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GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT PROCEDURES

PURPOSE

California State Law requires that all cities and counties have comprehensive General Plans that act as a guide for development of the community. All general plans are required to consist of the following elements: land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The Cloverdale General Plan combines the conservation and open space elements, and also has a parks and recreation element and an urban lighting element. In essence, a General Plan serves as the “blueprint” for future growth for the City.

Although the City will periodically review and update its General Plan, there occasionally arises a need or desire to change some specific portion of the General Plan such as the land-use designation for a particular area. In accordance with State Law, the City can amend its General Plan only four times during the year. However, several proposed changes may be considered at one time as one amendment.

No portion of the General Plan should be amended without reviewing the entire General Plan or at least an area substantially larger than the property being considered. Ordinarily, piecemeal amendments to the General Plan should not occur unless related conditions have changed since the last adoption of the General Plan or circumstances unforeseen at the time of the adoption of the General Plan have become known. Changes in a General Plan usually mean amended goals or objectives in development policies of the City. The General Plan represents one of the most important policy statements of the City. Proposed changes are reviewed very carefully by the Planning Commission and City Council. Applications for amendments should only be made when there are compelling reasons for a change in the plan within the context of existing public policy.

PROCESS

Step 1 - Pre-application Discussion with Staff

It is recommended that the applicant review the request with planning staff prior to the submission of the formal application. This will allow an opportunity to discuss the feasibility of the request and identify possible environmental concerns. A proposed land-use change should be compatible with the surrounding uses and act as a logical progression of City growth. In addition, the staff and applicant can review the required data and procedures to be

followed through the process. Usually, this first step is the most important step and helps a project move faster through the process.

Step 2 - Filing of Application

The applicant should submit the completed application together with a written statement of the reasons for the amendment request, a map exhibit, and filing fee to the Community Development Department, 124 N. Cloverdale Blvd., Cloverdale CA 95425. If the amendment request is the first step in known series of actions, all required applications should be filed concurrently. The planning staff will review the material to make sure all the required information is provided. The applicant will be notified within 30 days after filing as to whether the application is complete or what additional information is required. The application must be signed by the property owner(s.)

Step 3 - Review by City Project Review Committee (PRC)

Once the initial application has been received and fees paid, the proposal may be scheduled for review by the Project Review Committee (PRC.) The PRC consists of City staff who collectively and informally consider an application in its early stages. The intent of the PRC meeting is to identify any significant issues early in the process and determine the completeness of the application packet.

Step 4 - Environmental Review

Following review by the PRC, the application will be evaluated for its completeness. The application should embody any changes that were recommended by the PRC and agreed upon by the applicant. Once the application is deemed accurate and complete, an Initial Study will be prepared by staff as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the Initial Study is to identify any significant environmental impacts of the project which have not been mitigated by the design of the project or which cannot be mitigated by modifications. Based on the findings of the Initial Study, staff will prepare either a negative declaration, require the preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR) or refer the environmental determination to the Planning Commission. In any case, from the date when the application is deemed complete, an environmental review process takes approximately 90 days for a negative declaration and one year for an EIR.

Step 5 - Public Hearings by Planning Commission and City Council

The Planning Commission will review the environmental document and general plan amendment request at a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council then considers the recommendation of the Planning Commission at a public hearing. Following public testimony, the City Council may (1) refer the matter back to the Planning Commission for further evaluation, (2) continue the public hearing to a specific time, date, and place, or (3) close the public hearing and make their decision. The decision on approval or denial of the City Council is final.

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIREMENT

The actual time for the processing of general plan amendment will vary depending on the complexity and magnitude of the request and scheduling the hearing dates. Generally, the period from acceptance of a complete application to adoption of a resolution approving the general plan amendment is approximately 12 to 14 weeks under normal circumstances. If an EIR is required, the process could encompass a period of one year.

APPLICATION SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. Application form completed and signed
2. Application fee
3. Map exhibit depicting the dimensions of the affected properties and identifying the owner of each parcel
4. Statement of the reasons for the amendment request