



**CITY OF SALINAS  
PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 6, 2023

**TO:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**FROM:** LISA BRINTON, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 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:

No action required. Receive presentation and provide comment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City is undertaking the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan Update (GPU) and released an 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 the GPU and EIR and the NOP process is another opportunity to review the Draft Place Types. Staff is currently drafting General Plan policies and content and is reviewing 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 is preparing a separate environmental document for the Housing Element.

DISCUSSION:

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 and is reviewing Goals/Policies/Actions with the Steering Committee monthly. 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.

Notice of Preparation for the General Plan Environmental Impact Report

The City will prepare a programmatic EIR for the General Plan Update and pursuant to CEQA requirements is releasing 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"><li>• <b>Land Use</b> and Infrastructure</li><li>• Community Design</li><li>• <b>Housing</b></li><li>• <b>Circulation</b></li><li>• <b>Noise</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Conservation &amp; Open Space</b></li><li>• Environmental <b>Safety</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health and <b>Environmental Justice</b></li><li>• Economic Development</li><li>• Public <b>Safety</b></li><li>• Arts, Culture, and Youth</li></ul>

**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\***

<b>Draft Place Type</b>	<b>Proposed Density Range (dwelling units/acre)</b>	<b>Current Zoning</b>	<b>Current Density Range (dwelling units/acre)</b>
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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 receive a 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.

### CEQA CONSIDERATION:

This is an administrative report and not a project as defined by CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. Therefore, no environmental assessment is required.

### 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