

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
SUBJECT: SUMMER 2014 GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT PACKAGE:
OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION AND NOISE AND
SAFETY ELEMENTS UPDATE
STAFF PRESENTER: ERIN MORRIS, SENIOR PLANNER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

ISSUE(S)

Shall the Council approve the General Plan Amendment to update the Open Space and Conservation and Noise and Safety Elements of the General Plan?

BACKGROUND

1. Project History

In August 2013, the City of Santa Rosa began preparation of the Housing Element update. Upon revision to the Housing Element, Section 65302 of State law requires that the Conservation Element be updated to identify rivers, creeks, streams, flood corridors, riparian habitats, and land that may accommodate floodwater for purposes of groundwater recharge and stormwater management. In addition, the Safety Element must be updated regarding specific safety issues including flooding, dam inundation, and fire hazards.

When the City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit was adopted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board in 2010, the permit included a requirement to "amend, revise or update [the] General Plan to include watershed and storm water quality and quantity management considerations and policies as needed to remain consistent with [the Order]." These requirements have also been addressed as part of the technical update.

2. Project Description

The proposed General Plan Amendment includes changes to two elements of the General Plan, Open Space and Conservation and Noise and Safety. Text changes are highlighted in Attachment 1 (Draft Open Space and Conservation Element) and Attachment 2 (Draft Noise and Safety Element). "Strikeout" indicates text recommended for deletion, and proposed new text is underlined.

Open Space and Conservation Element

In Santa Rosa, the Conservation Element is combined with the Open Space Element. State law requires that the Conservation Element be updated to identify rivers, creeks, streams, flood corridors, riparian habitats, and land that may accommodate floodwater for purposes of groundwater recharge and stormwater management. Because the Open Space and Conservation Element was updated in 2009 to include a discussion about the Citywide Creek Master Plan (CCMP) and relevant policies from the CCMP, most State law provisions are already addressed, and there are only a few minor changes proposed to this chapter to address groundwater recharge and to modify some of the language discussing creeks and associated riparian habitat (see Attachment 1).

Groundwater recharge is a hydrologic process where water moves downward from surface water and infiltrates into the ground. According to the City's Groundwater Master Plan adopted by the City Council in 2013, significant natural recharge locations in the Santa Rosa plain are stream channels located along the eastern area of the City and outcrops of permeable soils in southwest Santa Rosa. References to groundwater recharge have been added to the Element along with the following new policy:

OSC-I-6 Protect groundwater recharge areas, particularly creeks and riparian corridors. Identify and protect other groundwater recharge areas.

This policy is not anticipated to have an effect on build out of the General Plan, because there are existing policies in place calling for preservation and enhancement of creeks and riparian corridors. There are studies in progress to determine the location of additional groundwater recharge areas.

Noise and Safety Element

Flood Hazards, Dam Inundation, and Stormwater

State law requires that the Safety Element be updated regarding flood hazards, dam inundation, and fire hazard severity zones. Since the General Plan was last updated in 2009, several 500-year flood hazard zones were identified along portions of Colgan Creek, Naval Creek, Roseland Creek, and Kawana Springs Creek. Figure 12-4 was updated to depict the location of all flood hazard zones, and to depict the most recent dam inundation information from the California Office of Emergency Services.

Dam inundation areas are those associated with the downstream inundation that would occur given a major structural failure in a nearby reservoir. A major earthquake could potentially cause damage or failure to a dam structure, and

cause localized flooding. Although dam failure is unlikely due to current state regulations for design, maintenance, and monitoring of dams, Santa Rosa is exposed to the hazard of inundation from failure of local dams such as Lake Ralphine and Fountaingrove Lake. Figure 12-4 illustrates the potential inundation boundaries for these two lakes.

Reference to the National Flood Insurance Program was added to note that Santa Rosa complies with program regulations to mitigate future flood losses through building and zoning ordinances and to provide access to affordable, federally backed flood insurance protection.

The following new policies have been included in the draft:

- NS-A-5 Locate essential public facilities, such as hospitals and clinics, emergency shelters, emergency command centers, and emergency communications facilities, outside of high fire risk areas, flood hazard zones, and areas subject to dam inundation.
- NS-D-6 Evaluate flood hazards prior to approval of development projects within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated flood zone. Ensure that new development within flood zones is designed to be protected from flooding without negatively affecting adjacent areas.

Policy NS-D-3 was updated to reference the Storm Water Low Impact Development Technical Design Manual (2011) and to identify current best management practices for stormwater treatment based on the manual.

Fire Hazards

A new map, Figure 12-5, was created to depict the location of Very High Fire Hazard Severity zones as required by the State. The map also depicts the Wildland Urban Interface zones within the Urban Growth Boundary. The Wildland Urban Interface encompasses four types of fire hazard severity zones; moderate, high, very high, and mutual threat. The mutual threat zone covers the geographical areas between two or more jurisdictions into which multiple agencies would respond to fires; in the case of Santa Rosa, the mutual threat zone is comprised of heavily vegetated areas interspersed with residential uses.

Wildland Fires policies NS-G-1, NS-G-2, and NS-G-3 were updated to discuss building and fire code requirements within Wildland Urban Interface area that are designed to reduce the risk of wildland fires and to help prevent fires from spreading. Protective measures include enhanced automatic fire sprinkler systems and development and implementation of vegetation management plans

to reduce the risk of wildfires and to help prevent fires from spreading by ensuring a higher level of property maintenance in these areas.

ANALYSIS

1. General Plan

The proposed General Plan Amendment was initiated because State law requires that the City of Santa Rosa update conservation and safety policies upon revision to the housing element. In addition, the City's NPDES permit requires an update of stormwater-related policies to reflect current requirements.

The required findings for approval of the General Plan Amendment, followed by a brief staff response, are as follows:

- A. The proposed amendment ensures and maintains internal consistency with the goals and policies of all elements of the General Plan.

Response: The proposed amendment includes updated information about flooding, dam inundation, fire risk, and stormwater treatment to ensure that the General Plan is current. The minor text changes to existing language regarding these topics, and the additional policies to address groundwater recharge, how flooding is considered in the development review process, and the location of future essential public facilities, are internally consistent within each chapter and within the General Plan as a whole.

- B. The proposed amendment would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the City.

Response: The minor changes to the text and policies provide additional information about certain topic areas. None of the changes would be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare of the City because they are relatively insignificant and are intended to enhance public safety in terms of reducing risks associated with fire and flooding.

- C. The site is physically suitable (including absence of physical constraints, access, compatibility with adjoining land uses, and provision of utilities) for the requested/anticipated land use developments; and

Response: This finding is not that relevant to the proposed General Plan amendment to update the Open Space and Conservation and Noise and Safety Elements, since the changes apply citywide. Staff considered the impact of the text changes on future development and finds that the impact would be negligible since the text changes merely clarify or amplify existing policy and do not result in new requirements.

- D. The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Response: Staff found that the project is consistent with General Plan 2035 and that no additional CEQA analysis is required. This is because the proposed text changes are minor in nature and will not result in land use changes that lead to different impacts than anticipated by the General Plan 2035 Environmental Impact Report.

Based on the above analysis, staff concluded that the findings can be made to approve the General Plan amendment.

2. Environmental Review

The General Plan 2035 Environmental Impact Report was certified by the Council on November 3, 2009. The Planning Commission and staff found that while the proposed General Plan text amendments involve minor changes to the text and policies, they are within the scope of the General Plan EIR because the proposed changes do not affect expected land uses to a significant degree and the revised General Plan will remain consistent with the development density established by the existing general plan policies for which the EIR was certified. Based on this analysis, the Planning Commission and staff concluded that the project does not require further environmental review.

3. Comments/Actions by Other Review Boards/Agencies

The Noise and Safety Element was sent to all fire departments that assist the Santa Rosa Fire Department, the California Geological Survey, and the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, and comments were requested. Both the Noise and Safety and Open Space and Conservation Element were sent to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, in an email dated May 30, 2014, responded that the proposed text amendments satisfy the NPDES permit requirements. A letter from the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection was received on June 19, 2014, which provided detailed comments regarding the safety element. Staff found that many of the comments are outside the scope of the update. The letter was reviewed by Community Development and Fire Department staff and a response letter was provided on July 7, 2014. In response to the comments, Figure 12-5 has been updated to depict existing and planned fire stations, hospitals, and the City's emergency operations center. Minor text revisions are proposed to two policies, Policy NS-G-2 and NS-G-5 and are identified in Attachment 3.

All correspondence has been attached to this report. No other comments have been received to date.

4. Public Comments

No public comments have been received to date.

6. Planning Commission Action

On June 12, 2014, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and considered the proposed General Plan Amendment. Staff made a presentation and recommended approval of the proposal. No members of the public spoke. The Planning Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend that the Council approve the proposed General Plan Amendment.

5. Issues

The main issue for the General Plan amendment is to ensure that the changes result in a General Plan that meets state law requirements and is internally consistent. The Planning Commission and staff found that the proposed changes accomplish these goals. Staff has not identified any unresolved issues.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Department of Community Development and the Planning Commission that the Council approve the General Plan Amendment to update the Open Space and Conservation and Noise and Safety Elements as identified in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2 as amended by Attachment 3.

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Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Draft Open Space and Conservation Element [Exhibit A]
- Attachment 2 – Draft Noise and Safety Element [Exhibit B]
- Attachment 3 – Recommended Changes to the Draft Noise and Safety Element and Updated Figure 12-5 [Exhibit C]
- Attachment 4 – Correspondence
- Attachment 5 – Planning Commission Resolution 11675
- Attachment 6 – June 12, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes