



# STAFF REPORT

DATE: July 6, 2023

PHG20-0028 – East Valley Specific Plan

**PROJECT NUMBER / NAME: PHG20-0028 / EAST VALLEY SPECIFIC PLAN**

**REQUEST:** A request to create a new Specific Plan that would provide a forward-looking vision for the future of the East Valley area in central Escondido ("Project"). The East Valley Specific Plan ("EVSP") is intended to provide guidance for private development and public investment in the EVSP Area, consistent with the adopted Escondido General Plan. The EVSP Area would be rezoned from existing General Commercial (CG), Hospital Professional (HP), and Commercial Professional (CP) to Specific Plan (S-P), allowing mixed-use and high-density residential uses to encourage new housing opportunities, improve economic vibrancy, and allow for flexibility in use and implementation as the EVSP Area changes over time.

**PROPERTY SIZE AND LOCATION:** The East Valley Specific Plan area is comprised of approximately 191 acres generally bound by Escondido Creek to the north; Harding Street to the east, Grand Avenue and East 2nd Street to the south; and North Hickory, South Hickory, and North Fig Streets to the west

**APPLICANT:** City of Escondido

**GENERAL PLAN / ZONING:** General Commercial, Office / General Commercial, Commercial Professional, Hospital Professional

**PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE:** Adam Finestone, AICP  
City Planner

**DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS REQUESTED:** Specific Plan and Rezone

**PREVIOUS ACTIONS:** In 2012, the City Council adopted the Escondido General Plan update which identified the East Valley Specific Plan area as a Target Area anticipated for mixed-use development.

**CEQA RECOMMENDATION:** Certify a Final Program Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Project.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend City Council approval

**REQUESTED ACTION:** Adopt Resolution Nos. 2023-11 and 2023-12

**CITY COUNCIL HEARING REQUIRED:** ☒ YES ☐ NO

**REPORT APPROVALS:** ☐ Andrew Firestone, Director of Development Services

☒ Adam Finestone, City Planner



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### SUMMARY OF REQUEST

At its June 13, 2023, meeting, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and received a presentation on the draft East Valley Specific Plan ("EVSP"). The staff report from that meeting, included as Attachment 1 to this report, provides a thorough summary of the draft EVSP as it existed at that time. At that meeting, input was provided by the commission on issues related to open space, landscaping, setbacks, parking, and requirements for ground-floor residential construction. At the conclusion of the June 13, 2023, meeting, the Planning Commission called a special meeting for 6 p.m. on June 20, 2023, to discuss additional aspects of the draft EVSP. A copy of the staff report from the June 20, 2023, meeting, and a memorandum distributed at that meeting, are included as Attachments 2 and 3, respectively, to this report. Issues discussed at that meeting are identified in the memorandum (Attachment 3). On June 27, 2023, the Planning Commission held another public hearing and received another presentation on the status of the EVSP including additional details related to parking and open space. The staff report from that meeting is included as Attachment 4 to this report. At the conclusion of that meeting, the Planning Commission continued the hearing to a special meeting on July 6, 2023.

Staff has taken the input received from the Planning Commission into advisement and prepared revisions to the draft EVSP. The revised draft of the EVSP is provided as Exhibit B to Planning Commission Resolution No. 2023-12, which itself is included as Attachment 7 to this report,

### Revisions to Draft East Valley Specific Plan

Revisions to the EVSP were both substantive and non-substantive. Non-substantive revisions addressed items such as punctuation, pagination, typographical errors, formatting, etc. Substantive revisions are described briefly in the table below, which includes references to where in the EVSP document that the revisions were made. As a result of the robust discussion on certain topics at Planning Commission meetings over the past several weeks, a detailed description of revisions that have been made in those topic areas follows the table.

PAGE #	TOPIC	REVISION(S)
5	Document approval	Inserted City Council ordinance number to be used when EVSP is considered by City Council on July 19, 2023
12	Mobility Policies	Revised Mobility Policy 2.2 to "encourage" rather than "require" internal pedestrian connections between properties
17	Map legend	Removed "Preferred" prior to "Land Use Plan"
18	Density Transfer Process	Revised language related to density allowance to reference "underlying land use designation" instead of "current zoning"
21	Document horizon	Revised two locations to identify the accurate 12-plus year horizon date for EVSP projections
32	Roadway classifications	Added language to specify that classifications described in the EVSP are based on the current General Plan designations and are subject to change
48-49	Parking requirements	Removed maximum parking allowance and adjusted minimum requirements for residential uses; combined certain residential land use categories; clarified non-residential parking requirements to be maximum allowed; clarified references to Escondido Zoning Code; created allowance for modifications to requirements
50	Supplemental parking standards	Provided additional language regarding reduction in vehicle emissions. Simplified requirement for EV charging spaces by referencing California Building Code.



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51	Supplement parking standards	Removed maximum bicycle and loading space columns; removed electric vehicle parking column; adjusted and provided limitations on minimum bicycle and loading space requirements; removed requirement for bicycle parking from units that have private garages
Removed	Parking Exceptions	Removed Parking Exceptions section
59	Precedence of development standards	Specified that development standards contained in the EVSP shall take precedence when conflicts exist between the EVSP and the municipal code
59	Open space definitions	Provided definitions for "public open space," "common open spaces," and "private open spaces"
59-60	Open space development standards	Changed minimum open space requirement to 200 sf per unit; allowed reduction in to 125 sf of open space per unit for projects that meet TPP; clarified requirements for "public," "common," and "private" open spaces;
63	Development standards table	Revised Table 7-1 to reduce certain setbacks and landscaping requirements; allow landscaping within setbacks to count toward the minimum landscape requirement; added information regarding locational dependence for building height in Urban IV/V district
65-69	Land use allowance	Modifications to Table 7-2: referenced Escondido Zoning Code for ADU development standards; changed second hand stores and thrift shops to prohibited uses in all districts; allowed consignment stores as conditional use in CG district; changed for-fee EV charging stations to permitted use (as primary use); clarified allowances for animal care, daycare, and boarding; allowed duplicating services in MU district; clarified educational use allowances; included publicly accessible open space on private property as private parks; increased restrictions on automotive services; changed firearms dealers and sporting goods stores which sell ammunition and firearms to conditional uses in CG and MU districts;
70-71	Accessory use allowance	Changed car or bike sharing services to permitted uses; restricted fleet vehicle storage; modified allowances for wireless facilities
80	Historic district	Removed information regarding review of projects within the downtown historic district
80	Initial meetings	Clarified that initial meetings are required prior to project submittal
80	Minor projects	Specified that review required for minor projects is design review; removed staff referral to historic preservation commission and planning commission;
80	Major projects	Clarified review process
80	Building permits	Clarified process when building permits are required
Removed	Historic district	Removed Figure 8-1 Historic District Map
81	Transportation fair share contribution program	Created separate section for Transportation Fair Share Contribution Program
81	Zoning Administrator	Clarified Zoning Administrator's role and authority

*Land Use Allowances* – At the June 20, 2023, and June 27, 2023, Planning Commission meetings, commissioners and staff discussed land use allowances that would be appropriate within the EVSP. Table 7-2 of the EVSP identifies land uses as either permitted, conditionally permitted, or prohibited in each land use district. That table was derived from land use tables in Article 16 (Commercial Zones) of the Escondido Zoning Code, and the Downtown Specific Plan ("DSP") and South Centre City Specific Plans ("SCCSP"). In reviewing the uses and allowances identified in Table 7-2 of the EVSP, the Planning Commission and staff identified several uses that warranted potential changes to their allowance, and noted others that required clarification or additional information.



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Revisions made to Table 7-2 would prohibit second hand and thrift stores in all districts, which is generally consistent with the other specific plans noted above aside from one district of the DSP and two districts in the SCCSP, which allow such establishments subject to specific provisions and require a conditional use permit. Changes would also allow consignment stores in the CG district, which is consistent with a majority of the districts in the DSP. (Consignment stores are grouped with second hand and thrift stores in the SCCSP.) For-fee EV charging stations have been changed to a permitted use in the CG and MU districts to comply with recent state law that mandates they be permitted in any parking facility. Animal-related uses have been modified so that animal care is classified as a permitted use in the CG district and a conditional use in the MU district; animal day-care and boarding is classified as a conditional use in the CG district; and animal shelters have been removed from the table.

Modifications have also been made to educational and childcare uses mainly to clarify what is included in each category. (In the Escondido Zoning Code, there is a separate subsection in the land use table which covers educational and child care uses, and when they were brought into the EVSP table, "Education and childcare" was included at the front of each use listed. No changes were made to the actual use allowances themselves.) Allowances for automotive services have been tightened to remove vehicle repair as a permitted or conditionally permitted use in the MU district and require a CUP for it in the CG district, and to require a CUP for boutique car sales in both the MU and CG districts. Other minor changes would add "publicly accessible open space on private property" in the same category as private or semi-private parks, which would be permitted in all districts; allow screen printing and duplicating services in the MU district; and provide a reference to the Escondido Zoning Code related to Accessory Dwelling Uses.

Subsequent to discussions regarding firearms stores at the past to Planning Commission meetings, staff explored the potential to allow for such stores further. Significant regulations related to gun sales exist in state and federal law, so the consideration of siting firearms stores in the EVSP would be based on site-specific issues and compatibility with nearby properties and uses. As such the chief of police recommended that any allowance for stores that sell firearms and/or ammunition require a conditional use permit so that his department can conduct a CPTED assessment and determine potential neighborhood impacts. Therefore, staff has provided an allowance for firearms stores through a CUP in the CG and MU districts. This requirement would also apply to sporting goods stores that sell firearms and ammunition.

*Open Space* – It is recognized that open space provides a myriad of benefits, including those related to recreational opportunities, shade, public health, and others. The challenge exists, however, in the fact that land that is used for open space purposes on a lot reduces the land that is available for residential development. In order to achieve the type of residential densities envisioned in the EVSP, an open space requirement of 250 square feet per unit, as had initially been proposed in the EVSP draft presented on June 13, 2023, would be challenging to achieve. High percentages of site landscaping and large setbacks further added to the density challenge.

With one of the overarching goals of the EVSP being to achieve a vibrant and active built environment through a significant increase in residential uses in the area, staff has proposed reducing open space requirements to 200 square feet per unit. Staff has also identified a further reduction to 125 square feet per unit for projects that achieve their Target Production Point as a way to incentivize development of dwelling units. To assist with the creation of more buildable area, front, rear, and street side setbacks have been reduced from 10 or 15 feet to eight feet in all districts, and the percentage of a site that is required to be landscaped has been decreased in the Urban IV/V district from 35% of the site to 25% of the site. (Note that landscaping in the setbacks counts toward the percent required, as does decorative hardscape.)



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*Parking* – Parking requirements contained in the initial draft EVSP were somewhat unclear. They identified maximum parking requirements for residential uses, but also allowed for reductions in the number of spaces required. Parking requirements for commercial uses were vague and incomplete as well. Through discussions at Planning Commission meetings over the past several weeks, staff has gained an understanding of the concerns raised related to parking and has identified a number of revisions. Specifically, staff has removed the maximum parking allowance for residential uses and applied a maximum allowance to commercial uses, with an ability to request an adjustment to that maximum. Additionally, parking requirements for some uses have been removed and instead reference the applicable provisions of the Zoning Code, and other requirements have been modified to be more appropriate to the use.

All of the above stated, the minimum parking requirement for residential uses remains unresolved. As currently drafted, the EVSP would require one space per unit, however concern has been expressed that one space per unit may not be the appropriate number, with arguments made for both higher and lower minimum requirements. At the July 6, 2023, Planning Commission meeting, staff will present a menu of options for residential parking requirements. As part of their action on the EVSP, the Planning Commission will be asked to select and incorporate one or a combination of the options presented for incorporation into the EVSP prior to it being forwarded to City Council for their consideration.

### **Environmental Determination**

A draft Program Environmental Impact Report ("PEIR") was prepared for the EVSP and identified potential impacts to air quality, biological resources, cultural and tribal cultural resources, and noise. The environmental analysis concluded that mitigation for impacts to air quality, biological resources, and cultural and tribal cultural resources would reduce them to a less than significant level, however impacts to noise would remain significant and unavoidable. The draft PEIR was made available for a 45-day public review period from March 30, 2023, through May 15, 2023, and two public comments were received.

A final PEIR has been prepared for the project and is included as Exhibit B to Planning Commission Resolution No. 2023-11, which itself is included as Attachment 6 to this staff report. The final PEIR consists of a summary of corrections and revisions made to the draft PEIR, comments received on the draft PEIR and the City's responses to those comments, a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and the revised draft PEIR showing revisions in strikeout/underline format. Pursuant to sections 15091 and 15093, respectively, of the State CEQA Guidelines, Findings of Fact ("Findings") and a Statement of Overriding Considerations ("SOC") have also been prepared, and are included as Exhibit C to Planning Commission Resolution No. 2023-11. An SOC is required when a jurisdiction has determined that there are "specific economic, legal, social, technological, or other considerations...[which] make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the EIR." In this case, potential mitigation measures necessary to reduce noise impacts to a less-than-significant level would render the project infeasible, and any alternative analyzed in the EIR would eliminate the ability of the EVSP to meet the goals identified in the document.



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### General Plan Conformance

A General Plan conformance analysis is included in the June 13, 2023 staff report (Attachment 1). That analysis identifies revisions which will need to be made to the General Plan for clarity as a result of approval of the EVSP. Those revisions will be made via subsequent amendments that will be brought back before the Planning Commission for recommendation to City Council in the next few months. Note that adoption of the EVSP would not create inconsistencies with the General Plan, and that the future revisions to the General Plan are intended for clarity purposes.

### PUBLIC INPUT

Staff mailed public hearing notices to all property owners, residents, and business owners within the EVSP area on June 12, 2023. Since that time, staff has received a combination of phone calls and emails from 15 individuals. The written comments have been included as Attachment 5 to this report. Additionally, two people spoke at the June 27, 2023, public hearing.

### CONCLUSION AND REQUESTED ACTION

At the July 6, 2023, Planning Commission public hearing, City staff will be presenting a menu of options related to parking for residential developments. Staff requests that the Planning Commission select one option to be incorporated into the final version of the EVSP. Subsequent to that selection, staff requests that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the EVSP and certification of the associated final PEIR to the Planning Commission via adoption of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 2023-12 and 2023-11, respectively.

### ATTACHMENTS

1. ~~June 13, 2023, Planning Commission staff report~~
2. ~~June 20, 2023, Planning Commission staff report~~
3. ~~June 20, 2023, Planning Commission memorandum~~
4. ~~June 27, 2023, Planning Commission staff report~~
5. ~~Public Comments~~
6. ~~Planning Commission Resolution No. 2023-11 with Exhibits A through D~~
7. ~~Planning Commission Resolution No. 2023-12 with Exhibits A through C~~