



# STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

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November 15, 2023

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** David Loya, Director of Community Development

**PREPARER:** David Loya, Director of Community Development

**DATE:** November 07, 2023

**TITLE:** **Consider Direction to Staff on the General Plan 2045 Comprehensive Update.**

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Council provide direction whether to retain the Gateway Area Plan as a stand-alone Element of the General Plan applicable only in the Gateway Area or distribute the new policy into the other General Plan Elements to be applicable citywide, as well as any other direction the Council wishes to provide.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The City is working on updating its General Plan, which is the overarching policy document for City decisions, including growth and development, conservation and management, budget, mobility and circulation, public services, and a host of other decisions the City makes. General Plans are typically used for 20-year planning periods, laying out the vision for the City for that term. The City included an area plan, the Gateway Area Plan, as one of the new Elements, or chapters, in the General Plan. The purpose of the area plan was to encourage redevelopment of the Gateway Area, one of four areas targeted for infill in the new General Plan. As the policy developed for the Gateway Area Plan, several decision makers and community members saw benefit in not restricting this new body of policy to just the Gateway Area but rather incorporate it City-wide. This item is to discuss expanding the policy in the Gateway Area Plan to be effective Citywide. The Council will provide direction whether to pivot the planning effort to extend the policy to a citywide scope and, if so, how to implement this action.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Around 2017 the City had a series of discussions about the need to find a balance between neighborhood input in development of the City and providing more certain pathways for development to occur. The concept of engaging the community before specific development was proposed to create a form-based code approach to design arose from these discussions. The Gateway Area Plan concept also emerged out of these discussions with the objectives of providing better clarity to the public and developers about design requirements, streamlined permitting, and mixed-use, mixed-income, walkable neighborhoods.

As this concept was developing, the City initiated its Housing Element in 2019. The Housing Element borrowed from the discussions about the Gateway Area and included four “Infill Opportunity Zones”. These infill zones were areas designated for high-density redevelopment to help meet the housing objectives the City has. Specifically, these areas were identified as appropriate for similar development streamlining and high-density development.

## **DISCUSSION:**

An area plan provides an opportunity to develop a body of policy that applies to a geographically restricted area. Area plans can help cities specify more detailed policies for the subject area that wouldn’t apply outside of the area. In this way, objectives around future community development in the area can be distinguished from objectives for the city at large. Area plans often have special land use designations that are not used for properties outside of the plan area to implement the area specific policy. This contrasts with citywide land use designations that implement a body of policy regardless of where in the community they are.

The City has been reviewing the Gateway Area Plan since late 2020. The new policy developed in the plan has been refined and largely embraced. Some of the policies are very specific to the area, such as policies on daylighting Jolly Giant Creek. Many of the policies, though developed for the Gateway Area Plan, reflect citywide values. Because of this, several people involved in the development and review of the Plan have suggested that the policies should be applied more broadly.

The Council should consider the costs and benefits of expanding the policy in the Gateway Plan to a citywide approach. Doing so would distribute most of the policies into other General Plan chapters (Attachment A). Some policies in the Gateway Plan are similar enough to policies in other chapters that they could be eliminated if the Council decided to expand the scope of the policy. Some policies are so specific to the Gateway that they do not make sense to retain if the Gateway Chapter of the General Plan is dissolved into other elements. And still other policies have been effectively eliminated by the public review process, such as policies identifying certain community benefits that have been recommended to not be a part of the Plan. The Policy Matrix (Attachment A) identifies the chapters of the General Plan 2045 that could house the Gateway Policies and which should be deleted if the Council decides to dissolve the Gateway Plan.

If the Council decides to dissolve/expand the scope of the Gateway Plan, land use designations and zoning for this region will need to be assigned. The current draft of the Gateway Area Plan would establish four new land use designations and associated zoning designations. The Gateway Barrel, Gateway Hub, Gateway Corridor, and Gateway Neighborhood districts correspond to differing intensities of development and different development standards in the Plan. Each of the districts is intended to facilitate high-density, mixed-use, mixed-income integrated neighborhoods with high-quality design, public spaces, and vibrant streetscapes.

The Gateway designations largely have the same objectives as the Commercial Mixed-Use designation. The properties currently designated with Gateway district designations could be redesignated as Commercial Mixed-Use and the policy in the Land Use Element updated to reflect the objectives in the Gateway Plan draft.

The Gateway Code, the form-based code developed for the 138-acre Gateway Area, could still apply to those parcels. Future form-based codes could be developed for several areas, including those with Infill Zones identified or for other Commercial Mixed-Use neighborhoods. The zoning is a separate matter from the General Plan decision, but the Council should consider that the energy and effort dedicated to zoning matters will be preserved regardless of the decision on retaining or dissolving the Gateway and incorporating its policies more broadly in the General Plan.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

The decision will affect whether the policies developed for the Gateway Plan extend to other areas of the City.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):**

While the direction is not an action subject to CEQA, the outcome of this decision will affect the project description for the Environmental Impact Report being developed for the General Plan and Gateway Code.

The timeline for environmental review will affect the timeline for adoption, which in turn affects the City's performance on the grants it has received to pay for the planning work.

**BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:**

The City has obtained grants to conduct the planning work for the Gateway Area Plan chapter, the other General Plan chapters, and the Gateway Code. Staff has initiated preliminary discussions with the funding agencies, which are amenable to considering modifying the grant agreements to reflect the outcome of the public process. While the grants were predicated on deliverables identified as "Gateway Area Plan", the granting agencies recognize the public process may result in changes to the deliverables.

Though the agencies are willing to consider an amendment process, the Council may wish to assume that at a minimum, the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation grant, which specifically identified the Gateway Area Plan as a deliverable, and constituted \$250,000 in funding, may need to be returned. This would require the City to identify a replacement funding source. Currently, the City receives fees with Planning and Building permits to pay for long-range planning. This is a source to repay the funds over an approximate three- to five-year term if the grant is clawed back.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

A. Policy Matrix (PDF)