicited public feedback on visions and alternatives through mailed materials, a community workshop, the project website (www.ptowndtown.org), two online surveys, and City staff-led small group and pop-up meetings.

Throughout the update process, City staff and the professional services team have met regularly with a 10-member Task Force consisting of City Council members, Planning Commissioners, representatives from Pleasanton Downtown Association and the City's Economic Vitality Committee, and at-large members appointed by City Council. The Task Force has provided guidance on the Plan's vision, options and alternatives for key streets, new uses for the existing civic center site, regulations for ground floor uses, a "base" land use plan, and corresponding set of strategies, and draft plan policies.

The Task Force will continue to provide guidance on preparation of the draft plan, and will ultimately recommend a draft plan to City Council for consideration.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The DSP is the city's guide for development in downtown Pleasanton, establishing policies and programs related to land use, circulation, infrastructure, historic preservation, urban design, economic development, and the environment. The overarching objective of the DSP remains improving the viability of downtown while preserving its small-town character and scale. However, in order to address changes and opportunities downtown, the following objectives have been established for the DSP Update:

- Provide clear and consistent policy guidance;
- Provide a framework for new development on significant opportunity sites, particularly the existing civic center site;
- Ensure consistency and integration with recent and ongoing planning efforts;
- Achieve the most desirable mix of land uses, including residential, retail, and office throughout the downtown area, including ground floor uses along Main Street;
- Ensure a high-quality, well-designed public realm;
- Improve connections from Main Street to side streets; and
- Improve the mobility of cars, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians in the downtown area.

With the active involvement of the community and the DSP Task Force, a base plan was developed and presented to City Council. The base plan was reviewed by the City Council on December 19, 2017, and revised in response to its comments. The Task Force reviewed the revised base plan on January 23, 2018. Its key features include:

- A conceptual land use plan that includes a mix of housing, commercial, visitor-oriented and open space uses to provide a vision for the 13-acre cluster of City-owned properties, should the civic center and library relocation be approved by voters;
- Two new mixed-use land use designations to complement the range of residential, commercial, public, and open space uses currently in the DSP, including a pedestrian-oriented *Mixed Use Downtown* designation and a lower intensity *Mixed Use Transitional* designation with operating characteristics that would be more compatible and appropriate for adjacent residential uses (generally, development intensities specified in the DSP update would remain within the existing envelope identified by the City of Pleasanton General Plan, current DSP, and Zoning Ordinance);
- Streetscape improvements to Peters Avenue for the inclusion of bicycle facilities;
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections from First Street to the Alameda Transportation Corridor;
- Strategic relocation of street trees along Main Street to create additional space for pedestrians and outdoor dining;
- Closure of Division Street between Main Street and Railroad Avenue to vehicular traffic to allow for dedicated pedestrian use; and
- Incorporation of enhanced materials and amenities into the streetscape where appropriate (such as colored pavers, signs, plantings, and benches).

Additional information about the Downtown Specific Plan update process, background, and supporting documents are available at www.ptowndtown.org.

4 Environmental Impact Report

The EIR will fulfill CEQA requirements for environmental review of the updated Downtown Specific Plan. The City determined that an EIR is necessary for the DSP update following preliminary review of the project; as such, no initial study has been prepared or is required,

pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a). The EIR will provide a programmatic environmental assessment of the potential consequences of implementing the draft Downtown Specific Plan update. It will discuss how land use and circulation changes, and implementation of other proposed DSP policies could potentially affect the environment, identify significant impacts, and recommend measures to mitigate those impacts. The EIR will also: evaluate potential cumulative and growth-inducing effects of the draft DSP update; consider and analyze alternatives to the draft DSP update; and identify the environmentally superior alternative.

The assessment of environmental impacts will utilize the most current guidelines for CEQA and for each issue area, including greenhouse gas emissions/global climate change. Community members can provide input at two different phases in the EIR process: in response to this Notice of Preparation (where comments are solicited on the scope of the EIR), and to the Draft EIR itself when that document is released.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO BE CONSIDERED

The environmental factors listed below have the potential to be affected by the updated DSP and will be analyzed in the EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural, Tribal, and Historic Resources
- Energy, Climate Change, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Geology and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology, Drainage, and Water Quality
- Land Use, Population, and Housing
- Noise and Vibration
- Public Services and Recreation
- Traffic and Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems

The EIR will evaluate whether the updated Downtown Specific Plan may potentially result in one or more significant environmental effects related to the above topics.

EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

CEQA allows environmental effects for which there is no likelihood of a significant impact to be “scoped out” of the EIR analysis. The following effects have been determined not to be significant, as outlined below. Full documentation of the factual basis for this determination will be included in the EIR. Unless specific comments are received during the NOP public comment period that indicate a potential for the project to result in significant impacts, these less than significant effects will be addressed briefly in the EIR and “scoped out.”

Based on characteristics of the planning area, the following two topic areas will be included in the *Effects Found Not to Be Significant* section of the EIR: agriculture and forestry, and mineral resources. No agricultural activities or activities related to mineral resources occur within the planning area boundaries, and none of the properties are designated for agricultural use or as relevant for mineral resources by the City of Pleasanton General Plan or Zoning Ordinance, or by the State of California. These conditions preclude the possibility of impacts on agricultural and forestry or mineral resources; therefore, these issues will not be analyzed further by the EIR.

ALTERNATIVES

CEQA requires that an EIR analyze a range of alternatives to the proposed project that “include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic purposes of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant impacts” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6 (d)(2)). The alternatives discussion must also include an evaluation of the *No Project* alternative to allow decision-makers to compare the impacts of approving the Proposed Project against the impacts of not approving it.

Staff will provide options for alternatives for public discussion at the scheduled scoping meetings.