



# CITY OF IONE CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



**FOR THE MEETING OF: AUGUST 26, 2009**

**DATE: JULY 31, 2009**

**TO: HONORABLE PLANNING COMMISSION**

**FROM: CHRISTOPHER JORDAN, AICP, CITY PLANNER  
DANIEL HAMILTON, AICP, GENERAL PLAN PROJECT MANAGER**

**SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN UPDATE – REVIEW AND POSSIBLE ACOPTION**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council:

1. Receive staff’s presentation;
2. Open the public hearing and take public comment;
3. Close the public hearing; and
4. Adopt Resolution 1746, a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Ione Certifying A Final Environmental Impact Report on The General Plan Update, Making Findings of Fact Relating to the Feasibility of Mitigation Measures and Project Alternatives, and Adopting A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and Adopting the 2009 General Plan (Attachment 1).

**SOURCE OF FUNDING:**

General Plan Services Impact Fees; Loans from various other funds.

**BACKGROUND:**

In March 2008, the Council directed staff to conduct a comprehensive update to the City’s General Plan. The General Plan is the City’s overarching policy document, or blueprint,

TYPE OF ITEM:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Consent  
\_\_\_\_\_ Departmental  
xxxxx Public Hearing  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:  
  
Council Order No. \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Meeting of: \_\_\_\_\_

City Council for the City of Ione  
  
Upon motion of Council Member  
Seconded by Council Member  
And carried \_\_\_\_\_ by those members present,  
The Council hereby adopts the recommended action contained in this report.  
  
Dated: \_\_\_\_\_  
Janice Traverso, City Clerk  
  
By: \_\_\_\_\_

for creating a thriving, well-balanced, and sustainable community. All future development and actions of the City must be consistent with the General Plan. General Plans typically have a 20-30 year life span. The City's existing General Plan was first adopted in 1982 and portions were updated in 1989, 1991, 1992, 2003, and 2005. Given the number of changes that have happened in the community since 1982 the City needs to update the Plan now in order to keep it current.

A lot has happened since the General Plan Update was initiated by the Council. The following list summarizes some of the key milestones and tasks completed to date:

- Establishing a General Plan Executive Committee made up of two Council members (Andrea Bonham and Lee Ard), two Planning Commissioners (Joe Wylie and Mike McDermed), and two Parks Commissioners (Rosemary Johnson and Fraser West). The Executive Committee met twice a month between August 2008 and April 2009 to provide direction to staff on the process of the project and to ensure that the August 2009 deadline established by the Council is achieved (Note: The August deadline is also important as it is the deadline for certification of the City's new Housing Element under State law). Since January 2009, the Committee has been reviewing two administrative draft elements, or chapters, every two weeks. Their comments have been incorporated into the draft General Plan being presented this evening.
- Creating a project website ([www.ionegeneralplan.com](http://www.ionegeneralplan.com)) for people to learn about the project and stay involved.
- Conducting three public workshops at Evalynn Bishop Hall at Howard Park. The workshops provided the public with an introduction to the General Plan process and were a forum for the public to express their ideas and concerns about the future of Ione.
- Conducting a public survey aimed at gathering resident input and views outside of the workshop setting. The surveys were mailed out as part of the September sewer bill and were available for pickup at a number of locations throughout town (Curves, Claypool's, etc). Over 230 responses were received.
- A series of Planning Commission meetings on December 9 and December 15, 2008, where the Planning Commission discussed the three base land use alternatives and a fourth alternative prepared by staff and based upon comments at the November 19 public workshop. The Commission ultimately recommended an alternative to the City Council as the draft preferred Land Use Plan.
- A City Council meeting on January 6, 2009 to discuss the draft preferred Land Use Plan. The Council received the Planning Commission recommendation and took public comment. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Council directed staff on a preferred Land Use Plan to use as the basis for the preparation of the balance of the General Plan and for the initiation of the draft General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

- A policy workshop with the City Council and Planning Commission on February 19, 2009 to discuss circulation issues and policies for the draft General Plan. The Council and Commission ultimately directed staff on a new series of level of service standards and other circulation policies. These standards were used to complete the initial transportation analysis of the draft Land Use Plan in late February.
- At a second circulation policy discussion on April 7, 2009, the Council directed staff to modify the draft circulation policy based upon the initial traffic model results.
- On April 21, 2009, the City released the draft General Plan for public review.
- On May 5, 2009, the City Council and Planning Commission conducted a joint study session of the Conservation and Open Space, Noise and Safety, Economic Development, Public Facilities, and Housing Elements of the draft General Plan.
- On May 19, 2009, the City Council and Planning Commission conducted a joint study session of the Land Use and Circulation Elements.
- On June 10, 2009, the City released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the draft General Plan. This initiated a 45-day public comment period as required under State law.
- On July 14, 2009, the City held a workshop to receive public comments on the DEIR. Only one comment was received at the meeting.
- On July 27, 2009, the 45-day public comment period for the DEIR closed. The City received a total of 7 letters (described in the Environmental Review section below).
- On August 5, 2009, the Planning Commission held a public hearing, accepted public comment, and adopted Planning Commission Resolution No. 09-4 recommending that the City Council adopt the General Plan as amended

The focus of this City Council meeting is to review the draft General Plan in its entirety, with special attention to the changes recommended by the Planning Commission, as well as the outcomes of the EIR analysis. Staff will present an overview of this information. The City Council should take public comment and then consider adoption of a resolution certifying the EIR and adopting the Plan.

**Copies of the draft General Plan (dated August 2009 and identified as Attachment 2 to this report) were provided to City Council under separate cover. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (identified as Attachment 3 to this report) was also provided to the Council under separate cover. The draft Final Environmental Impact Report is provided as Attachment 4. A limited number of copies of these documents will be available to the public at the meeting. Copies are available on the project website at [www.ionegeneralplan.com](http://www.ionegeneralplan.com).**

## **ANALYSIS:**

Since the public release of the draft General Plan in April 2009, the City has received a number of comments and requests for specific language in the Plan and specific land use designations on properties. The Council and Planning Commission reviewed many of these requests at their Joint Study Sessions in May 2009 and provided direction to staff on what changes to include. At the same meetings, the Council and Commission also provided direction to staff on changes they would like to see. At their August 5, 2009 meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed all of these changes, along with additional requests from the public and property owners, and directed staff with final changes. These changes have been incorporated into a new draft General Plan dated August 2009 (Attachment 2). A comprehensive list of these changes is provided as an errata in Attachment 5.

Modifications are organized by page number/element and include a reference to the relevant section, goal, policy, or action. NOT included in the errata are the following items:

- Typos, grammatical errors, formatting, and non-substantive changes, clean ups, and cross references;
- Changes to the Implementation Chapter to reflect changes in action language, responsibility, or timeline.
- Updated photos

### **Substantive Changes Directed by the Council and Planning Commission in May**

The substantive changes made as a result of the direction from the May study sessions are summarized below:

- The Future Growth Area has been added back to the Mule Town area north of Q Ranch/Mule Creek State Prison. It has also been added to the western half of the Silva property (west of Five Mile Drive).
- The Industrial Park, Old Stockton Road, and Q Ranch Policy Areas have been changed to Special Planning Area designations with corresponding Conceptual Land Plans, rather than detailed land plans with plotted General Plan land uses. The text for the corresponding policies has been updated to reflect this change.
- The maximum development potential for the Q Ranch Policy Area has been increased from 500 units to 850 units.
- The requirements for completion of backbone roadways and utilities as part of new development have been clarified (see Action CIR 1.1.2 and Policy PF 1.4). The revised policy clarifies that the objective is to complete the necessary major roadway infrastructure to serve the development. For instance, depending on the size of the development, its phasing plan, and the ultimate roadway sizing, the entire roadway width may not be needed on day one, but the entire length of the roadway would be required. The intent of this action is to preclude the Shakeley/Golf Links Drive phasing problem where this roadway connection as part of the Castle Oaks development is not built for a significant time.

- Policy CO-2.4 has been updated to allow for minor adjustments in creek alignments, on a case-by-case basis, provided the quality and integrity of the habitat is maintained.

### **Housing Element-Specific Changes Requested by HCD**

Specific to the Housing Element, the City received comments from the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in early June, 2009. Under State law, HCD must approve, or certify, the City's Housing Element. City staff has drafted revisions to the Housing Element in response to HCD's comments. These revisions, which involve both the Housing Element and the Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix B to the General Plan) are included in Attachment 6. Note that changes to the policies in the Housing Element are also included in the errata in Attachment 5. The significant changes to the Housing Element are summarized below:

- A discussion of the current infrastructure constraints (sewer and water) was added to the Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix B). Two additional action items (new Action H-2.2.3 and Action H-2.2.4) have been added to identify how the City is continuing to work towards addressing these constraints.
- Action H-5.1.1 has been updated to identify that the City will update its definition of "family" in the Zoning Code consistent with State law.

Since the August 5 Planning Commission meeting, staff has been working with HCD to finalize the Housing Element. HCD has requested a few final adjustments addressing water and sewer services. These changes have been integrated into the errata.

As of August 20, staff was still awaiting acceptance of this final language by HCD. Due to the State's ongoing furlough program, there has been a lag in communication between the City and HCD. Staff will provide an update on the Housing Element review by HCD at the meeting.

### **Public and Property Owner Requests Since May**

At the August Planning Commission meeting, the Commission considered a number of policy and map modifications requested by the public and property owners. All of these requests are provided in Attachment 7. The requests accepted by the Planning Commission are summarized below and have been included in the errata and the August Draft General Plan:

- The conceptual land plan for the Q Ranch Policy Area was modified to reflect updated property ownership boundaries. At the May 19 joint meeting, the Council and Commission directed staff to study a alternative land plan that accommodated a revised boundary, looking at all land south and east of Irish Hill Road as part of the EIR. This gave the property owners opportunity to work out a land swap with the neighboring owners. On August 3, the owners provided documentation to staff that the land swap would be completed. Staff recommended to the Planning Commission that the adjusted boundaries and alternative land plan (as analyzed in

the EIR) be included in the final General Plan; the Commission agreed and included the land swap in their recommendation to the Council.

Other requests not accepted by the Planning Commission are also included in Attachment 7 for reference.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

### **Overview of the EIR**

On June 10, 2009, the City released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the draft General Plan. The intent of this document is to provide the City, the public, and other responsible agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed update to the General Plan. As described in the State Public Resources Code and State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a public informational document that assesses potential environmental effects of the proposed project, as well as identifies mitigation measures and alternatives to the proposed General Plan that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts. The City is charged with the duty to consider and, where feasible, minimize environmental impacts of proposed development, and has an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prior to approving any project that may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term “project” refers to any action that has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The General Plan Update is, therefore, a project and as such the EIR was prepared.

Under CEQA, a Draft EIR (DEIR) is prepared and circulated for public review and comment. While called a Draft, this document is actually a complete work effort. Comments received on the DEIR, responses to the comments, and other technical clarifications, are compiled into a Final EIR (FEIR).

The full DEIR for the draft General Plan is a document of considerable length. Environmental issue areas studied under the DEIR include:

- Land Use (Section 4.1)
- Agricultural Resources (Section 4.2)
- Population, Housing, and Employment (Section 4.3)
- Traffic and Circulation (Section 4.4)
- Air Quality (Section 4.5)
- Noise (Section 4.6)
- Hazardous Materials/Risk of Upset (Section 4.7)
- Biological Resources (Section 4.8)
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources (Section 4.9)
- Hydrology and Water Quality (Section 4.10)
- Geology and Soils (Section 4.11)
- Visual Resources (Section 4.12)

- Public Services and Utilities (Section 4.13)
- Cumulative Impacts (Section 5.0)
- Growth Inducement (Section 7.0)

Copies of the full DEIR are available at City Hall and on the project website at [www.ionegeneralplan.com](http://www.ionegeneralplan.com). In lieu of providing a full copy as part of this report, Attachment 3 is just the Table of Contents, Introduction, Executive Summary, and Project Description.

Of particular interest to the City Council will be the following sections in Attachment 3:

- **Summary of Environmental Impacts** – Beginning on page 2.0-7, the DEIR contains a summary of impacts for the proposed General Plan Land Use Map, General Plan policies, and proposed mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize potential impacts.
- **Project Description** – Section 3 of the General Plan EIR describes the project being analyzed in the EIR. The City has taken the opportunity, as part of the General Plan EIR, to analyze a number of related projects that, in the near term, implement the General Plan. The “projects” included in the EIR are:
  - The General Plan policy document and related land use and circulation maps;
  - A Sphere of Influence Amendment and Annexations (see page 3.0-29 for a description of what has been included);
  - An amendment to the City’s Zoning Code (Title 17 of the Municipal Code) for consistency with the General Plan Land Use Map and Land Use Categories; and
  - The West Ione Roadway Improvement Strategy (WIRIS) (note, this is a programmatic review only as part of the General Plan Circulation Element and not at a level for construction).

The EIR will have a life after adoption of the General Plan. It will serve as the primary environmental document for future development activities and for future annexations and modifications to the City’s Sphere of Influence (see Attachment 8).

### **Comments on the DEIR**

The City received a total of seven comments on the DEIR. The comments are from the following individuals and agencies and are provided in Attachment 4.

- CAL FIRE
- California Department of Fish and Game
- Caltrans
- Amador Water Agency
- Foothill Conservancy
- California Public Utilities Commission
- David Plank, Ione Resident

Draft responses to these comments are included in Attachment 4.

Based upon the comments received, the Planning Commission is recommending that two new policies/actions be added to the draft General Plan. These are included in the Errata (Attachment 5) and are:

- **Action CO 1.1.4** – Which requires feasible mitigation of impacts to ensure that a public or private project not contribute to the decline or viability of a special-status species (e.g., Ione Manzanita). Such mitigation measures could include providing similar replacement habitat or paying in-lieu fees toward a mitigation bank. Mitigation shall emphasize a multi-species approach to the maximum extent feasible and could be accomplished through Habitat Conservation Plan (a plan that identifies specific conservation measures that will be implemented in exchange for a federal permit to allow the taking of a threatened or endangered species).
- **Policy NS 2.7** – Which requires roadway construction projects or projects requiring new or expanded roadways to assess impacts to existing railroad crossings and provide improvements as necessary to ensure such crossings remain safe for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.

### **Final EIR, Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations, and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program**

Staff has prepared a Final EIR (FEIR), as required under CEQA. The FEIR includes the response to comments received on the DEIR and addresses in minor technical issues in the DEIR. The FEIR is provided as Attachment 4.

In order to certify the General Plan EIR (DEIR + FEIR), staff has prepared the required Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations. This document, included as an exhibit to Resolution 1746 (Attachment 1) establishes the basis for the certification of the EIR.

Finally, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program has been prepared for the EIR. This report tracks the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the EIR, as required under CEQA. This document is also an exhibit to Resolution 1746 (Attachment 1).

### **NEXT STEPS: GENERAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Should the Council adopt the General Plan, staff will begin the process of implementation the Plan almost immediately. Many of the implementation items occur as part of development projects, of which several are pending. However, there are a number of larger projects, some already underway (e.g., Sewer Master Plan), that will require further Council action.

One such project is a series of amendments to the City's Zoning Code and modifications to the Zoning Map (rezones). These amendments will implement specific General Plan policies including the following:

- Preservation of the existing Downtown along Main Street and future expansion of the more intensive retail and office uses south to Jackson Street. As under the existing General Plan, the Downtown runs from approximately Mill Street on the west to Ione Street on the east. The Downtown is intended to be an area that is inviting to pedestrians and does not focus on more automotive-oriented uses. This area is defined in the General Plan as the Central Business District (CBD).
- Continued opportunities for limited commercial retail and office uses in the areas north, south, and east of the Downtown, provided these uses are compatible with the predominate residential character of the properties. Examples would include small medical office, legal office, personal services such as a hair salon, and bed and breakfast inns. These areas are defined in the General Plan as Downtown Transition (DT) because they provide a transition from the commercial activities on Main Street to the residential neighborhoods around Downtown.
- Focusing larger, more intensive commercial development to areas of the City where new roads can be built (or existing roads can be adequately expanded) to accommodate higher traffic levels. The future industrial park across Church Street from Howard Park is an example of an area targeted for these types of uses because of its access to the future Ione Bypass. These areas are called General Commercial (GC) under the General Plan.

The rezones and Zoning text amendments **are not part of this General Plan discussion** and are provided as an example of what kinds of implementation actions will be required once the General Plan is adopted.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The costs of completing the General Plan Update are being financed through the General Plan Services Impact Fee and loans from various other funds. The project remains on schedule and on budget.

#### **OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:**

Development of the General Plan is a City-led effort; however, staff from Amador County, AWA, and Caltrans have participated in the public workshops to date. Additional agencies have provided comments on the draft General Plan document and the draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

#### **ALTERNATIVES TO PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

The City Council may modify, in whole or in part, the Planning Commission's recommendation; however modifications to the policies in the draft General Plan that are not substantially consistent with the project analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) may require revisions and recirculation of the analysis, which would require the allocation of additional funds and would require additional time to complete.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Staff has incorporated all the changes to the General Plan policy document directed to date by the Planning Commission and City Council. Further, based on staff recommendations, the Planning Commission has identified a number of additional modifications that clarify the intent of the overall plan. The DEIR was routed for a 45-day comment period. All comments have been addressed in the draft FEIR and additional policies to address these comments are proposed. The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council certify the EIR and adopt the General Plan.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

If the City Council agrees with the Planning Commission's recommendation, the following motion is recommended:

*I move that the City Council adopt Resolution 1746, a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Ione Certifying A Final Environmental Impact Report on The General Plan Update, Making Findings of Fact Relating to the Feasibility of Mitigation Measures and Project Alternatives, and Adopting A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and Adopting the 2009 General Plan.*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution 1746
2. Draft General Plan (dated August 2009; provided under separate cover)
3. Draft Environmental Impact Report (full document provided under separate cover; excerpts provided herein)
4. Draft Final Environmental Impact Report
5. General Plan Errata
6. Housing Element changes
7. Additional Requests
8. LAFCO Letter