



Legislation Text

File #: 22-761, **Version:** 1

Report regarding consideration of adoption of resolutions recommending that the City Council adopt documents related to the comprehensive update of the General Plan, including the 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update, and certification of an overarching Environmental Impact Report (*Lisa Costa Sanders, Project Administrator and Billy Gross, Principal Planner*)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Planning Commission conduct the public hearing and take the following actions:

1. Adopt a Resolution making findings and recommending that the City Council certify the Environmental Impact Report, including adoption of the Statement of Overriding Considerations and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, for the 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update.
2. Adopt a Resolution making findings and recommending that the City Council adopt the 2040 General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan Update.
3. Adopt a Resolution making findings and recommending that the City Council introduce an Ordinance repealing certain sections of Title 20 of the South San Francisco Municipal Code and adopt the Zoning Ordinance Update, including a new Title 20 and Zoning Map.

Introduction

The City Council initiated South San Francisco's General Plan update process in early 2019 by forming a General Plan Community Advisory Committee (GPCAC) and selecting Rami + Associates consultant team to guide the effort. The update process includes a comprehensive update of the General Plan, Climate Action Plan, Zoning Code and preparation of an overarching Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The process to date has included substantial community engagement meetings with the public, GPCAC, Planning Commission and City Council (see Attachment 1 -Summary of Public Outreach Meetings).

Following the three-year public engagement process, the 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update, and Zoning Ordinance Update are presented for formal consideration by the Planning Commission for a recommendation to the City Council for adoption. The Environmental Impact Report, analyzing all three documents, is also presented for consideration.

The Planning Commission is the official recommending body to the City Council on amendments to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance following the occurrence of a duly noticed public hearing.

Background/Discussion

General Plan

A General Plan is the local government's long-term blueprint for the community's vision of future growth. Each city is required by California law to have a General Plan to guide its future land use decisions. South San

Francisco's last comprehensive General Plan update occurred in 1999.

Per state law, the general plan includes the following mandatory elements - land use, circulation, housing, conservation, environmental justice, air quality, open space, noise, and safety. The general plan also addresses the following additional topics - community design, mobility, parks, community health, resilience, community services, economic development and climate protection.

The document is organized into four parts - *Our Place* contains elements that focus on the built environment, *Our People* contains elements that focus on the safety and the well-being of the people, *Our Environment* contains elements that focus on the natural environment, and *Our Plan to Get There* summarizes the implementation actions to achieve the vision and critical goals of the General Plan. The 2040 General Plan Update establishes a detailed range of policies related to housing, employment, public realm, connectivity, and more in the Downtown, East of 101, El Camino Real, and Lindenville sub-areas, which are the sub-areas anticipated to undergo the most change under the General Plan horizon. For the other residential sub-areas, little change is expected over the General Plan horizon and, thus, the 2040 General Plan Update establishes a framework to enhance existing assets and character.

Our Place Elements

The **Land Use and Community Design** chapter (Chapter 5) of the General Plan designates the land uses and density/intensity of development as depicted on the land use map. The Land Use chapter includes policies and actions to create complete neighborhoods, transit-oriented communities, diverse high-quality housing, quality spaces, and policies to improve disadvantaged communities.

Chapter 6: **Sub-Areas** of the Draft General Plan includes more detailed policies for each of the eleven sub-areas of the city. The areas of change are focused on East of 101, Lindenville, Downtown and El Camino. Other areas of the city are not expected to undergo significant change and do not have any land use designation changes. The chapter includes policies for the residential sub-areas including more convenient bicycle and pedestrian access; improved access to parks; open space and childcare; and infill housing development on former school sites.

The Draft General Plan also includes an optional element, Chapter 8: **A Prosperous Economy for All** to further economic development and equity in the community. This chapter includes key policies and actions to support workforce development and business support.

The **Mobility and Access** chapter (Chapter 9) is the City's transportation element. The anticipated development under the General Plan doubles the travel demand citywide, triples travel demand in the East of 101 and Lindenville sub-areas and adds 3 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per day. This chapter includes a new multimodal network map with new roadways to address capacity and connectivity, and complete street improvements. The chapter includes key policies and actions with multimodal performance metrics, addresses equity in mobility access, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policy update and an East of 101 trip cap to manage district-wide effects on traffic.

Chapter 10: **Abundant and Accessible Parks and Recreation**, is the City's open space element. This chapter includes key policies and actions to support a system of well-connected parks, open spaces, trails and recreational facilities that serve all of South San Francisco and promote use of active transportation, exercise and health.

The General Plan Update incorporates certain existing Area and Specific Plans formally into the General Plan Update and removes others.

- The Bay West Cove Specific Plan and the Terrabay Specific Plan have been incorporated and will be replaced by the 2040 General Plan Update thereby eliminating these Specific Plans.
- The East of 101 Area Plan and associated Resolution 84-97 are now unnecessary and will be replaced by the 2040 General Plan Update thereby eliminating both of these documents.

Our Plan Elements

Chapter 11: **Equitable Community Services** provides the opportunity to address the underlying causes of inequities through topics such as community engagement, implementation of the 2021 SSF Racial and Social Equity Action Plan, and prioritizing amenities and services in disadvantaged communities.

The **Community Health and Environmental Justice** chapter (Chapter 12) addresses existing community health concerns as well as approaches to managing new development to prevent future health and environmental justice issues. Key ideas include providing access to timely and high quality preventive and health services and to fresh, affordable and culturally relevant produce.

Chapter 13: **Community Resilience** includes goals and policies that will proactively advance community resilience, preparing the community for all hazards, including climate disruption, while ensuring a high quality response and recovery from future disasters.

Our Environment Elements

Climate Protection is the topic of Chapter 14, recognizing the risks posed by climate change and aiming to protect natural resources and community from potential climate change impacts. This chapter sets goals of achieving a 40% reduction in community emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2045.

Chapter 15: **Environmental and Cultural Stewardship** highlights the City's vision to foster urban ecology, protect its cultural and historic resources, to create an abundant urban forest that supports vegetation and wildlife, to protect open spaces, and to steward the San Francisco Bay and Colma Creek.

The last chapter dealing with the environment is Chapter 16: **Noise**, designed to provide policies that will guide development in a manner that protects the residents and employees of South San Francisco from exposure to unacceptable noise and vibration levels.

The Draft General Plan was published for public review and comment on March 1, 2022. Several community meetings (both virtual and in person) as well as meetings with the CAC, Planning Commission and City Council were conducted to receive comments on the Draft General Plan. A list of the comments and responses to the General Plan is included as Attachment 2. The final General Plan is included as Exhibit A to the General Plan Resolution recommending City Council adoption of the 2040 General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan Update.

Zoning Code

The Zoning Ordinance is required to be consistent with the General Plan and provides the development and land use regulations to implement the General Plan. The Zoning Ordinance Update identifies permitted, conditionally permitted or prohibited uses, clarifies the types of buildings or structures and the desired character of the community (size, height, configuration and lot coverage).

The Zoning Ordinance Update includes new citywide design standards for all residential development in compliance with State law and a form-based code approach in certain districts to regulate new development. The Zoning Ordinance Update also includes a new Floodplain/Sea Level Rise Overlay zone, updated parking standards, a new Community Benefits Program for non-residential development proposals, and an updated Transportation Demand Management chapter.

The Draft Zoning Ordinance Update was released for public review and comment on June 8, 2022. Several community meetings (both virtual and in person) as well as meetings with the CAC, Planning Commission and City Council were conducted to receive comments. Revisions to the Zoning Ordinance Update have been incorporated in response to those comments; see Attachment 4. The final Zoning Ordinance Update is included as Exhibit A to the Zoning Ordinance Amendment Resolution recommending City Council adoption.

Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) outlines how the City will create new policies, programs and services that will support the community in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The current CAP was prepared in 2014 which set emission targets to the year 2020.

The CAP Update provides programs to reduce emissions by 40% by year 2030 and 80% by the year 2040 with a long-term goal of carbon neutrality by 2045. The goals of the CAP Update are to equitably mitigate and address the impacts of climate change and realize the co-benefits of climate mitigation actions that help create a sustainable community. The CAP Update programs cover the areas of clean energy; energy efficient building construction; multimodal, sustainable, livable and connected transportation; water efficiency and a safe and resilient water supply; diversion of solid waste and organics from landfill; and increases carbon sequestration in public lands, open spaces and urban forest through marsh enhancement and tree planting.

The CAP is the City's plan to meet several State regulations, and incorporates existing City plans and policies and programs as well as plans for future programs. The CAP Update is a standalone document intended to be updated every 5 years.

The Draft CAP Update was made available for public review and comment on March 1, 2022. Several community meetings (virtual and in person) as well as meetings with the CAC, Planning Commission and City Council were conducted to receive comments. A list of the comments and responses to the Climate Action Plan are included as Attachment 3. The final Climate Action Plan is included as Exhibit B to the General Plan Resolution recommending City Council adoption of the 2040 General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan Update.

Environmental Impact Report

The General Plan EIR provides a complete evaluation of the 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update as the proposed "Project", and the cumulative impacts of the Project along with other existing and proposed uses and alternatives to the Project. The purpose of an EIR is to disclose information to the public and to decision makers about the potential environmental effects of a proposed project. An EIR does not recommend either approval or denial of a proposed project; rather, it is intended to provide a source of independent and impartial analysis of the foreseeable environmental impacts of a proposed course of action.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168, the EIR is a program-level EIR. Specifically, the EIR provides a program-level analysis of the potential effects on the environment that could occur from implementation of the

proposed project, which comprises buildout of the proposed General Plan. This EIR serves as a master CEQA document that will provide environmental clearance for the future developments consistent with the 2040 General Plan Update or will allow those projects to tier-off this Final EIR if further site-specific analysis is warranted.

The Final EIR consists of:

- 1) The Draft EIR
- 2) Comment letters received during the review period for the Draft EIR
- 3) Responses to the comment letters
- 4) Changes to the Draft EIR and relevant changes to the Draft General Plan

Evaluation of the Project

The Environmental Impact Report evaluates the impact of implementation of the 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update. The 2040 General Plan Update anticipates approximately 14,312 net new housing units and approximately 42,297 net new employment opportunities by 2040. The project includes amendments to the Zoning Ordinance necessary to implement the 2040 General Plan Update and incorporates Specific Plans that were previously adopted. The project also includes the Climate Action Plan Update, which includes a community-wide inventory of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and identifies strategies and measures to reduce GHG emissions generated by existing and future uses in the City.

Significant Impacts Identified & Mitigated

The EIR identifies potential significant impacts that with implementation of identified mitigation measures, can be reduced to less than significant impacts. The mitigation measures are included in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program as attached to the Resolution.

The following CEQA categories have impacts that can be reduced through mitigation:

- Aesthetics, Light and Glare
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology, Soils and Seismicity
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHGs)
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Population, Housing and Employment
- Public Services and Recreation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The DEIR identifies the proposed Project would result in several significant unavoidable adverse impacts as

feasible mitigation measures have either not been identified, have uncertain feasibility, or may not be effective in reducing the impacts to a less than significant level. These impacts, related to air quality and transportation, are as follows:

- **Project-Level Vehicle Miles Traveled:** The proposed project's Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) would result in a significant impact for citywide Total VMT per Service Population and for work-based VMT per employee. The proposed project would implement Mitigation Measure (MM) TRANS-1, which would require the City to implement its Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Ordinance as part of the Zoning Code Amendments and parking requirements to reduce project-generated VMT. MM TRANS-1 also requires the City to update its TDM Ordinance and parking requirements every 5 to 10 years and establishes an East of 101 Area Trip Cap, to achieve the maximum feasible reductions in vehicle travel. However, even with the implementation of the General Plan Update policies and actions and implementation of MM TRANS-1, the effectiveness of VMT reduction strategies cannot be quantified in this programmatic analysis. Therefore, the City of South San Francisco may not achieve the overall VMT threshold reduction level and the impact would remain significant and unavoidable. This impact is also considered significant and unavoidable under the cumulative analysis.
- **Project-Level Roadway Safety:** Implementation of the proposed project would increase vehicle trips on the City's freeway ramps, which would cause vehicle queues to exceed offramp storage capacity or exacerbate offramps that already experience offramp queues exceeding storage capacity, resulting in a potentially significant impact. The proposed project would implement MM TRANS-4, which would require the City to work with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to develop improvement measures for freeway offramps and adjacent intersections that help manage offramp queues to minimize queueing hazards. MM TRANS-1 is also applicable and would be implemented to minimize freeway offramp queues. However, even with the implementation of General Plan Update policies and actions and implementation of MM TRANS-4 and MM TRANS-1, given the uncertainty around specific operational conditions and ability to mitigate such conditions in a constrained right-of-way, this impact remains significant and unavoidable. This impact is also considered significant and unavoidable under the cumulative analysis.
- **Project-Level Conflict with 2017 Bay Area Clean Air Plan:** The VMT growth facilitated by the proposed project would constitute an approximately 94 percent growth through 2040 while population growth facilitated by the proposed project would constitute an approximately 61 percent growth through 2040. The forecasted VMT growth would outpace the forecasted population growth facilitated by the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would be considered inconsistent with the 2017 Clean Air Plan. The proposed project would implement MM TRANS-1, which would achieve the maximum feasible reductions in vehicle travel. However, even with the implementation of the General Plan Update policies and actions and implementation of MM TRANS-1, the effectiveness of VMT reduction strategies cannot be quantified in this programmatic analysis and the City of South San Francisco may not achieve the overall VMT threshold reduction level. As such, this impact would be significant and unavoidable. This impact is also considered significant and unavoidable under the cumulative analysis.
- **Project-Level Criteria Air Pollutants:** Because the proposed project's projected VMT growth outpaces projected population growth, the proposed project would result in a cumulatively considerable net increase in criteria pollutants, and this impact would be potentially significant. The proposed project

would implement MM TRANS-1, which would achieve the maximum feasible reductions in vehicle travel. However, as there is no reasonable mitigation that could be implemented to increase population projections while keeping VMT growth to a minimum in an area that is already fully urbanized and built out, such as the City of South San Francisco, this impact would remain significant and unavoidable after mitigation. This impact is also considered significant and unavoidable under the cumulative analysis

Alternatives Analysis

An EIR is required to assess a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project that would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project while avoiding or substantially lessening any of the significant impacts of the project and evaluate the comparative merits of each alternative.

Three alternatives to the proposed project were evaluated and are discussed in detail in the DEIR. The three alternatives are:

- **Alternative 1-No Project Alternative/1999 General Plan** - Under the No Project Alternative/1999 General Plan, the General Plan would not be updated with new policies and no zoning or land use designation changes would occur. Future development would be in accordance with the current land use and zoning maps identified in the 1999 General Plan. The 1999 General Plan provided for development of then-approved projects plus future development of a total of 2,780 housing units and 9 million square feet of nonresidential space to the City's current inventory of an estimated 19,400 housing units and 18.1 million square feet of nonresidential development. The 1999 General Plan estimated a population of 67,400 at projected buildout in 2020. Existing land uses in 2019 include 24,647 residential units and 31,906,205 square feet of commercial/industrial/civic space. Additionally, under this alternative the Zoning Code would not be updated, and the City would not consider updating the existing Climate Action Plan. Under this alternative, the current goals, policies, and zoning would remain in place through the horizon year.
- **Alternative 2-Decreased Employment Alternative** - Under the Decreased Employment Alternative, there would be a 25 percent decrease in nonresidential uses in the East of 101, Lindenville, and El Camino subareas to decrease the number of employment opportunities and improve the jobs/housing balance in the City. It is assumed that these decreases would not occur within 0.333 mile of existing transit. This alternative was selected because it would decrease VMT associated with employment and would therefore result in reduced traffic related impacts compared to the proposed project.
- **Alternative 3-Increased Residential Alternative** - This alternative would propose an increase in residential development along the El Camino Real transit corridor through increased density zoning (see Exhibit 4-2). This alternative would result in an increase in approximately 500 dwelling units compared to the proposed project. An additional 3,017 residential units would be added to this area (compared to the 2,524 units under the proposed project). Approximately 95 acres of what is now proposed as Medium-Density Mixed Use along El Camino Real and around the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station would be designated as High-Density Mixed Use, resulting in a change in maximum allowable density from 120 dwelling units per acre to 180 dwelling units per acre. Maximum building heights for these parcels would increase from 85 feet to 120 feet. This alternative was selected because it would reduce the jobs to housing imbalance; thereby reducing VMT impacts associated with commuting compared to the proposed project.

Review and Acceptance of the EIR

The Planning Commission is required to conduct a public hearing and if it finds the Final EIR to be adequate, make a recommendation to the City Council on certification of the EIR. Where significant and unavoidable

impacts are identified, findings and a statement of overriding considerations are required to be made at the City Council level. The findings indicate that the decision makers have weighed the economic, legal, social, technological and other benefits of the 2040 General Plan against significant and unavoidable environmental impacts and determined that the *potential* adverse environmental effects may be considered acceptable.

The findings are included as Exhibit A to the CEQA Resolution recommending the City Council certify the Final EIR. The Final EIR, including the Response to Comments, is included as Exhibit B, and the Draft EIR as Exhibit C.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no immediate fiscal impact at this time.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update include goals, policies and actions that are related to each of the Strategic goals of Workforce Development, Quality of Life, Public Safety, Financial Stability, Economic Vitality and Community Connections.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Planning Commission recommend the City Council take the following actions:

1. Adopt a Resolution making findings and recommending that the City Council certify the Environmental Impact Report, including adoption of the Statement of Overriding Considerations and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, for the 2040 General Plan Update, Climate Action Plan Update and Zoning Ordinance Update.
2. Adopt a Resolution making findings and recommending that the City Council adopt the 2040 General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan Update.
3. Adopt a Resolution making findings and recommending that the City Council introduce an Ordinance repealing certain sections of Title 20 of the South San Francisco Municipal Code and adopt the Zoning Ordinance Update, including a new Title 20 and Zoning Map.

Attachments

1. Summary of Public Outreach meetings
2. General Plan Comments and Responses
3. Climate Action Plan Comments and Responses
4. Zoning Ordinance Comments and Responses
5. Staff Presentation

Associated Files and Exhibits

1. CEQA Resolution (22-762)
 - a. Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding considerations
 - i. Mitigation and Monitoring Reporting Program (MMRP)
 - b. Final EIR, including Response to Comments
 - c. Draft EIR

2. General Plan Resolution (22-763)

- a. General Plan
- b. Climate Action Plan

3. Zoning Code Amendment Resolution (22-764)

- a. Zoning Code Amendment Ordinance
 - i. Zoning Code Update
 - ii. Zoning Map Update