



STAFF REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: Regular Meeting of October 14, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

VIA: Dante Hall, City Manager

SUBMITTED BY: Timothy Rood AICP, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: General Plan Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve a resolution establishing an ad-hoc General Plan Advisory Committee to serve until the comprehensive General Plan update is adopted.

BACKGROUND:

Since 2022, the Council has received annual progress reports on the City's General Plan. These reports have highlighted the fact that many of the General Plan elements are extremely out of date and require updating to clearly reflect the City's vision and current conditions and to comply with many new state laws. On March 25, 2025, the Council received the 2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report and discussed the proposed General Plan update process and timeline, including the recommendation that the Council establish an ad-hoc General Plan Advisory Committee to serve throughout the update process.

A competitive Request for Proposals process in the summer of 2025 resulted in the selection of a team led by Raimi + Associates (R+A) to provide comprehensive consultant services (planning, environmental, transportation, economic and civil engineering) for the update of the General Plan Land Use, Circulation, Open Space & Conservation, Noise, and Economic Development elements and preparation of an Environmental Impact Report. The Council considered the consultant contract at its October 14, 2025 meeting.

ANALYSIS:

Purpose and Role

As the City embarks on its first comprehensive General Plan update in over 25 years, the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) will provide guidance by reviewing the existing plan and policies, helping identify targeted updates, and reviewing draft goals and policies. General Plan Advisory Committee meetings will guide the development of the guiding principles, analysis of issues, and evaluation of proposed goals, policies, future development scenarios, and infrastructure improvements.

Consultants will work closely with the GPAC throughout the process, using their input as a sounding board for key concepts to ensure alignment with community priorities. The GPAC will also be a sounding board to review draft materials before outreach events with the general public. This engagement will help keep the project on track and minimize the risk of delays later in the process.

The GPAC members will provide added eyes and ears in the community to provide insight and act as ambassadors to encourage broad engagement in the General Plan update process. The members will also provide unique expertise and invaluable local knowledge.

The role of the Committee will include reviewing milestone documents, providing guidance on policy direction, and providing recommendations to City staff and the consultants at critical junctures. Meetings will be publicized and open to the public. The Committee will act in an advisory capacity and not have decision-making responsibilities and will serve to build support for the updated General Plan.

Other cities that have appointed advisory committees to inform their General Plan updates in recent years include Richmond, El Cerrito, Pinole, San Rafael, Santa Rosa, Morgan Hill, Elk Grove, Davis, Temecula, Ventura and San Bernardino.

Composition

Similar to the Steering Committee that was successfully used for the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan adopted in 2024, staff recommends the following composition for the GPAC:

- One (1) Planning Commissioner, to be selected by the Commission
- One (1) Finance Commissioner, to be selected by the Commission
- One (1) Community & Library Services Commissioner, to be selected by the Commission
- One (1) representative of the Hercules Historical Society, to be selected by the Society's board
- Five (5) at-large community representatives, to be appointed by the City Council. The Council may wish to consider appointing representatives reflecting the City's diverse population, such as seniors, youth, parents, business owners, and representatives of non-profit organizations and other community groups.

Including representatives of City commissions on the GPAC will help to ensure alignment with other City goals and policies. Staff also recommends including a dedicated seat on the GPAC for a representative of the Hercules Historical Society, due to that organization's unique perspective on the City's growth and development as well as its remaining historic resources.

Process and Timeline

If the Council approves the resolution to establish the GPAC, staff will publicize the openings for the Council-appointed GPAC along with other City commission appointment opportunities. Interviews for all Council appointees are expected to be held in November, with appointments made on December 9, 2025.

Any at-large openings not filled in the initial round of Council appointments, for example due to a lack of applicants, could be appointed later, following the initial round of public outreach for the General Plan in early 2026, which may generate additional interest in serving on the GPAC.

GPAC members representing the City's Planning, Finance and Community & Library Services Commissions and the Hercules Historical Society would be chosen by those bodies prior to the GPAC's first meeting.

As detailed in the consultant's proposal, the general flow of GPAC meetings will be approximately every two months over a roughly two-year period, and related to the phases of work, as listed below:

- Meeting #1: Introduction to the project and the role of the GPAC
- Meeting #2: Issues, opportunities, community priorities
- Meeting #3: Focus areas and development vision
- Meeting #4 and #5: Land use options
- Meeting #6: Preferred land use options
- Meeting #7: Land use designation changes and development standards
- Meetings #8 and #9: Policy development
- Meeting #10: Responses to comments on the Public Review Draft Elements and Draft EIR

For each GPAC meeting, the consultants will prepare agendas and meeting materials, facilitate the meetings, and provide summary notes. All the meetings will be open to the public and include time for public input and participation. City staff responsibilities will include meeting logistics and communication with GPAC members, identifying meeting spaces, and providing support during the meetings.

GPAC meetings are anticipated to include the following topics:

Focus Areas and Vision: Building on the Part 1 deliverables, the Consultant Team will work closely with City staff and the GPAC (meeting #3) to draft a vision for future development and to identify “focus areas” – sites or areas that are likely to develop or redevelop by 2050.

Land Use Options: For each focus area, the Consultant Team will work with City staff to explore land use development options that are consistent with the vision but vary in the mix of use, density, and/or intensity. The land use options will be refined and confirmed in consultation with the GPAC (meetings #4 and #5), Planning Commission (meeting #2), and City Council (meeting #2).

Preferred Land Use Option: Based on the community feedback, and in consultation with City staff and the Consultant Team, R+A will prepare a recommended land use option for each focus area. The team will refine the recommendation with the GPAC (meeting #6) and Planning Commission (meeting #3) before inviting the City Council (meeting #3) to select the “preferred” land use options.

Land Use Standards and Map: Based on anticipated land use change, and building on the existing Municipal Code, R+A will draft updates to the General Plan land use designations and their associated development standards and refine them in consultation with City staff and the GPAC (meeting #7). R+A will then prepare an updated land use map based on the preferred land use options and designations. Along with the policy direction confirmed in Part 3, the land use map will be the starting point for the EIR (Task 7).

Engagement Round 3: Using community-friendly summaries of changes in policy direction, community feedback on the policy frameworks will be invited through GPAC meeting #8, Survey #3, Pop-ups #3, Workshop #3, and focused stakeholder meetings. Based on a review of community feedback with City staff, recommendations for policy direction will then be presented to the GPAC (meeting #9) and Planning Commission (meeting #4) before requesting that the City Council confirm the policy direction for each of the General Plan elements being updated (meeting #4).

Engagement Round 4: Using community-friendly summaries of changes made since the community last reviewed land use options and draft policies, community feedback on the Public Draft Elements and Draft EIR will be invited through Online Survey #4, Workshop #4, and focused stakeholder meetings. Based on a review of community feedback with City staff, recommendations for refinements to the elements will then be presented to the GPAC (meeting #10) before proceeding with adoption hearings for the updated elements.

Following adoption of the updated General Plan, anticipated for early in 2028, the GPAC will be dissolved.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to this item.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attach 1 - Resolution