



STAFF REPORT

DATE: November 29, 2016
TO: PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: Jim Reese, Interim Planning Director
RE: Review of “White Paper” prepared by General Plan Consultant regarding trail segments

Background

In April of 2016 the City Council approved a contract with Christine O’Rourke, General Plan Consultant, to prepare four “white papers” or reports addressing specific issues raised by comments received by the City on the Draft General Plan Update (DGPU). The DGPU was circulated, along with the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), for review and comment in late 2015. The circulation of these documents represented the culmination of a seven-year process that started with a work session with the Planning Commission in February 2008, that involved hundreds of community members using a series of surveys and other outreach vehicles intended to solicit input on this long-range planning document. A 19-member Task Force was appointed to oversee this public input process and to: (1) help formulate and participate in the outreach effort, (2) assist in formulating a vision for the General Plan, (3) identify issues of concern, (4) hear from experts on various topics, (5) review background materials and policy choices and (6) provide an opportunity for key property owners to submit their ideas. Once the Task Force completed its work the DGPU was circulated for public comment.

At the conclusion of the review of the white papers, a determination will be made on whether the DEIR needs to be re-circulated for additional public comment. If this step is not necessary, then the DGPU and DEIR will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for final hearings and adoption. The General Plan Consultant estimates that, if recirculation is not necessary, then this process could be concluded sometime in mid-2017.

The first white paper, Trail Segments, has been completed and will be reviewed by both the Planning Commission and City Council. Three additional white papers will be presented in the near future addressing: (1) the “unique agricultural land” designation for Viano winery, (2) the general plan designation for 635 Vine Hill Way/Freitas Property and (3) land use designations in downtown.

Discussion

The City received approximately 125 letters from individuals with comments on the DGPU. About 50 of those letters requested the City include a hiking trail map in the DGPU document

itself. The purpose of the white paper is to provide information on state requirements for the inclusion of trails in a General Plan and outline options for the City to consider: (1) in identifying existing, planned and potential new trails in the General Plan and (2) including policies and programs in the General Plan that support development of new trail segments.

The report concludes that:

A hiking trails map is not a State requirement for a general plan. However, there are State requirements to describe and inventory transportation routes in the Circulation Element and trails that serve as links between major recreation and open space reservations in the Open Space Element. There are several agencies that provide detailed hiking trail maps and online interactive maps, including the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, the East Bay Regional Park District, and the National Park Service. These sources provide more comprehensive information than what would typically be included in General Plan maps.

The General Plan consultant goes on to recommend two changes to ensure consistency with state law. Staff concurs with these recommendations, as follows:

In order to comply with State law, regional hiking trails that serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations should be added to the Open Space map. These will include the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the San Francisco Bay Trail, the California Riding and Hiking Trail, and the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

The General Plan Bicycle Network map should be revised to accurately reflect the existing Bay Area Ridge Trail.

The consultant goes on to further outline three options for Commission and Council consideration as follows:

Do nothing, other than the staff-initiated changes identified above.

Do not include a hiking trails map, but add a program to the General Plan to develop and adopt a Trails Master Plan as follows.

Add a hiking trails map to the General Plan. There are two alternatives under this option.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council that option 2 be selected, as follows:

Do not include a hiking trails map, but add a program to the General Plan to develop and adopt a Trails Master Plan as follows:

PCU-P-3.11: Consider preparation and adoption of a Trails Master Plan that inventories and maps existing, planned and proposed trails, trail segments and connections, identifies potential funding sources, and prioritizes trail segments for future development.

While this option would require the expenditure of city funds, it would allow time to develop detailed hiking trail maps with extensive community input. The Trails Master Plan could include planned, proposed and potential trails in addition to existing trails, and could include more detail about how, where and when to develop specific trails and linkages. Adding a program rather than creating a hiking trails map for the General Plan would mean that the General Plan could be

adopted in a timely manner. The Trails Master Plan and associated maps would be easier to update and would not require a General Plan amendment whenever a revision is required.

Attachments

1. Trails White Paper
2. Draft General Plan Update comment letters labeled T-Trails