



Agenda Report

25-214

Agenda Date: 4/16/2025

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

PUBLIC HEARING: Recommendation on a General Plan Amendment to Remove the Lawrence Station Phase II, Central Expressway, and De La Cruz Focus Areas

BACKGROUND

The City's General Plan has nine Focus Areas that includes four Focus Areas south of the Caltrain corridor and five Future Focus Areas north of the Caltrain corridor, as shown in the Focus Areas map (Attachment 1). The purpose of these Focus Areas is to encourage improvements and new development tailored to the character and quality of these areas and represent locations with opportunities for more intense development.

The proposed General Plan Amendment will remove the following three Focus Areas: Lawrence Station Phase II (west of Lawrence Expressway), Central Expressway, and De La Cruz. Staff proposes to remove these three focus areas in that the existing conditions are inconsistent with future housing goals.

DISCUSSION

The General Plan has a multi-phase implementation strategy to guide development. Phasing provides the foundation for continued re evaluation of the development and service goals of the General Plan. In practice, Focus Areas have represented locations with anticipation of residential development opportunities. The Downtown, Tasman East and Lawrence Station Focus Areas have resulted in the development of a Precise Plan and Specific Plans with significant amounts of new residential development. Over time, the City has satisfied housing needs in these new Specific Plans and other areas as outlined in the sixth cycle of the General Plan's Housing Element.

The adopted Housing Element demonstrates that the City has adequate capacity to produce housing during this sixth cycle, which is generally co-terminus with the timeframe of the City of Santa Clara General Plan. The City created a variety of sites to develop high-density housing during this cycle, including the Tasman East and Patrick Henry Drive specific plans, and the approved Greystar Freedom Circle residential development project.

The Lawrence Station Phase II Focus Area, and the Central Expressway and De La Cruz Future Focus Areas, are not ideal locations to convert to housing due to the existing industrial and office land uses. The Central Expressway Future Focus area has a dense concentration of data centers that would be unlikely to convert to housing and be incompatible with housing should it be developed. Some of the properties are in an undesirable location under the San Jose Mineta International Airport flight path, in the case of the De La Cruz Future Focus Area. As for Lawrence Expressway Phase II, owners of industrial and office properties in this area have no current interest in redevelopment for housing.

To reflect these conditions, the City proposes a General Plan Text Amendment and Land Use Diagram Amendment to remove the De La Cruz and Central Expressway Future Focus Areas, and the Lawrence Station West Focus Area from the General Plan and continue to apply the Heavy Industrial, Light Industrial, and Low Intensity Office Research & Development (R&D), land use designations to these areas consistent with existing uses.

The amendment will revise texts and land use diagrams associated with the subject Focus Areas. The

revisions will primarily affect Chapter 5.4, Focus Areas, of the City's General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The City prepared an Addendum to the 2010-2035 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (Attachment 2) for the sixth Cycle (2023-2031) Housing Element, which considered the removal of the subject Focus Areas. The Addendum concluded that there is no substantial change to the General Plan that would require major revisions to the previous EIR; that there is not a substantial change in circumstances as a result of modifications to the General Plan that would cause new or substantially more severe impacts; and, that there is no new information of substantial importance that identifies new or more intense significant impacts than those identified in the General Plan EIR. With the adoption of Resolution No. 23-9188 (Attachment 3) at a public hearing on January 31, 2023, the City Council approved the Addendum to the General Plan EIR.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to the City for processing the requested application other than administrative time and expense for staff to draft this report and coordinate the environmental assessment.

COORDINATION

This report was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City's website and in the City Clerk's Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>> or at the public information desk at any City of Santa Clara public library.

On March 20, 2023, Planning staff had a community outreach meeting to present this General Plan Amendment. Property owners within 500 feet of the subject Focus Areas were notified. There were twenty people in attendance and two spoke regarding affordable housing in this area and redevelopment of housing elsewhere in the City. There is no affordable housing requirement in this area unless there is a proposal for a residential redevelopment. Residential development will be focused in new specific plans areas and where there are residential land uses designation on the General Plan map.

On January 29, 2025, pursuant to Government Code Section 65352(a), the City mailed referral letters to Native American tribes and outside agencies advising them of the City's intent to act on a General Plan Amendment to remove the subject Focus Areas.

On April 2, 2025, pursuant to Government Code Section 65353 and 65355, a notice of public hearing was published in The Weekly, a newspaper of general circulation, regarding the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt a Resolution to Recommend the City Council Amend the General Plan to remove the Lawrence Station Phase II, Central Expressway and De La Cruz Focus Areas and make associated text edits.
2. Adopt a Resolution to Recommend the City Council Amend the General Plan to remove the Lawrence Station Phase II, Central Expressway and De La Cruz Focus Areas and make associated text edits, with additional revisions.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend the City Council Amend the General Plan to remove the Lawrence Station Phase II, Central Expressway and De La Cruz Focus Areas and make associated text edits.

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Reviewed by: Alexander Abbe, Assistant City Attorney
Reviewed by: Sheldon S. Ah Sing, Development Review Officer
Approved by: Lesley Xavier, Planning Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Map of Focus Areas and Removal Areas
2. Addendum (Hyperlink)
3. City Council Addendum Resolution No. 23-9188
4. Planning Commission Resolution
5. General Plan Chapter 5.4 Focus Areas_Clean
6. General Plan Chapter 5.4 Focus Areas_Markup