

county of ventura

January 27, 2015

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

**SUBJECT: Receive Staff's Presentation and Provide Direction Regarding Recommended Preliminary Tasks for Developing a Scope of Work, Budget and Timeline for the County's General Plan Update, Authorize the Resource Management Agency Director to Select and Enter into a Contract with a Consultant Specializing in General Plan Updates to Conduct the Identified Work Tasks, Approval of General Fund Allocations for a Consultant Contract, and Direct Staff to return with Options for a Detailed General Plan Update Program.
RECOMMENDED ACTION NUMBER 4 REQUIRES A 4/5THS VOTE**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **RECEIVE** staff's presentation regarding the Preliminary Work tasks for the General Plan Update (GPU) Program provided in this Board letter and provide direction to staff;
2. **AUTHORIZE** the Resource Management Agency Director to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit proposals from consultants with expertise in conducting General Plan Updates, to complete the recommended Preliminary Work Tasks described in the Board letter;
3. **AUTHORIZE** the Resource Management Agency Director to select a qualified consultant, and enter into a standard consulting contract for an amount not-to-exceed \$50,000 to complete the recommended Preliminary Work Tasks described in this Board letter;
4. **AUTHORIZE** the Auditor-Controller's Office to process budgetary transactions necessary to increase expenditures and establish appropriations:

DECREASE - \$50,000 Org 1500 General Fund Contingency
INCREASE - \$50,000 Org 4704 Services and Supplies

This requires a 4/5ths vote.



5. **DIRECT** staff to return to your Board with recommendations regarding options for the detailed GPU Program;

FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:

Mandatory: Yes
 Source of Funding: County General Fund
 Funding Match Required: None
 Impact on Other County Departments: Minimal

Summary of Revenue and Costs	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16
Revenues:	\$ -	\$ -
Costs:		
Direct	\$ 50,000	\$ -
Indirect – Dept/County CAP	<u>\$ Minimal</u>	<u>\$ Minimal</u>
Net County Cost (includes indirects):	\$ 50,000	\$ -
Recovered Indirect Cost (Dept/County CAP):	\$ -	\$ -

Current FY 2014-15 Budget Projection for Org 4704 Plans and Ordinances				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Actual	Estimated Savings/Deficit
Appropriations	\$ 1,113,201	\$ 1,121,562	\$ 1,171,562	\$ (50,000)
Revenue	\$ 333,931	\$ 333,931	\$ 333,931	\$ -
Net Cost	\$ 779,270	\$ 787,631	\$ 837,631	\$ (50,000)

An external consultant will be hired based on the Request for Proposals (RFP) selection process. It is estimated that approximately \$50,000 will be needed to complete the work effort required to prepare a General Plan Update (GPU) Program. The FY 2014-15 Planning Division budget does not include appropriations for this work effort. Since this is the initial planning phase for the GPU, there is no revenue offset, therefore County general funds are requested. Upon completion of the work effort recommended today, a complete budget cost estimate for the actual GPU will be developed and brought back to your Board later this fiscal year.

DISCUSSION:

The General Plan, which is mandated by State law, sets forth the goals, policies, and programs the County will implement to manage future growth and land uses. The General Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors, embodies the vision for the future of unincorporated Ventura County.

There are seven required “elements” of a General Plan (land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open-space, noise, and safety). A General Plan may be adopted in any format deemed appropriate or convenient by the local legislative body and may consist of a single document or a group of documents relating to subjects or geographical segments of the planning area.

Ventura County has an adopted General Plan consisting of:

- *Goals, Policies and Programs* that govern the entire unincorporated area of the county which include related land use and circulation maps;
- Four Technical Appendices (*Resources, Hazards, Land Use, and Public Facilities and Services*) that provide background information in support of the General Plan’s goals, policies and programs; and
- Ten Area Plans that govern specific geographic areas of the unincorporated county (*Ahmanson Ranch, Coastal, El Rio/Del Norte, Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley, North Ventura Avenue, Oak Park, Ojai Valley, Piru, Saticoy, and Thousand Oaks*).

The horizon year for the County’s General Plan is 2020 and as such, Planning Division staff is requesting input from your Board on the GPU scoping process, which will necessarily include establishing a new horizon period, and consideration of a recommendation to retain a consultant to review and evaluate the current General Plan, consult with staff, decision-makers and stakeholders, and return with a recommended GPU scope of work and budget for Board consideration.

History

In 1988, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors approved a comprehensive update to the Ventura County General Plan. As part of that action, the Board certified a program-level Environmental Impact Report (EIR), incorporated feasible mitigation measures as policies of the General Plan, and adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations acknowledging that significant, unmitigated impacts could occur. There has been no comprehensive update prepared since that time.

Since 1988, the Board of Supervisors has adopted many amendments to the General Plan, each of which had its own environmental documentation (e.g., exemption from CEQA, EIR addendum, Supplemental EIR) and CEQA findings.

In 2000, the Board of Supervisors directed County staff to prepare a focused update to the County General Plan and to prepare a Subsequent EIR to update the environmental analysis adopted for the General Plan. The primary scope of the Board-directed update was to:

- Extend the time horizon of the General Plan from 2010 to 2020;
- Update the population, dwelling unit and employment forecasts;

- Update the Transportation/Circulation chapter based on updated traffic forecasts;
- Update the Noise Chapter based on the updated traffic forecasts; and
- Update selected chapters of the Public Facilities and Services Appendix based on the updated population, dwelling unit and employment forecasts.

In 2005, the County adopted a focused update to the General Plan. The amendments adopted at that time included updates to the Goals, Policies and Programs, and updates to three technical appendices (Land Use Appendix, Public Facilities and Services Appendix, Hazards Appendix) and six of the Area Plans (El Rio/Del Norte, Lake Sherwood/Hidden Valley, Oak Park, Ojai Valley, Piru, and Thousand Oaks). Most recently, your Board adopted the 2014-2021 Housing Element which was certified by the State in December of 2013, as being in compliance with State housing law.

Recommended Preliminary Work Tasks

The State of California requires that General Plans be updated periodically but does not specifically define how often. As there has not been a comprehensive update to the Ventura County General Plan since 1988, staff believes it is important that we take this opportunity to review and consider the options for the next horizon period and are, therefore, seeking direction from your Board. A General Plan Update process is by far the most expensive, complex and time intensive land use task that a county undertakes. At the same time, it is the most critical document as the General Plan forms the foundation for all local land-use planning decisions. When a county adopts a General Plan, it creates a vision for the foreseeable future and translates that vision into goals, policies and programs.

Comprehensive General Plan Updates are major undertakings within any community and routinely require budgets in the millions of dollars over several years. Unfortunately for many jurisdictions, the updates end up costing far more and taking years longer than originally anticipated. Over the past several months, staff has interviewed staff at many other jurisdictions and land use consultants to better understand the factors that can lead to extended timelines and exceeded budgets during a typical county General Plan Update process. First, and without fail, the response has been that the process, scope and necessary staffing (both internal staff as well as consultant staff) were not clearly defined at the onset of the project. The second common theme was that even when the scope of work was defined at the outset of the process, the scope of work was frequently modified during the multi-year process, which in turn led to increased time and expense to complete the project.

To help avoid these common pitfalls, staff recommends that the Board retain a planning consultant with expertise in updating General Plans for cities and counties. This consultant would work with staff to prepare a comprehensive scope of work, timeline and budget for the GPU Program. Although it is possible to conduct that work with in-house staff, it is not recommended at this juncture for two very specific reasons: (1) our in-house staff resources are fully committed for FY 2014-15 with other long range planning projects

such as the update to the Saticoy Area Plan and the update to our Local Coastal Plan, which need to remain on schedule to ensure continued grant funding, and (2) it is important to retain a consultant with on-point expertise in updating recent General Plans. This consultant would already be familiar with the myriad existing laws and requirements to be incorporated into a General Plan Update and would have practical experience managing the factors that can lead to a more efficient process, when they are identified early.

It's expected the consultant will follow the steps below when accomplishing the recommended work tasks. Each of these steps would be detailed in the RFP:

Step 1: Review the existing General Plan

Review the County General Plan for consistency with State law, internal consistency, and contemporary planning trends. The consultant would then prepare an initial report summarizing the findings.

Step 2: Meet with Community and Stakeholder Groups

Facilitate a minimum of two public meetings to engage community and stakeholder groups, solicit input on topics of interest and concern and bring those items forward into the steps listed below for the Board's consideration.

Step 3: Meet with Key County Staff

Using the initial report (prepared in Step 1) as a basis for discussion, the consultant will facilitate a one-to-two day meeting with key staff to discuss the findings and recommendations, as well as review options for the overall update work program, general plan content and format, community engagement, and the roles and responsibilities of staff vs. consultants. The consultant will provide examples and case studies to staff that illustrate the available options.

Step 4: Facilitate Board/Commissioner Public Workshop

The consultant will facilitate a public workshop/joint study session with the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission to provide an overview of the GPU process based on the range of options developed in the previous steps. In this workshop the consultant will also discuss the formation of a Citizens Advisory Committee.

Step 5: Conduct Board/Commissioner and Staff Interviews

Following the workshop, the consultant will conduct two or three days of interviews. They will interview individual Board members, Planning Commissioners, and County staff from *all* agencies to develop a clear understanding of their ideas and expectations for the GPU.

Step 6: Prepare detailed General Plan Update Program

The consultant will prepare a detailed report and outline of the GPU Program based on all of the input gathered during the first five steps. The options prepared by the consultant for the Board's consideration will range from making only minimal changes to the document so that it is legally defensible to a truly comprehensive update that may include

new General Plan elements such as Healthy Communities, Agriculture, and Land Use Compatibility with Naval Base Ventura County. The options will include preliminary budget figures. The consultant's report will be presented to the Board, at which time your Board would provide the direction needed to establish the scope and process for the GPU Program.

Step 7: Prepare Estimated Budget, Timeline, and Identify Staff Resource Requirements

As a final step, the consultant will prepare a more detailed budget estimate, timeline, and staff resource recommendations for the GPU Program focusing on the option chosen in Step 6. Staff would then use the GPU Program, budget, timeline and staff resources requirements to prepare a more detailed work program for the GPU Program and return back to your Board for final approval.

After direction on the scope and process is received from the Board, consultants would be retained through the RFP process and then the comprehensive multi-year work effort of the GPU process would begin in earnest in detailed discussions with the community, the cities, county staff and our stakeholders, the formation of a Citizens Advisory Committee, and detailed periodic updates provided to your Board at key steps or decision points in the process.

This Board item was reviewed by County Counsel, the Auditor Controller's Office, and the County Executive Office. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at (805) 654-2481 or Chris Stephens at (805) 654-2661.



Kim L. Prillhart, Director
Ventura County Planning Division