



CITY OF PACIFIC GROVE
300 Forest Avenue, Pacific Grove, California 93950

AGENDA REPORT

TO: HONORABLE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: Joseph Sidor, Contract Planner
MEETING DATE: 02/15/2024
SUBJECT: Scoping Meeting for the Environmental Impact Report for the Pacific Grove Housing Element Update, Zoning Amendments, and General Plan Amendments Project
CEQA: Does not constitute a “Project” per California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15378

RECOMMENDATION

Receive agency and public input and provide comment on the scope and content of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Pacific Grove Housing Element Update, Zoning Amendments, and General Plan Amendments Project.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

The purpose of this scoping meeting is to receive public and Planning Commissioner comment on the scope and content of the environmental analysis for the proposed project. This environmental analysis will then be subsequently circulated for public review and comment as a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Notice of Preparation

The intent of the Notice of Preparation (NOP; attached) is to inform agencies and interested parties that the City of Pacific Grove (City) is preparing a Draft EIR for the proposed Housing Element Update, Zoning Amendments, and General Plan Amendments Project (proposed project) in accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15082. The NOP provided information about the project and its potential environmental effects and requested that comments be provided on the proposed scope and content of the Draft EIR. A scoping meeting is typically held to inform the public and to receive comment regarding the scope and content of the environmental analysis.

Project Location and Existing Conditions

The project area includes the entirety of Pacific Grove. The city is primarily developed, with parks, beaches, and scattered undeveloped parcels within the city. Portions of the city are in the Coastal Zone, portions of the city contain mapped Critical Habitat, and the city contains sensitive archaeological and historic resources. See the attached NOP Figures for the regional location and an aerial image of the project area.

Project Description

The proposed project consists of the following components: 1) Housing Element update, which includes a program to rezone sites in the Commercial-Forest Hill, Commercial-Downtown, and some Unclassified districts; 2) Zoning Amendments to implement Housing Element Programs, including updates to the zoning map; and 3) associated General Plan Amendments. The draft Housing Element was submitted to the California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) for the first round of HCD review on November 2,

2023, and is undergoing revisions to address HCD comments. The zoning amendments would include modifications to the Zoning Code to meet target densities as well as compliance with State housing laws as identified in the Housing Element. The Land Use Element would be updated for consistency with the Housing Element update and Zoning Amendments. The Health & Safety Element update would involve updated information, policies, and implementation measures consistent with the current requirements of state law. This includes additional details related to evacuation routes and emergency access.

Potential Environmental Effects

The City has determined that an EIR is the appropriate level of CEQA review. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), because the City has determined that an EIR is needed and its scope will not be narrowed to exclude certain potential environmental effects that were determined to be insignificant, an initial study will not be prepared. The EIR will address the potential physical environmental effects of the proposed project for each of the environmental topics outlined in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The following environmental issues are anticipated to be analyzed in the EIR:

Aesthetics; Agriculture and Forestry Resources; Air Quality; Biological Resources; Cultural Resources; Energy; Geology and Soils; Greenhouse Gas Emissions; Hazards and Hazardous Materials; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use and Planning; Mineral Resources; Noise; Population and Housing; Public Services and Recreation; Transportation; Tribal Cultural Resources; Utilities and Service Systems; and Wildfire

The Draft EIR will propose mitigations to avoid and/or reduce impacts identified as being potentially significant, identify and evaluate a reasonable range of project alternatives, and compare the environmental impacts of the alternatives to the impacts of the proposed project. The EIR will also include other required information including discussions about : 1) any significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; 2) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments to resources; 3) growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project; 4) effects found not to be significant; and 5) cumulative impacts.

When the Draft EIR is completed, it will be available for review online and at two publicly accessible locations: 1) the City's Community Development Department located at 300 Forest Avenue, Pacific Grove, California, and 2) the Public Library located at 550 Central Ave, Pacific Grove, CA 93950.

EIR Purpose

The purpose of an EIR is to inform decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project that an agency (in this case, the City of Pacific Grove) may implement or approve. The EIR process is intended to: 1) provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment; 2) examine methods (e.g., programmatic-level mitigation or uniformly applied development regulations) for avoiding or reducing significant impacts; and 3) consider alternatives to the proposed project.

Providing Comments

At this time, the City is soliciting comments on the scope of the EIR, including potential environmental impacts of the project and alternatives to be considered. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.4(a) and CEQA Guidelines Sections 15082(b) and 15096(b)(2), agencies must limit comments to environmental information about the agency's area of statutory responsibility. For all commenters, comments must be specific and related directly to the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15082[b][3]). Comments will be considered when preparing the Draft EIR's discussion of environmental impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives. Because of time limits mandated by State law, comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 26, 2024, which ends the 31-day scoping period.

Comments may be submitted by U.S. mail or by email prior to the close of the scoping period. Direct comments to:

Alyssa Kroeger, Housing Program Manager
Community Development Department
City of Pacific Grove

300 Forest Avenue
Pacific Grove, California 93950

Comments may also be submitted via email to housing@cityofpacificgrove.org. For comments submitted via email, please include “NOP Comments: Housing Element Update, Zoning Amendments, and General Plan Amendments Project” in the subject line and the name and physical address of the commenter in the body of the email. All comments on environmental issues received during the public scoping period will be considered and addressed in the Draft EIR, which is anticipated to be available for public review in the summer of 2024.

Future Steps

The Draft EIR, once prepared, will be released for a minimum public review and comment period of 45 days. After the conclusion of the review period, the City will evaluate the comments and prepare the Final EIR. The Final EIR will be considered and acted upon by the City Council.

Attachments

Notice of Preparation
Public Comment
Meeting Presentation
