



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

March 15, 2022

Location: Citywide

Request for: Scoping Meeting on the Focused General Plan Update EIR (Related to the Housing, Land Use and Public Safety Element, Environmental Justice goals, policies, and programs and Associated Zoning and Municipal Code Amendments)

Applicant: City of Redwood City

CEQA: Environmental Impact Report

Planner: Diana O'Dell
Principal Planner
dodell@redwoodcity.org
(650)780-7236

Notice of Preparation Focused General Plan Update



Reason for the Request: Provide input on the scope and content of the Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Focused General Plan Update Related to the Housing, Land Use and Public Safety Element, Environmental Justice goals, policies, and programs and Associated Zoning and Municipal Code Amendments.

Key Considerations: Potential environmental impacts that should be addressed in the document.

Public Notice: On March 4, 2022, ten days before to the hearing date, notice of the Planning Commission hearing was posted on the website, and placed in the San Mateo Daily Journal. In addition, on March 4, 2022, the Notice of Preparation was published in accordance with CEQA. No comments were received as of the preparation of this report.

Staff Recommendation:



Receive Comments.

Hold a public hearing and receive comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP). No decision will be made at this hearing.

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Scoping Meeting for Focused General Plan EIR (including Housing Element)

BACKGROUND

In February 2021, the City of Redwood City launched a Focused General Plan Update that focuses on the Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice Elements. The Housing Element contains information about housing needs, constraints to building that housing, and an explanation of City resources for building housing, as well as goals, policies and programs that will meet that the City's housing needs as identified by ABAG. These housing needs, also called the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA), includes housing targets at all income levels. As part of the Housing Element, the City must proactively identify individual sites that collectively can support the total amount of new units needed to meet the RHNA. The minimum RHNA requirement is 4,588 homes, but the City is targeting 150 percent of the minimum RHNA in order to increase flexibility and address jobs housing concerns.

In addition to the Housing Element, the City must review and update the Land Use Element of the General Plan, which includes both the Land Use Map and goals, policies, and programs to ensure consistency with the Housing Element. The City is also required to update the Safety Element, which identifies natural and man-made hazards such as wildfire and flood zones and areas with hazardous materials. This update will focus on ensuring compliance with recent State law regarding evacuations, wildfire risk, sea level rise, and climate adaptation strategies. State law also requires cities to adopt an Environmental Justice Element, or related policies to decrease pollution burdens, increase health, improve population characteristics, and improve long-term community participation in disadvantaged communities.

Each amended element must meet certain requirements and the Housing Element must be completed by State mandated deadlines. In addition to the Housing, Safety and Environmental Elements, other General Plan Elements may need to be updated to ensure consistency in accordance with State law and General Plan Guidelines. The amendments to the Elements of the City's General Plan contain goals, policies, and programs that provide City staff and decision-making bodies with a foundation for long-range planning related to physical development and public services. A brief project description and project objectives is contained in the Notice of Preparation (NOP, Attachment 1). The General Plan Update will undergo environmental review through an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), which will be prepared in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements.

TYPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

As the lead agency, the City of Redwood City has determined that the proposed Project will require preparation of a Program EIR pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Program EIR will evaluate the environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the Project and will recommend mitigation measures to avoid or reduce significant impacts, where applicable. The Program EIR also is intended to help the City review future project proposals pursuant to section 15168 (Program EIR) of the CEQA Guidelines.

A Program EIR is warranted because there is reasonable potential that the General Plan and associated Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Map, and Municipal Code amendments may result in new or more significant environmental effects for one or more of the following CEQA topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Transportation and Circulation

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Scoping Meeting for Focused General Plan EIR (including Housing Element)

- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire
- Cumulative Impacts
- Alternatives to the Proposed Project

NOTICE of PREPARATION (NOP) PURPOSE

The scoping process is designed to help the City determine the scope and contents of the EIR at an early stage, including identifying the range of actions, significant environmental effects, potential alternatives, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in the EIR and eliminating non-critical issues. The scoping period lasts for 30 days following the release of the NOP. The Planning Commission meeting falls within that 30-day window and serves as a scoping session for the Program EIR.

The scoping session serves as an opportunity for the Planning Commission and public to provide comments on the content in the EIR. Comments can be made on the scope, content, and focus of the analyses in any of the CEQA topic areas. Examples of topics for consideration could include suggested mitigation measures, variations or alternatives (e.g. increase or decrease in proposed housing density in a particular area, etc.), and cumulative impacts. These topics are only examples to help provide context to the Planning Commission and members of the public on the types of comments that could be provided on the EIR scope and are not intended to limit the scope of comments.

Verbal comments received during the scoping session and written comments received during the NOP comment period on the scope and content of the environmental review will be considered while preparing the draft EIR. NOP comments will not be responded to individually; however, all written comments on the NOP will be included in an appendix of the draft EIR, and a summary of all comments received (both written and verbal) on the NOP will be included in the body of the draft EIR. Staff will continue community engagement on the Housing Element process and other General Plan amendments concurrently with initiation of the environmental review. The City will be seeking additional community input on the proposed project components.

EIR ALTERNATIVES

The EIR will also include an evaluation of alternatives. The EIR will identify and conduct a comparative evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives, including the required no project alternative, and will identify an environmentally superior alternative. The EIR will also identify any alternatives considered but excluded from analysis in the EIR and will explain the reasons for their exclusion.

NEXT STEPS

The NOP comment period began on Friday, March 4, 2022 and will end on Monday, April 4, 2022. Comments and responses to the NOP must be made in writing and submitted by the identified deadline. The attached NOP provides more information on how to submit comments and the project planner to submit those comments to.

The City will seek public input on the draft EIR once completed (estimated summer of 2022) with a public comment review period of 45 days. During this time, the City will hold a public hearing with the Planning

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Scoping Meeting for Focused General Plan EIR (including Housing Element)

Commission to receive comments on the draft EIR. After the conclusion of the review period, the staff and consultant team will evaluate both written and verbal comments received on the draft EIR and prepare Responses to Comments document. Together the draft EIR and the Response to Comments document constitute the final EIR. At the completion of the environmental review, the Planning Commission will review the project together with the EIR and make a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council is the final deciding body and would make a final decision on the project and certify if the final EIR has been completed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

ATTACHMENTS

1. Notice of Preparation

REPORT PREPARED BY:

Diana O'Dell, Principal Planner

APPROVED BY:

Anna McGill, Principal Planner

Sue Exline, Assistant Director to the Community Development and Transportation Department.



NOTICE OF PREPARATION and NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

DATE: Friday, March 4, 2022
TO: Reviewing Agencies, Interested Parties and Organizations
FROM: City of Redwood City, Lead Agency
APPLICANT: City of Redwood City
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation and Scoping Meeting for a Program
Environmental Impact Report

PROJECT TITLE: City of Redwood City Focused General Plan Update Related to the Housing, Land Use and Public Safety Element, Environmental Justice goals, policies, and programs and Associated Zoning and Municipal Code Amendments (the “Project”).

PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE: This is a notification that the City of Redwood City will be the Lead Agency and will prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (**Program EIR**) for the Project. The City is requesting comments and guidance on the scope and content of the Program EIR from responsible and trustee agencies, interested public agencies, organizations, and the public (CEQA Guidelines 15082).

30-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD ENDING MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2022, AT 5:00 p.m.: You are invited to submit written comments and recommendations regarding the scope and content of the Program EIR that is being prepared. The project description, location maps, and preliminary identification of the potential environmental issues to be explored are attached to this notice.

SCOPING MEETING: The Planning Commission will conduct a scoping meeting via teleconference on **Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.** to collect oral comments on the scope of the EIR. See the instructions posted on the agenda 72 hours in advance on how to join the meeting will be available at the www.redwoodcity.org/pc on the Friday before the meeting.

MAKING A COMMENT: Comments should focus on discussing possible impacts on the physical environment, ways in which potential adverse effects might be minimized, and alternatives to the project consistent with the purpose of the environmental review. Note that if you challenge this Program EIR in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised during the review period of the EIR.

Please provide a contact name, phone number and email address with your comments and specify "Focused General Plan EIR" in the subject line. All comments or questions must be sent to:

Diana O'Dell, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City
1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 780-7236 | dodell@redwoodcity.org



March 4, 2022

Diana O'Dell, Principal Planner
City of Redwood City

Date

PROJECT LOCATION: The project will encompass the entirety of the City, which is located in the San Francisco Bay Area on the San Francisco Peninsula in southeastern San Mateo County. It is bounded on the west by the cities of San Carlos and Foster City, the cities of Atherton and Menlo Park on the east, the Town of Woodside, and unincorporated San Mateo County on the south, and by the San Francisco Bay to the north (Figure 1). The City of Redwood City encompasses approximately 19 square miles (approximately 34 square miles including the Bay and the sphere of influence), nearly all of which are developed with urban land uses (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Regional Context Map

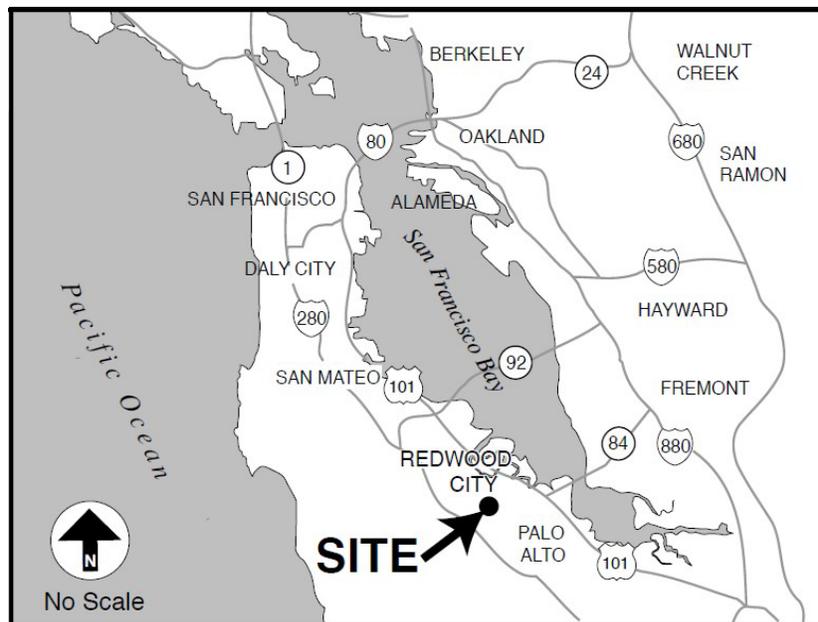
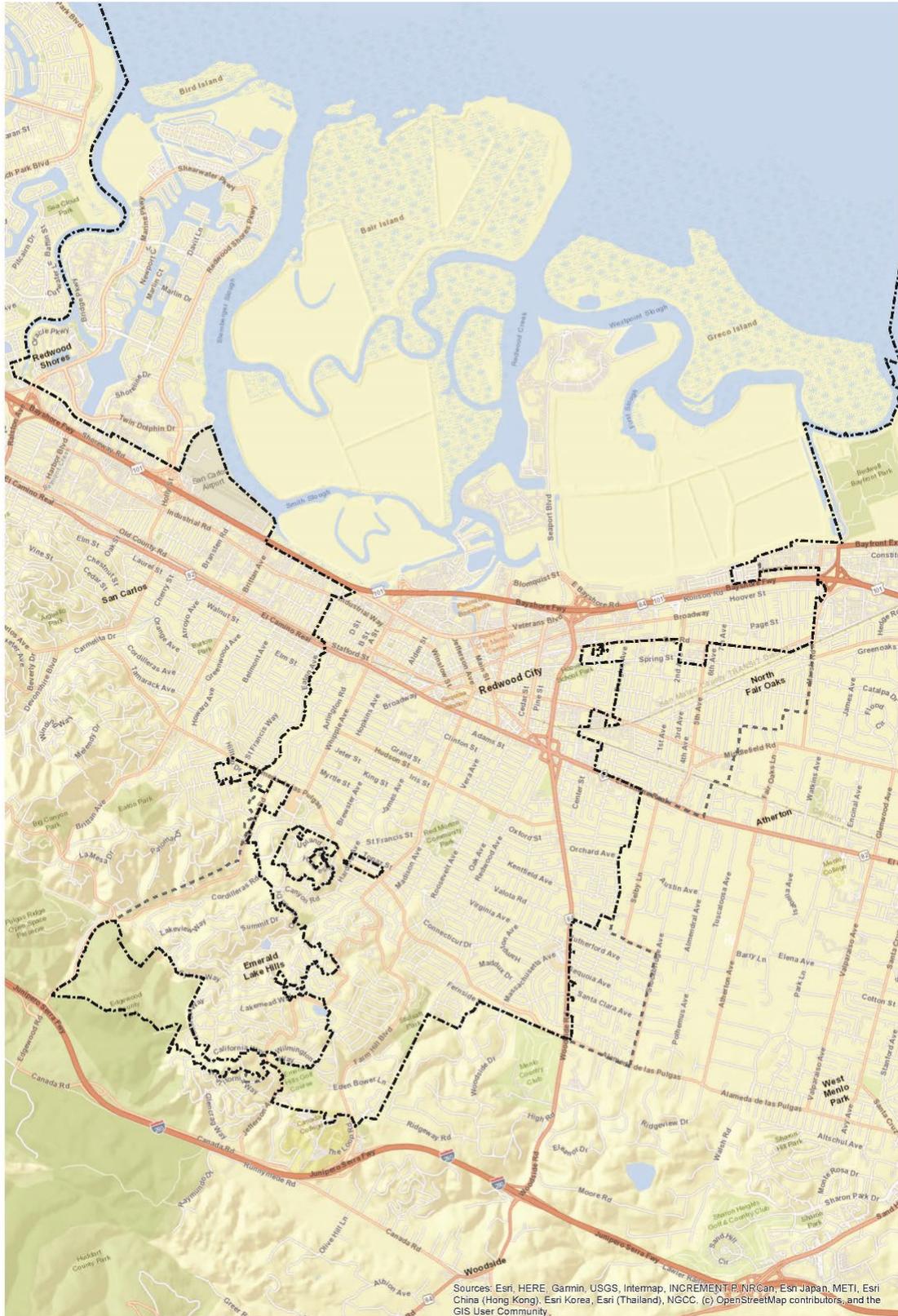


Figure 2 - Redwood City General Plan – Planning Area Map



PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The amendments to the Elements of the City’s General Plan described below include goals, policies, and programs that provide City staff and discretionary bodies with a foundation for long-range planning related to physical development and public services.

Housing Element Update - All cities and counties in California are required to meet their fair share of the State’s housing needs. The planning process for accomplishing this is typically implemented every eight years through an update of the Housing Element of each jurisdiction’s General Plan, which is a long-range policy document mandated by the State and further required to be reviewed and certified by the State of California’s Housing and Community Development Department (HCD).

California State law requires that each city and county have land zoned to accommodate its fair share of regional housing needs (the City’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation or “RHNA”) over the course of the Housing Element planning period. The Housing Element must identify adequate sites for housing, including rental housing, factory-built housing, mobile homes, and emergency shelters, and must make adequate provision for the existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community. The RHNA for the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) region is divided into four income categories: very low, low, moderate, and above moderate. Redwood City’s RHNA for the 2022-2031 planning period is 4,588 housing units, with the units distributed among the four income categories as shown in Figure 3. Through the Housing Element process, Redwood City will ensure that it has sufficient capacity under existing land use policy to meet its 2022-2031 RHNA obligations.

State law requires the City to plan for 100% of RHNA goals. However, targeting 150% of RHNA makes Redwood City eligible for a “pro-housing” designation, which would allow the City to compete for a new selection of grants. Planning for more housing than the RHNA minimum would also allow for flexibility in future development and create additional opportunities to address the jobs/housing imbalance. It would also increase opportunities for affordable housing to be constructed, benefitting low-income households. For these reasons, the City is targeting at least 150% of the required RHNA, or approximately 6,880 homes.

Figure 3 - Regional Housing Needs Allocation 2022-2031

Income Group	% of County AMI	Number of Units Allocated	Percent of Total Allocation
Very Low ¹	0-50%	1,115	24%
Low	>50-80%	643	14%
Moderate	>80-120%	789	17%
Above Moderate	120%+	2,041	44%
Total	--	4,588	100%

Note: Pursuant to AB 2634, local jurisdictions are also required to project the housing needs of extremely

low-income households (0-30% AMI). In estimating the number of extremely low-income households, a jurisdiction can use 50% of the very low-income allocation or apportion the very low-income figure based on Census data. Using the 50/50 calculation, the City's very low-income RHNA of 1,115 units can be split into 558 extremely low-income and 557 very low-income units.

The updated Housing Element portion of the Project would thus guide the City's future residential growth and development consistent with the City's RHNA obligations. The Housing Element will also incorporate State law requirements legislated since 2015.

Land Use Element Update – The Land Use Element update will amend General Plan policies and land use categories and descriptions to ensure consistency with the other proposed Housing, Safety, and Environmental Justice updates.

Safety Element Update – The Safety Element identifies natural and man-made hazards such as wildfire and flood zones and areas with hazardous materials. It establishes goals and programs to reduce the potential for short- and long-term risk of death, injury, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from these hazards. The update to this Element will focus on ensuring compliance with recent State law which requires the Safety Element to be reviewed and updated in conjunction with Housing Element updates. The update will address the following:

- Fire risk for land classified as very high fire hazard severity zones
- Sea level rise
- Climate adaptation strategies
- Vulnerability assessment
- Local hazard mitigation
- Resiliency strategies
- Identification of areas that may require additional evacuation routes

Other General Plan Updates – Local jurisdictions are required to incorporate Environmental Justice goals, policies, and programs in their general plan if they have a disadvantaged community (“environmental justice community”) and are concurrently adopting or revising two or more elements of their general plan. Redwood City has identified three environmental justice communities and is proposing to both amend existing goals, policies, and programs as well as add new goals, policies, and programs to address environmental justice needs.

Zoning Ordinance and Municipal Code Amendments to Text and Map – The above updates to various General Plan Elements may require associated Zoning Ordinance and Municipal Code amendments, including rezoning additional areas to a Mixed-Use Zoning District and rezoning areas with mobile home parks to allow mobile homes by right. Zoning text amendments would include, but are not limited, to removing the residential limit, or “cap,” for the Downtown Precise Plan, increasing the densities and heights permitted in existing Mixed Use zoning districts, reducing zoning constraints to building medium-density housing in the R-2 through R-

5 Zoning districts, and other associated amendments. These amendments would implement specific goals and policies to promote housing, streamline approvals, and affirmatively further fair housing and implement the goals and policies of other General Plan Elements, including Housing, Land Use, Safety, and Environmental Justice.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES: The Project promotes the objectives listed below for the long-term growth and enhancement of the community.

1. **Housing** - Comply with State law requiring an update to the Housing Element to incorporate the City's RHNA obligations.
2. **Housing** - Locate housing in places close to services, transit, and jobs and in existing high opportunity residential neighborhoods.
3. **Land Use Element** – To achieve consistency with the proposed Housing Element goals, policies, and programs
4. **Safety Element** - Comply with State law requiring an update to the Safety Element to incorporate information, goals, policies, and programs to address climate change, resiliency, sea level rise, flooding, and wildfire risk.
5. **Environmental Justice Goals, Policies and Programs** – Comply with State law and guidelines to implement goals, policies, and programs that address pollution burdens and population characteristics in environmental justice communities.

SCOPE OF PROGRAMMATIC EIR: As the lead agency, the City of Redwood City has determined that the proposed Project will require preparation of a Program EIR pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Program EIR will evaluate the environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the Project and will recommend mitigation measures to avoid or reduce significant impacts, where applicable. The Program EIR also is intended to help the City review future project proposals pursuant to section 15168 (Program EIR) of the CEQA Guidelines. The following environmental topics will be evaluated in the Program EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
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- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
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- Mineral Resources
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