



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

Colleagues Memo

TO: Mayor and Members of the Town Council

FROM: Mary Hufty, Judith Hasko

DATE: January 17, 2023

RE: General Plan Research and Working Group

RECOMMENDATION:

We propose that the Council support the formation of a volunteer General Plan Research and Working Group to begin work immediately on educating itself and the Town residents on the General Plan, including exploring its consistencies with proposed zoning changes, local ordinances and guidelines, and State laws. We further recommend that the public be made aware of these meetings and encouraged to attend them.

BACKGROUND:

Our Town's General Plan is a carefully crafted, unique document reflecting Town values and the Town founders' vision for our community. Commonly viewed as our Town's "Constitution," our General Plan has at least 12 separate sections, or "elements," addressing key attributes of our Town. These elements are closely inter-related, and also related to our Town's ordinances and guidelines. The General Plan covers topics also governed by State law. The manner in which these elements relate to each other, and to these ordinances, guidelines and laws, can be challenging to understand.

To encourage and enable full participation of Town residents in future discussions of the individual elements of the General Plan, and related ordinances, guidelines and laws, we propose as a first step the formation of a General Plan Research and Working Group consisting of volunteer residents of Portola Valley and of its sphere of influence. This group would meet on a regular basis, in scheduled meetings open to the general public, to discuss and gain a comprehensive understanding of the General Plan in anticipation of the Town's efforts to update the General Plan in connection with the Housing Element update and any other future Town initiatives directed to the General Plan.

As the current General Plan has at least 12 elements, the membership goal for the Working Group is 13 to 15 volunteers, of whom at least 11 shall be residents of the Town.

The deliverables/ products of the General Plan Research and Working Group are:

- A review of the current General Plan, including, in relation to our Town zoning, ordinances and guidelines and State laws.
- A review of currently proposed changes to the General Plan in connection with the Housing Element update currently in process, and notations of when various aspects of the General Plan were updated in past efforts. Serve as a resource to support the staff for any future changes to the General Plan to be considered.
- Function as a standing Research and Working Group for future changes to the General Plan.

Support requested:

Consistent with our Town's ethos of encouraging regular participation by Town residents in important Town matters, we propose that the Council approve:

- The provision of meeting space at the Town center for the Working Group, in a room large enough to accommodate attendance by the public.
- Staff support to advertise for volunteers to serve on the Working Group in our weekly town bulletin.
- A member of the planning department, or other personnel as appropriate, to attend, no more frequently than one time per month, a Working Group meeting for one hour to answer questions. Staff participation in these meetings would not require any special staff preparation or follow-up support, given the current significant workload of the Planning Department.

Benefits:

Residents would commence a process to enhance public understanding of the current General Plan and related ordinances, guidelines and laws in anticipation of currently contemplated, and any future, updates to the General Plan and related Town ordinances and guidelines. Participants would come into any such future process more fully informed, and be enabled to provide in a timely manner comprehensive input into any such updates. This open process for engaging residents on the General Plan now would set the stage for productive participation by the community in future Town activities relating to the General Plan and related ordinances, guidelines and laws to enable the General Plan to continue to reflect community values, in a manner reflecting our Town's history of open resident engagement.