



STAFF REPORT

DATE: June 13, 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 commercial and office uses to 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

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 Programmatic Environmental Impact Report prepared for the Project.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Continuance to date-certain

REQUESTED ACTION: Provide input to staff; Continue Public Hearing to June 27, 2023.

CITY COUNCIL HEARING REQUIRED: YES NO

REPORT APPROVALS: Andrew Firestine, Director of Development Services

Adam Finestone, City Planner



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BACKGROUND

A specific plan may be established through the authority granted to the City by California Government Code, Sections 65450 through 65457, as a means of systematically implementing the General Plan. A specific plan, through text and diagram(s), must identify the following:

1. The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.
2. The proposed distribution, location, and extent and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.
3. Standards and criteria by which development will proceed, and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable; and
4. A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out items 1 through 3 above.

In 2012, the Escondido City Council adopted a comprehensive General Plan update. The Land Use and Community Form chapter of that document called out the area along East Valley Parkway from downtown Escondido to just east of Midway Drive, as the East Valley Parkway Target Area (“Target Area”) with the goal of revitalizing the area. The EVSP area encompasses the western half of the Target Area. The current Land Use designations applied to the EVSP area are General Commercial and Office, with a Mixed-Use Overlay which designated the EVSP area for future mixed-use development via application of a Mixed-Use Overlay. The EVSP is intended to implement the Mixed-Use Overlay provided in the General Plan through the creation of a new Specific Plan.

In 2020, the City was awarded grant funding to conduct a Housing and Community Investment Study which included the recently-adopted 6th cycle Housing Element, a sector feasibility study, and a proposed specific plan for the EVSP area. The Housing Element, among other programmatic goals, established an inventory of suitable sites (“Inventory”) necessary for the City to achieve its share of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (“RHNA”). A significant number of properties identified in the Inventory are within the portion of the Target Area that has a Mixed-Use Overlay designation. Without adoption the EVSP, the City would not be able to achieve its share of the RHNA. Thus, the EVSP serves as the rezoning effort necessary for the Housing Element to be in substantial compliance with housing element law.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The City of Escondido developed the draft EVSP in collaboration with residents, local businesses, and property owners, to provide a forward-looking vision for the future of the EVSP area. The EVSP presents goals, policies, design standards, and implementation strategies for categories such as land use, mobility, and parks and open spaces. The EVSP is intended to provide guidance for private development and public investment over the next 12+ years. Further detail regarding the public outreach efforts taken in support of development of the EVSP can be found in the Public Input section later in this staff report.

The above stated collaborative efforts established the following vision (“Vision”) for the EVSP area:



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The East Valley Specific Plan incorporates a dynamic mix of land uses, ensuring a variety of residential options, linked together through safe streets and a business corridor. The Plan creates an inviting atmosphere and quality of life with attractive public spaces and connected paths that leverage the Escondido Creek Trail and provide a unique and artistic identity that attracts local residents and North County Inland residents to live, shop, dine, and recreate.

The EVSP vision establishes an all-embracing mission for the Plan Area, while the following goals and policies act as tangible steps or actions towards achieving the vision. The goals are broken out into the different topics or lenses in which to carry out the vision. Each goal is supported by policies that give the City measurable, implementable actions intended to help accomplish that goal. Goals and policies are provided for the following topics: Land Use, Sustainable and Equitable Development, Site and Building Design, Mobility, Parks and Public Realm, Economic Development, Public Services and Infrastructure. Further discussion of the EVSP goals is provided below. A detailed list of policies intended to implement said goals can be found starting on page 7 of the draft EVSP which is included as Attachment 1 to this staff report.

East Valley Specific Plan Goals

Land Use – Policies related to the Land Use goals are intended to address the mix of land uses proposed for the EVSP area. They provide guidance that was utilized to establish the land use plan described later in this report.

1. A self-contained land use pattern that offers a mix of compatible land uses and community spaces.
2. A housing program focused on affordable housing opportunities.

Sustainable & Equitable Development – Policies that would implement the Sustainable and Equitable Development goal serve to create an environment where sustainability is essential to the vibrancy of the EVSP area, and where resources and desirable community amenities are distributed in fair and equitable manner.

1. Environmentally mindful and equitable development standards for the Plan Area choices.

Site & Building Design – Site and Building Design goals speak to the aesthetic quality of the built environment. The goals and their supporting policies address not only architectural design, but the appearance of streetscapes through right-of-way and landscape improvements.

1. Alluring building forms and streetscapes that enhance the physical character and pride of East Valley.
2. Development sites that seamlessly support all right-of-way users.
3. Quality landscaping and greenspace throughout the public realm.

Mobility – Mobility goals recognize the need to provide an array of transportation options for all EVSP area residents and visitors. Safety and efficiency are essential considerations when designing transportation improvements, and alternative modes of transportation should be given consideration in order to address concerns specific to all roadway users.

1. Public and private development that provides safe vehicular circulation while reducing overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and promoting alternative modes of transportation.
2. A safe and connective pedestrian and cyclist experience for residents and workers, through quality design, public amenities, and accessible facilities.
3. A transit-oriented community with safe, reliable and timely transit options.
4. More efficient parking strategies.



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Parks & Public Realm – Outdoor open space and recreational amenities improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The Parks and Public Realm goal puts an emphasis on engaging with the community to assess their needs, and encourages flexibility in design of public and private open space, which will allow for alterations as needs change over time.

1. Accessible public gathering spaces with social and recreational amenities.

Economic Development – A strong economy can create vibrancy within the community. Policies established to implement the EVSP Economic Development Goal provide a framework by which to do so.

1. Robust economic activity within the Plan Area.

Public Services & Infrastructure – Quality public services and infrastructure are necessary to support growth and accommodate development and private investment. Efficient use and upgrades to existing systems can assist in achieving the Public Services and Infrastructure goal.

1. High-quality services and infrastructure that accommodate projected growth in the Plan Area.

Land Use

As noted earlier in this report, the Escondido General Plan provides a mixed-use overlay for the EVSP area, with a focus on residential growth. Historic development trends and existing land use allowances do not reflect this goal. Current zoning for the EVSP area accommodates commercial development along the East Valley Parkway and lower-intensity commercial and office uses along East Pennsylvania, East Ohio, and East Grand avenues. Commercial uses continue to be a major focus along East Valley Parkway, however the demand for medical office uses is expected to wane as a result of the closure of Palomar Health’s downtown hospital campus. Additionally, a significant amount of lower-density residential development occurred along East Pennsylvania, East Ohio, and East Grand avenues prior to establishment of the current Hospital Professional (H-P) zoning designation for the area, making those properties nonconforming with existing zoning.

A Land Use Plan (“LUP”) has been established for the EVSP, which acts as the policy framework for the development and use of land in the EVSP area. The overall goal of the LUP is to encourage new housing opportunities, improve economic vibrancy, and allow for flexibility in the use and implementation as East Valley changes over time, while preserving strongly utilized uses that exist today. Land use designations proposed in the EVSP are intended to implement the mixed-use overlay identified in the General Plan, as highlighted in the Vision for the EVSP.

The LUP, found on page 17 of the EVSP (Attachment 1), envisions a compatible mix of land uses that support the overarching goals and vision for the area. The LUP focuses on maintaining many of the existing uses, while clustering them into different areas to create a more cohesive pattern and design. Additionally, the LUP would establish permitted land uses that would eliminate the nonconforming status for many of the residentially-developed properties noted above.

The LUP is comprised of three land use designations and one overlay zone, and sets forth a transition of intensities throughout the EVSP area. Consistent with the effort to encourage and accommodate residential growth, a vast majority of properties in the EVSP allow residential uses in some form. As shown on the LUP, the majority of properties along East Valley Parkway are designated as Mixed Use, allowing a variety of commercial uses along with residential development at up to 80 dwelling units per acre. The goal here is to create a more urban and vibrant



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character with an enhanced public realm through outdoor dining, public plazas, and other amenities, and provide transitions to larger commercial properties to the east and downtown to the west. Properties in the southern portion of the EVSP area (those generally along East Pennsylvania, East Ohio, and East Grand avenues), as well as those along Ash Street north of the flood control channel, are designated Urban IV/V, which allows multi-family residential development between 21 and 31 dwelling units per acre, consistent with the Urban IV and Urban V General Plan land use designations. The EVSP Urban IV/V designation differs from the Urban IV and Urban V designations in the General Plan, however, in that the EVSP designation also allows up to 15,000 square feet of retail and office uses per acre, enabling many of the properties to remain in conformance with land use designations. Additional discussion of certain unique provisions of the EVSP related to residential uses is provided later in this report.

A General Commercial land use designation is provided at the corner of East Valley Parkway and Ash Street, and on the southwest corner of East Valley Parkway and Harding Street. These properties would retain land use allowances highly similar to those allows in the General Commercial zone, and have been designated as such in order to encourage more compact commercial footprints and create an activity node proximate to shopping, transit, and residences.

A Park Overlay Zone is also identified on the LUP, with the goal of providing up to 25 acres of parkland in the EVSP area. In addition to linear parks envisioned for residential alleys, the Park Overlay Zone has been applied to three areas. Two of those areas were strategically selected because they would create the greatest expansion of land, both inside and outside the EVSP area, within ¼ mile of a park. The third was selected because it is a City-owned parcel (owned by the Utilities Department), though it does not significantly expand the amount of land within ¼ mile of a park. Additionally, while the Park Overlay Zone is only shown in the areas described here (totaling approximately 25 acres), it should be noted that parks are not precluded elsewhere in the EVSP area.

Residential Land Uses

As noted above, the EVSP includes some innovative provisions that would encourage higher-density development on Urban IV/V and Mixed-Use properties. The goal of these provisions is to ensure that housing can be developed at the densities and affordability levels provided for in the Housing Element.

Density Transfer Program – Similar to the Downtown Specific Plan, the EVSP contains a Density Transfer Program (“DTP”) in order to maintain the full residential build-out potential of the EVSP area. The DTP would enable the City to transfer densities from undeveloped or underutilized properties (sending areas) within the EVSP area to other properties in the EVSP area (receiving areas) to enable a developing property to increase its density beyond what current zoning would permit. The transferred density will be held in a Density Credit Pool (“Pool”) administered by the City.

As part of the development review process, and prior to issuance of any permits for a project, properties that are not being built to their full potential would be required, as a condition of project approval, to deposit the unused density (those units that could be built based on the underlying land use designation but are not) into the Pool. This would be accomplished through recordation of a restriction on the title of that property which would preclude further development without authorization of the City. Units deposited into the Pool would then be available for use by other developers in order to increase the density of their projects beyond what would otherwise be permitted on the subject property. The request for an increase in density would require City Council approval of a Planned Development Permit. Provided there is adequate density available in the Pool, there would be no ceiling



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on the number of units that could be requested, and each development would be scrutinized through the entitlement and environmental review process. Properties that have deposited their excess density into the Pool would be eligible to claim that density back through the same process as any other development.

(As a point of reference, at the time of this writing, the DTP Pool for the Downtown Specific Plan contains 922 units that could be allocated to developing properties.)

Target Production Point – The EVSP establishes a Target Production Point (“TPP”) for each land use designation which permits residential development. The TPP is a density within the density range for each designation that provides realistic site development capacities that are likely to yield smaller housing units at a higher density that become more affordable by design. The Urban IV/V land use designation has a density allowance that ranges from 21 – 30 dwelling units per acre. The TPP for the Urban IV/V designation is 25 dwelling units per acre. The Mixed Use land use designation has a density allowance that ranges from 30 – 80 dwelling units per acre. The TPP for the Mixed Use designation is 45 dwelling units per acre. For the purposes of RHNA, 25 and 45 dwelling units per acre are the densities utilized to allocate moderate income (120% of the county’s area median income, adjusted for family size) and lower-income (80% of the county’s area median income, adjusted for household size) units, respectively.

To ensure that the EVSP achieves a build-out that accommodates RHNA, especially for lower- and moderate- income households, residential development would not be permitted below the TPP unless a fee in lieu is received for on-site production. The TPP in-lieu fee would be paid into an applicable housing trust fund and used (along with other local funding sources) to finance affordable housing developed off-site. The per-unit fee shall be deemed a comparable affordable unit contribution towards lower or moderate income households. The TPP in-lieu fee is paid at the time of building permit issuance, or for conversion of existing apartments to condominiums prior to the recordation of a final map and/or issuance of a certificate of compliance, at a rate established by resolution of the City Council. The goal of the TPP is to encourage housing production by incentivizing construction at densities sufficient to achieve the City’s RHNA. An in-lieu fee is not required for residential development built at or above the TPP.

Development Standards and Design Guidelines

The EVSP includes development standards and design guidelines intended to help achieve the vision for the EVSP by setting standards and guidelines for future development. The standards and guidelines are intended to complement other Citywide policy documents such as the Escondido Municipal Code, and provides regulations for a variety of design topics such as setbacks, landscaping, and parking. The EVSP provides development standards and guidelines that are intended to supplement the City’s provisions with more specific guidance for how to achieve the unique vision for the Plan Area. The design guidelines and standards apply to future public improvements and private development in the Plan Area. They address the design of new buildings and renovations to existing structures. Where development standards are not provided, the most-relevant standards of the Escondido Zoning Code would be applicable.

Building conversion to new use – Any project looking to convert an existing building to a new use will be subject to design review to assess appropriateness of the proposed use and any proposed changes in relation to the area, the building, and the site. All conversions will also need to meet applicable provisions of the California Building Code.



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Open Space - Public (common) and private open space is required for each new development. These open spaces shall include elements such as shade, seating, water features, and public art. New development or redevelopment of residential dwelling units would be required to provide open space as follows:

1. 250 square feet per dwelling unit including:
 - a. Minimum of 150 square feet per unit as common open space
 - b. At least 50% of units required to have 50 square feet of private open space (balconies/decks/patios/etc.)
 - c. Dedication of land for linear park(s) and areas along creek may be provided as part of common open space
2. Orientation toward streets/linear parks/creek
3. Benches and outdoor furniture

Landscaping – Landscaping is required in both on a project site and in the public right-of-way adjacent to it. New development or redevelopment of residential dwelling units would be required to provide landscaping as follows:

1. On-site – minimum requirement
 - a. Urban IV/V: 35% of site
 - b. Mixed Use: 20% of site
 - c. General Commercial: 30% of site
2. Right-of-Way
 - a. Street tree spacing: 20'
 - b. 15% - 25% canopy coverage at maturity
 - c. Stormwater basins prohibited ROW (must be on private property unless part of public works project)
3. Vertical L/S (vines/trellises/etc.) along blank walls

Setbacks – Building setbacks vary by land use district. Special consideration is also given to setbacks from the creek. The following table provides a summary of setback requirements as provided in the EVSP:

	URBAN IV/V	MIXED USE	GENERAL COMMERCIAL
FRONT	10'	15'	15'
REAR	10'	10'	10'
ALLEY (SIDE OR REAR)	5'	5'	N/A
SIDE (INTERNAL)	0'	0'	0'
SIDE (STREET)	10'	15'	15'
CREEK TRAIL	20' to building 10' to fence/wall	20' to building 10' to fence/wall	N/A

Building Height – Similar to setbacks, maximum building height varies by land use district as well. In addition, height is also limited based on geographical location, such that taller structures are permitted along the creek trail and in the Mixed Use and General Commercial districts, with shorter structures permitted in the Urban IV/V district. The map on page 67 of the draft EVSP (Figure 7-2 Building Height) shows this geographical distribution. Regardless of location, the maximum height permitted in along the creek trail and in the Mixed Use and General Commercial districts is 75 feet. The maximum in the Urban IV/V district is 55 feet.



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Ground-Floor Residential Uses – The EVSP provides for flexibility in uses, such that all properties in the Urban IV/V and Mixed Use districts are permitted to have commercial uses on the ground floor. While ground-floor residential uses may make sense today, it is important to consider the long-range vision of the EVSP when considering building design. As such, the following requirements have been put in place for properties on along East Grand Avenue, East Valley Parkway, and North Ash Street (“Retail Corners & Frontages”) shown on page 64 of the draft document):

1. Retail-ready ground floor
 - a. Minimum interior height of 16 feet
 - b. Minimum depth (street-facing unit) of 25 feet or 25% of the building depth (whichever is greater)
 - c. Oversized storefront windows
2. Built to commercial building code standards

Parking – The EVSP includes a unique parking provision found nowhere else in Escondido. For residential development, the EVSP establishes parking maximums which limit the number of spaces permitted on-site. While it maintains a minimum of one covered parking space per unit, it limits parking to no more than 1.25 spaces per one-bedroom unit and 1.75 spaces per two-bedroom unit, plus 0.3 guest parking spaces per unit. Units with three or more bedrooms are allowed up to two parking spaces, with an additional 0.5 guest parking spaces per unit. Parking for non-residential land uses is generally required to be consistent with the off-street parking provisions of the Escondido Zoning Code, with exceptions permitted in certain circumstances (TDM program, incentive for providing public open space, etc.).

Parking spaces for electric vehicles (EVs) are required at a rate greater than currently stipulated in the California Building Code. At least 10% of all parking spaces for new commercial development shall be designated for EV parking with Level 2 (or better) charging stations. Residential developments are required to provide EV space for every 10 units. (It should be noted, however, that it is likely that the California Building Code will increase EV parking requirements beyond what is currently required by the EVSP before the 2035 horizon date of the EVSP.) Provisions for loading spaces (delivery and ride-share pick-up/drop-off) and bicycle parking are also identified in the EVSP.

Parks and Public Realm

The vision for EVSP incorporates an active open space network, attractive public spaces, connected paths, parkland, and open space. This comprehensive and interconnected parkland network will provide a variety of active and passive recreational opportunities which will enhance the overall quality of life, community health, and wellness.

Park Overlay Zones – The EVSP establishes Park Overlay Zones intended to integrate public parkland and outdoor spaces within proximity to schools, transit, trails and activity nodes. The Park Overlay Zones span over multiple blocks in various areas throughout the Plan Area. The purpose of designating larger areas instead of individual parcels is to allow for flexibility in implementation of park facilities. The Park Overlay Zones act as recommended, or priority areas, for parks and public spaces within the Plan Area.

The placement of two of the Park Overlay Zones has been strategically identified in an effort to broaden the geographic area within 0.25-mile (or 5-minute walk) of a park, as shown on page 23 of the draft EVSP. (The third Park Overlay Zone is a parcel currently owned by the City of Escondido’s Utilities Department.) Linear Parks in alleys in the Urban IV/V district are also identified as part of the Park Overlay Zone.



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The Park Overlay Zones do not establish what type of park or amenities shall occur within that zone. Rather, it specifies potential amenities appropriate for certain types of parks and public outdoor spaces. These spaces are identified as Pocket Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Linear Parks. Additional areas described in the draft EVSP are public outdoor spaces and the public right-of-way. Amenities appropriate for each type of park and open space area are provided on pages 28 and 29 of the draft document.

Public Open Space Incentive Program – The EVSP identifies 25 acres of land within the Park Overlay Zone. It is acknowledged, however, that it is likely that only 10 acres of parkland would be developed. Because the City does not currently own enough land to develop this amount of parkland, an incentive program has been established to encourage dedication of property for public parks. This could include flexibility in development standards, fee reductions, use of units in the density credit pool, and other mechanisms, and would require approval of a Planned Development Permit by the City Council.

Mobility

The EVSP is designed for residents and visitors to move about the community safely and efficiently. The Plan Area is well connected to the surrounding destinations in Escondido; conveniently located east of Downtown Escondido, approximately one mile from the Escondido Transit Center, with the Escondido Creek Trail immediately accessible. Although visitors and residents of the Plan Area primarily rely on private automobiles, public transit and non-motorized transportation opportunities are available in the form of buses and a multi-use trail.

Bicycle Network – As part of the robust active transportation network envisioned in the EVSP, a significant bicycle network is identified, consistent with the City's 2012 Bicycle Master Plan. It is focused along the Escondido Creek Trail, which provides an east/west Class I bikeway through the City. While no other parts of the bicycle network currently exist, with the exception of a short portion of Class III bike route on East Washington Avenue, the network recommended by the EVSP includes Class II bike lanes on East Grand Avenue, East Valley Parkway, North Ash Street, and portions of North Date and North Fig streets. Class II bike lanes provide a minimum five-foot striped bike line, with a preference for six feet and an additional two-foot buffer where roadway width is available. The network also identifies Class III bike routes North Beech, North Cedar, and North Elm streets, and portions of North Date and North Fig streets. Class III bike routes are suggested bicycle routes marked by a series of signs and/or sharrows designating a preferred route between destinations such as schools, workplaces, and residential and shopping areas.

A safe and secure place to park and store a bicycle is also necessary in order to expand the use of this mode of active transportation, especially as a result of the ever-increasing costs of bikes brought on by the influx of e-bikes. The EVSP makes provisions for both short-term and long-term bicycle parking facilities, differentiated by the location and duration of stay at the destination. Short-term parking typically consists of bike racks to which one wheel and the frame of a bicycle can be secured, and is appropriate for retail and personal service destinations. Long-term bicycle parking consists of fully enclosed lockers or secure storage rooms within a garage or other portion of a building, and is appropriate for residential projects and offices where employees are anticipated to be on-site for more than a few hours at a time.

Pedestrian Network – Pedestrian facilities in the Plan Area include the aforementioned Escondido Creek Trail, and sidewalks along all public roadways. The General Plan envisions a pedestrian-friendly environment where public spaces, including sidewalks and off-street paths, offer a level of convenience, safety, and attractiveness to the pedestrian that will encourage and reward the choice to walk. To support this vision, the EVSP includes a network



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of sidewalks, trails and linear parks organized around the grid network of public roadways. Policies intended to improve pedestrian comfort and mobility, such as mid-block pedestrian crossings and installation of sidewalk amenities, are also provided for in the EVSP.

Public Transportation – Public transit is an important component of the transportation network, both locally and regionally. The Escondido Transit Center is less than one mile west of the EVSP area, and numerous bus routes run either through or near the EVSP area. A shuttle system is also envisioned for the area, which would connect the EVSP area to the transit center. The EVSP includes policies that promote public transit ridership through a collaborative effort between the City and North County Transit District to increase frequency and efficiency of transit service.

Transportation Demand Management (“TDM”) – A TDM program consists of a variety of measures that can be used to mitigate the transportation impacts associated with new development. By providing increased transportation choices, a TDM program is intended to reduce overall vehicle miles traveled (“VMT”) through a combination of public and private measures. In addition, a TDM strategy typically increases the use of active modes of transportation, having the ancillary benefit of improving public health.

Some measures that can be implemented by public agencies as part of a TDM program include:

1. Develop and implement a Safe Routes to Transit Plan.
2. Participate in the City’s commuter program that includes subsidized transit passes, preferred parking spots for carpool or vanpool, bike racks, showers on-site, teleworking, and flexible work schedules.
3. Encourage employers to offer programs, facilities, and incentives to their employees that would promote carpooling, transit use, and use of other alternative modes. Provide businesses and business organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, with information on iCommute.
4. Provide information on commuting resources. Install a kiosk with information on commute alternatives and provide information on Web sites and newsletters
5. Participate in and promote annual regional events and campaigns that encourage commute alternatives to driving alone, such as Bike to Work Month, Dump the Pump, Rideshare Week, and Walk and Bike to School Day.

TDM measures can also be beneficial components of new private development projects. Residential projects can provide transit passes to tenants and high-speed internet to increase telecommuting, and can provide bicycle parking greater than that required by the EVSP. Non-residential projects can incentivize use of public transportation and/or carpooling, and promote telecommuting options as well. They can also ensure that there is sufficient bicycle parking, and can provide “end-of-trip” facilities such as showers, lockers, and changing rooms.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

General Plan Conformance

Land Use and Community Form – The Land Use Element is one of eight elements required by state law to be included in California General Plans. The Element guides the desired pattern of growth, development and change in the community. The purpose of the Element is to ensure that a balance of residential, employment, commercial, recreational, civic/cultural and open space land uses are provided at appropriate intensities, locations and combinations to enhance Escondido’s sustainability.



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In the Land Use Element, the EVSP area currently has land use designations of General Commercial (“GC”) and Office (“O”). According to *Figure II-6* of the General Plan, the GC designation allows “a broad range of retail and service activities, including local-serving commercial, community shopping/office complexes, automobile sales and service, eating and drinking establishments, entertainment facilities.” The O designation is intended for “administrative and professional offices; business support services; financial, insurance, and real estate services; supportive commercial uses such as restaurants” as well as “medical offices and health care services, short-term convalescent and long-term care facilities, research labs, medical supply, and similar uses.”

The EVSP area is also located in the East Valley Parkway Target Area, and has a mixed-use overlay on it. The language in the Target Area description directs the City to “establish a mixed use overlay between Palomar Hospital and Ash Street to focus residential growth...” and the corresponding *Figure II-27* has a cross-hatched overlay extending beyond Ash Street, to Harding Street. Since the text and the figure are inconsistent, the EVSP area was established using the larger of the two depictions in order to create a larger and more comprehensive specific plan, providing for increased development opportunities.

Adoption of the EVSP would also include an amendment to the General Plan. The amendment would address several related items:

1. Change the underlying land use designations from GC and O, to Specific Plan Area (“SPA”)
2. Revise the East Valley Parkway Target Area text to appropriately reference the newly adopted EVSP
3. Add a figure and text describing the location, size, current status, adopted plan details, and guiding principles for the SPA
4. Revise *Figure II-8* to identify the EVSP area as “SPA 16”
5. Additional minor revisions for consistency (re-numbering of pages, figures, etc.)

Proposition S – In 1998, voters of the City approved Proposition S, which established and affirmed various General Plan policies limiting the intensification of residential land uses. In addition, Proposition S specified that certain future amendments to the General Plan which affect the intent of the policies established and reaffirmed by Proposition S would require approval by vote of the public. In particular, Proposition S requires voter approval of any General Plan Amendment which would increase residential densities, change, alter or increase the General Plan Residential Land Use categories, or change any residential designation to a commercial or industrial designation on any property designated as Rural, Estate, Suburban, or Urban.

What Proposition S did not do, however, was limit the change of commercial (or industrial) land use designations to residential land use designations. This determination was affirmed by the City Council via Resolution No. 2021-109 on July 14, 2021, which stated, in part, “(a) change in General Plan land use designation from a non-residential designation to a residential designation does not trigger Proposition S.” The change proposed by the creation of the EVSP would change non-residential land use designations (CG and O) to a specific plan designation (SPA 16) in order to both maintain the existing commercial land-use ability and allow residential land uses. Thus, the adoption of the EVSP would not be a violation of Proposition S.

Housing Element – To ensure adequate housing can be developed in a jurisdiction, a Housing Element is required as part of the General Plan. The Housing Element has two main purposes: 1) to provide an assessment of both current and projected housing needs and constraints in meeting these needs; and 2) to state “goals, policies, quantified objectives, financial resources, and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing.” (Gov’t Code § 65583.) Thus, a Housing Element has become the official “planning”



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response to the need to provide housing and housing-related services for all economic segments of the community. The City Council adopted the 6th cycle Housing Element on March 22, 2023. In a letter dated May 24, 2023, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (“HCD”) determined that the adopted element substantially meets statutory requirements and that it will comply with state housing element law when rezoning through the EVSP is completed, adopted, submitted, and approved by HCD.

East Valley Parkway Area Plan

The East Valley Parkway Area Plan (“EVPAP”) serves as a zoning overlay district that covers properties along East Valley Parkway from Hickory Street on the west to Citrus Avenue on the east. The mission of the EVPAP is to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for the revitalization of the physical character and economic health of East Valley Parkway businesses and community. A significant portion of the EVSP area lies within the boundaries of the EVPAP. The EVPAP is focused on commercial land uses and does not serve to implement the mixed-use overlay in the East Valley Parkway Target Area as provided in the General Plan. In order to remove any conflict between the EVPAP and the EVSP, the portion of the EVSP that is within the EVPAP would be removed from the EVPAP concurrent with the adoption of the EVSP.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The EVSP provides a framework to enable private development in the East Valley in areas currently characterized by lower-density and lower-intensity commercial and residential uses. As redevelopment occurs over time, development impact fees will be collected to pay for public improvements necessary to serve the area. In addition, impacts directly attributed to the construction of a specific project or projects will be required to construct those improvements (or pay their fair-share contribution toward the cost of construction). These requirements are typical of all development throughout the City, however it is important to note that impact fees collected from projects in the EVSP area will stay in the area.

Residential projects shall also fund the on-going operational cost of providing municipal services required for the project, through either an agreement to form or annex into a Community Facilities District or the establishment of another lawful funding mechanism reasonably accepted by the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

A draft Programmatic 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 is being prepared which will include responses to the two comments received, findings of fact, a statement of overriding considerations, and a mitigation monitoring and reporting program. The final PEIR and will be presented to the Commission for consideration at along with the EVSP at the June 27, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.



CITY of ESCONDIDO

STAFF REPORT

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

As noted earlier in this report, work on the East Valley Specific Plan began in 2020 as part of a larger Housing and Community Investment Study (“HCIS”) which included a Sector Feasibility Study, the Housing Element update, and the East Valley Specific Plan. At that time, the City established a webpage for the program (<https://www.escondido.org/hcis>) to solicit input and provide updates on the status of all three HCIS documents. Additional early outreach efforts included virtual meetings on July 23 and October 7, 2020. Mailers were sent to property owners, residents, and business owners, in English and Spanish, ahead of the meetings, and translation services were available at the meetings. Mailers were also sent out to business owners in August of 2020 (English and Spanish) specifically related to an online business survey.

The first draft of the EVSP was posted on the HCIS webpage in March 2021, and the document was discussed at Planning Commission meetings on the March 23, July 13, and October 21, of that year. At that time, focus on the HCIS work program turned toward the Housing Element which had been adopted by the City Council but failed to achieve certification from HCD. Because the EVSP is intended to serve as the rezoning program to achieve compliance with housing element law and enable HCD to certify the City’s Housing Element, it was important that the EVSP be developed in conjunction with the Housing Element. The updated Housing Element was adopted by the City Council in March of this year, and, while there was some discussion of the EVSP during outreach efforts and public hearings ahead of that adoption, no outreach specific to the EVSP took place.

In March of this year, a revised draft of the EVSP was made available for public review concurrently with the draft PEIR described above. A public hearing notice was published ahead of this public hearing, and another notice will be published ahead of the June 27, 2023, public hearing. Notices will be mailed to property owners, residents, and business owners ahead of the June 27, 2023, public hearing, and publication and mailing will occur prior to the City Council’s public hearing, tentatively scheduled for July 19, 2023.

CONCLUSION AND REQUESTED ACTION

Prior to bringing the EVSP forward for Planning Commission consideration and formal recommendation to the City Council, staff would like to obtain feedback from the Planning Commission on the EVSP. Staff has noted certain areas of the document that warrant minor revisions and will present those to the Commission at the meeting. Staff will also be asking the Commission for areas that they believe warrant revisions as well. It is unlikely that significant revisions can be made at this time, however input from the commission will be considered as the final draft is prepared. A summary of changes will be presented at the June 27th public hearing.

ATTACHMENTS

1. East Valley Specific Plan (Final Draft, March 30, 2023)