



**CITY OF SALINAS
COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

FROM: LISA BRINTON, DIRECTOR

THROUGH: GRANT LEONARD, PLANNING MANAGER

BY: JONATHAN MOORE, SENIOR PLANNER

TITLE: NOTICE OF PREPARATION FOR THE GENERAL PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND QUARTERLY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Receive and accept the General Plan Environmental Impact Report and quarterly General Plan Update and provide comment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City is undertaking the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan Update (GPU) and Climate Action Plan and released the associated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Notice of Preparation (NOP) on September 1, 2023. The NOP process gives the community and agencies the chance to comment on the scope and focus areas to guide EIR drafting. Land use changes are a critical part of this GPU and EIR and the NOP is another opportunity to review the Draft Place Types. Staff is currently drafting and content and is reviewing General Plan Goals/Policies/Actions with the Steering Committee monthly. Additional engagement for the General Plan and Climate Action Plan (CAP) will continue this fall and winter, with the intent to release full drafts of the General Plan, CAP, and EIR in spring 2024. The Housing Element continues on its separate track for adoption before the December 15, 2023, statutory deadline. Staff is working on addressing preliminary comments received from the state Department of Housing and Community Development and preparing a separate environmental document for the Housing Element.

BACKGROUND:

The City started the Visión Salinas 2040 comprehensive update of the City of Salinas General Plan in the summer of 2021. The City has undertaken an intense engagement program, including 17 workshops, nine Working Group meetings, regular Steering Committee meetings, pop-ups at community events, and other activities.

Staff is now drafting policy and narrative content for the General Plan elements, is reviewing Goals/Policies/Actions with the Steering Committee monthly and will soon start drafting Climate Action Plan policies. The state recommends starting the environmental review process for planning documents when still drafting policy to align the documents and create self-mitigating plan policy.

DISCUSSION:

Notice of Preparation for the General Plan Environmental Impact Report

The City will prepare a programmatic EIR for the General Plan and Climate Action Plan and pursuant to CEQA requirements has released a NOP (Attachment 1) to announce the formal start of this process. The NOP sets a time period where community members, agencies, and other stakeholders are invited to provide comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The written comment period is from September 1, 2023 to October 2, 2023. There will also be an official scoping meeting held as part of the General Plan Steering Committee meeting on September 27, 2023. Details on how to submit comments and the scoping meeting are provided in the NOP, attached to this staff report.

The NOP includes a project description of the General Plan Update and its contents (see Table 1 below) and notes potential areas of environmental impact to be analyzed. Because of the high-level and citywide nature of General Plans, the NOP presumes potentially significant impact in most subject areas, unless there is nothing relevant in the city (i.e., timberland or mineral resources). In addition to making General Plan policy as self-mitigating as possible, the EIR will also include a Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program.

Table 1: Pillars and Elements of the General Plan

<i>Pillars</i>	<i>Built Environment</i>	<i>Environment and Sustainability</i>	<i>Socioeconomic Systems</i>
Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use and Infrastructure • Community Design • Housing • Circulation • Noise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation & Open Space • Environmental Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Environmental Justice • Economic Development • Public Safety • Arts, Culture, and Youth

Bold = State-mandated element

The NOP also includes figures showing the regional vicinity and Draft Place Types (land uses). Land uses changes are often one of the most significant pieces of a general plan update and EIR, therefore, the NOP process is another opportunity for community review of the Draft Place Types.

Draft Place Type Land Use Designations

Through this General Plan Update, staff is proposing a new approach to land use designations and corresponding land use map that aims to create and reinforce quality places where people want to live, work, play, and learn. The Draft Place Types and Place Type Map (Attachments 2 and 3) were developed from community feedback received at the seven (7) land use workshops, Working Group and Steering Committee meetings, and the Community Design Workshop. Draft Place Types incorporate land use policies and recommendations of other recent planning documents including the Alisal Vibrancy Plan and the Economic Development Element. In general, residents and stakeholders wanted to see more housing and mixed-use development, sufficient area for businesses to grow, and a variety of entertainment and recreation opportunities for all ages.

The Draft Place Types respond to community identified needs by increasing flexibility to make the most use of limited infill sites, as well as new development opportunities in the Future Growth Area (FGA). Even with the FGA buildout, there are many reasons to grow up, not just out, including: meeting community needs on limited developable sites, increasing housing opportunities and easy access to services and daily needs throughout the city, lowering emissions, and balancing the municipal costs of sprawl.

Certain parts of the city are more likely to see major changes than others. The Draft Areas of Change Map (Attachment 4) highlights that the biggest transformations will occur in the Future Growth Area and other areas with the implementation of major specific plans or proposed projects such as the Ag-Industrial Center and Carr Lake. Major corridors could evolve with mixed-use or higher-density developments, while most of the city’s residential areas would see smaller infill changes.

Some key proposed land use changes include:

- Addition of two (2) mixed-use designations, plus special districts for the downtown and the Alisal Marketplace;
- Residential densities that allow for more housing (see Table 2 below), including the “Missing Middle” (bungalows, duplexes, townhomes etc.) range, that may be more affordable through design;
- Unique place types for the West Area and Central Area Specific Plans that reference the approved specific plan documents; and
- An update to East Area of the FGA to blend the community’s desire for higher housing density with the vision and objective of a previous draft specific plan.

Table 2: Comparison of Draft Place Type and Zoning Residential Densities*

Draft Place Type	Proposed Density Range (dwelling units/acre)	Current Zoning	Current Density Range (dwelling units/acre)
Traditional Neighborhood	6-12	Residential Low Density	6-8
Blended Residential Neighborhood	12-20	Residential Medium Density	8-15

Multifamily Neighborhood	20-40	Residential High Density	15-24
Employment Center Neighborhood Center	15-30 (both)	Commercial Office, Commercial Office/Residential	15-20 (both)
Commercial Retail	15-30	Commercial Retail	15-24
Mixed Use Corridor, Mixed Use Village	30-40 (Corridor) 30-50 (Village)	Mixed Use	15-24 for residential only, 30-40 in certain FG Overlays
City Center Core, City Center Edge	30-80 (Core) 20-40 (Edge)	Mixed Use – Central City Overlay	80 maximum in Downtown Core
Alisal Marketplace	30-60	N/A – area currently commercial/light industrial (roughly bounded by Front Street, E Market Street, US 101, and E Alisal Street)	15-24 in limited Commercial Retail/Mixed Arterial Frontage areas

*Zoning code densities used for ease of comparison

Housing Element Progress Update

For most of the first half of 2023, staff focused on completing a first draft 6th Cycle Housing Element (Housing Element) and accompanying community engagement. The draft Housing Element was submitted for state Housing and Community Development (HCD) review on July 7, 2023. Staff received preliminary HCD comments in August and are addressing the comments prior to the official HCD comment letter, expected in early October. Staff will complete any remaining revisions and engagement and start the approval process with the goal of adoption at the December 6, 2023, City Council meeting, ahead of the statutory deadline of December 12, 2023.

Since the draft Housing Element is running ahead of the rest of the General Plan Update it will move forward under separate environmental document. Working with outside legal counsel a determination was made that because the number of units anticipated by the draft Housing Element falls within the thresholds of previously certified environmental documents, the City will prepare an addendum to the 2017 Economic Development Element EIR, which will also be adopted in December 2023 with the Final 2023-2031 Housing Element.

General Plan Update Next Steps

During the next quarter, staff will be focused on General Plan content editing and review, finalizing the Housing Element, completing associated environmental work, and conducting additional engagement for the Climate Action Plan, particularly through pop-ups and surveys. Staff will also circle back with stakeholders on key housing and economic policy pieces that require additional consultation. Following the Housing Element adoption in December, staff will work with the consultant teams to prepare drafts of the full General Plan, CAP, and EIR for public review in spring 2024.

DEPARTMENT COORDINATION:

Community Development Department (CDD) staff is working with Public Works, Library and Community Services, Police, and Fire staff to review draft policies to ensure internal consistency. CDD staff is also working closely with the City Attorney and their outside special counsel firm Meyers Nave on the development of the General Plan and related environmental documents.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). Because the proposed action and this matter have no potential to cause any effect on the environment, or because it falls within a category of activities excluded as projects pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, this matter is not a project. Any subsequent discretionary projects resulting from this action will be assessed for CEQA applicability.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

Given that the General Plan acts as the City's guiding document for future growth and development, it will help meet all City Council Strategic Goals. However, the current work around the General Plan Update is specifically reflected as an objective under Effective and Culturally Responsive Government. Adopting a Climate Action Plan is also an objective under Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

The General Plan update is estimated to cost approximately \$3.4 million dollars. The City secured \$1.1 in grant funding through the Local and Regional Early Action entitlement grants and a Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation grant to support the General Plan update. Additional funding for the General Plan update comes from the General Plan Fund (2513), formerly CIP 9701, which is funded by the General Plan/Zoning Maintenance Fee. There is currently \$2.6 million available in the General Plan Fund (2513) to support the General Plan update.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Notice of Preparation for the General Plan Environmental Impact Report
2. Draft Place Types Description Table
3. Draft Place Types Map (NOP Figure 2)
4. Draft Areas of Change Map