
**NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
FOR THE
FREMONT GENERAL PLAN 2030**

TO: State Clearinghouse, Interested Persons, and Agencies
DATE: August 23, 2010
SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report
LEAD AGENCY: City of Fremont
PROJECT NAME: Fremont General Plan 2030
PROJECT AREA: City of Fremont

The City of Fremont will be the Lead Agency for preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan 2030 (an update of the City's current General Plan, adopted in 1991), which is intended to guide future development within the City through 2030. We request comments from your agency regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be addressed in the EIR. Comments should be limited to issues germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. The EIR may be used by your agency when considering subsequent permits or approvals necessary for this project. A brief description of the proposed project, its site boundaries, and a summary of the potential environmental effects are attached. Project information is available on the City's website, at: www.fremont.gov/ceqa and www.fremont.gov/generalplan.

The General Plan 2030 and its potential environmental effects are described in the attached materials. An initial study was not prepared for this project.

According to State law, the deadline for your response is 30 days after receipt of this notice; however, we would appreciate an earlier response, if possible. **Written comments will be accepted until September 21, 2010 at 4:00pm.** A scoping meeting is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on September 13, 2010. The meeting will be held in the Niles Room at 39550 Liberty Street, Fremont, California, 94538.

Please send your written responses, including the name of the contact person with your agency, to Kelly Diekmann, Senior Planner, at the address below:

City of Fremont
Community Development Department
Planning Division
39550 Liberty Street P.O. Box 5006
Fremont, CA 94537-5006
Phone: 510-494-4540
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FREMONT GENERAL PLAN 2030 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Project Title

Fremont General Plan 2030

2. Lead Agency Name and Contact

City of Fremont
Community Development Department
Planning Division
39550 Liberty Street, P.O. Box 5006
Fremont, CA 94537-5006

Kelly Diekmann, Senior Planner
Phone: 510-494-4540
Fax: 510-494-4402
Email: kdiekmann@fremont.gov

3. Project Location

The City of Fremont is located in southwestern Alameda County, California, with the city of Union City to the north the East Bay Hills to the east, the city of Milpitas to the south and San Francisco Bay to the west (see **Attachment A**).

4. Surrounding Land Uses

The City of Fremont has urban development (e.g., residential, commercial and industrial uses) to the north and south in the cities of Union City and Milpitas. It also has urban development to the west in the City of Newark, an enclave along the west central side of the City. Open space and grazing areas are present in the East Bay Hills to the east, and extensive wetlands are present along the margins of San Francisco Bay to the west.

5. General Plan and Zoning

Under the current General Plan, the entire City has been designated for a wide variety of land uses, ranging from open space and recreational uses to residential, commercial and industrial uses of varying intensities. Zoning districts within the City of Fremont are generally consistent with the current General Plan land use designations.

6. Description of the Project

The vision of General Plan 2030 sees Fremont serving as a national model of how an auto-oriented suburb can evolve into a sustainable, strategically urban, modern city. The General Plan 2030 addresses the mandatory requirements of California law with Land Use, Mobility, Public Facilities, Conservation, Parks and Recreation, and Safety (including Noise) elements. It also includes three elective elements of Economic Development, Community Character and Sustainability. The Sustainability Element serves as a guide to sustainable components of the Plan, and calls for adopting and regularly updating a Climate Action Plan. The Housing Element was adopted by the City and certified by the State in 2009, and will be incorporated in the General Plan 2030 without substantial changes.

Under General Plan 2030, much of the anticipated development potential during the twenty-year planning period would be characterized as higher-intensity “Transit-Oriented Development” (TOD) that takes advantage of Fremont’s bus, BART and ACE train lines, to enable the City to become more urban in strategic locations. This would be accomplished by establishing minimum floor area ratios (FARs) and densities in areas near transit to encourage growth in these urban areas, and by directing housing development to support the majority of the anticipated 45,000 new residents toward Priority Development Areas (PDAs) in Centerville, the Central City Center, Irvington and potentially Warm Springs. General Plan 2030 encourages the development of “complete neighborhoods” with many services within reach without reliance on automobiles.

The Plan also establishes more descriptive place type land use designations to replace the current land use designations. A notable change in land use intensity and character occurs with the new “Town Center” land use designation that allows for a mix of uses and development at intensities consistent with traditional “Main Street” development patterns. Additionally, the “City Center” designation is the most intense area, as it intensifies the use of the current Central Business District by allowing for high density mixed-use development in addition to employment uses. Other commercial, industrial, and residential designations are similar in intensity and range of uses to those currently described in the 1991 General Plan with different designation names. General Plan 2030 establishes policies to protect key industrial lands for industrial uses to provide local jobs and tax revenues, and policies to focus retail in concentrated locations. General Plan 2030 includes a Community Character Element focused on design of the built environment, with guidelines that will influence new private development and the design of public spaces in selected locations. Open space and recreation designations are also similar, with the exception of a new designation recognizing linear parks and plazas as parks and open space. The General Plan 2030 continues the open space preservation policies of two voter-approved hill initiatives known as Measures “A” and Measure “T.”

While General Plan 2030 acknowledges that car transportation will continue to be a vital part of Fremont’s transportation network, it places a new emphasis on alternative modes of travel (e.g., walking, bicycling and public transit). The Plan incorporates the concept of “complete streets” that serve all modes of transportation, not just cars. A core transportation planning assumption of the General Plan 2030 is the extension of BART to Warm Springs and beyond into Santa Clara County. The Plan also calls for evaluating minimum parking standards and for parking maximums in TOD areas, so that valuable land near transit stations is preserved for working and living space, and not for cars. Roadway capacity and operations will continue to apply industry standards of “Level of Service” (LOS), but the City also recognizes that it is not the sole criterion for evaluating the mobility effects associated with such development, and the Plan establishes LOS E and LOS F as acceptable in the City Center, the Town Centers and near transit (i.e., those strategic locations where the City wants to grow more urban). The City intends to balance the needs of pedestrians, transit users, bicyclists, and vehicle operators by accepting some additional traffic congestion as a necessary trade-off associated with desirable street spaces and places for higher-intensity development.

The development potential estimate through 2030 is relatively consistent with policies of the ABAG 2009 Projections, but the City estimates a greater total potential than ABAG projections due to the changed policies concerning development intensities in PDAs. The City estimate for growth contemplates citywide development of vacant land and substantial intensification of underutilized land in the PDA areas. While these numbers are economically optimistic, they provide a conservative basis for evaluating the environmental effects of the Plan. The City assumes the total City population will increase by approximately 45,000 people with the development 17,000 additional housing units that take the current supply from 72,659 households to 89,673 households. Additional non-residential development is also anticipated during the twenty-year planning period, with future office, R&D and industrial development likely to take place within the approximately 405 acres of developable vacant

land within the City's core industrial areas and on underutilized parcels which currently support non-residential uses. Existing built development in the City has the potential to support 115,000 jobs, while development consistent with the proposed Plan would be able to support an estimated 162,000 jobs in 2030. Taking vacancy rates into account, current employment in Fremont is estimated at approximately 93,000 jobs.

7. Project Approvals

The EIR will be used to provide decision-makers and the general public with relevant environmental information to use in considering the following actions:

- Adopt General Plan
- Amend Zoning Districts
- Adopt Implementing Policies and Resolutions

FREMONT GENERAL PLAN 2030 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Introduction

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a proposed project. The EIR process is intended to provide environmental information sufficient to evaluate a proposed project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment; examine methods of reducing adverse environmental impacts; and consider alternatives to the project.

The Fremont General Plan 2030 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared and processed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended, and the *CEQA Guidelines*. In accordance with CEQA requirements, the EIR will include the following:

- Summary of the proposed project and its potential environmental effects;
- Description of the proposed project;
- Description of the existing environmental setting, potential environmental impacts, and mitigation measures;
- Cumulative impacts;
- Alternatives to the proposed project; and
- Other Environmental consequences of the project, including: 1) the growth-inducing impacts of the proposed project; 2) any significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; 3) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources; and 4) effects found not to be significant.

The EIR identifies the general effects of development envisioned under the General Plan 2030. The degree of specificity in the EIR reflects the level of detail provided in the Plan. Following City of Fremont adoption of the Fremont General Plan 2030, subsequent development activities and other actions would be necessary to implement the policies included in the Plan. The EIR will address the potential environmental impacts of those subsequent actions to the extent possible, given the conceptual nature of the Fremont General Plan 2030. When subsequent individual development projects are proposed, additional site-specific environmental review may be required to evaluate and disclose project-level impacts in accordance with CEQA, as well as to demonstrate conformance with General Plan 2030 goals, objectives and policies.

It should be noted that the level of residential and non-residential development assumed for the purposes of the EIR evaluation is much greater than the level of development that has actually taken place in Fremont in recent times, and represents an “upper limit” set of assumptions for development during the planning period to provide the basis for the assessment of potential environmental impacts. The level of development assumed under the General Plan 2030 would accommodate the City of Fremont’s “fair share” of the regional housing need, but development decisions are often driven by economic factors which would not be influenced in any substantive way by the Plan. Although the General Plan 2030 would permit more intensive development than has been experienced in recent years, it is probable that actual development during the planning period may not match the levels assumed for the purposes of the EIR evaluation. As a result, actual environmental impacts associated with development in Fremont during the planning period may ultimately turn out to be less than those described in the EIR.

2. Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

The Environmental Impact Report will identify the significant environmental impacts resulting from implementation of the Fremont General Plan 2030, including the types of effects associated with the construction and operation of the development projects that may be proposed during the twenty-year planning period. The EIR will address the following specific environmental topics:

- a. Land Use.** Although most of the land in Fremont suitable for development has already been developed, the General Plan 2030 would enable development and redevelopment at significantly higher intensities than exist in the some areas today. The compatibility of possible development enabled under the Fremont General Plan 2030 with surrounding land uses will be discussed in the EIR. The EIR will also include an evaluation of the potential of the Fremont General Plan 2030 to divide an established community. Appropriate mitigation measures will be identified for any significant land use impacts resulting from implementation of the General Plan 2030.
- b. Aesthetics.** Development anticipated under the General Plan 2030 would change the existing visual character of the areas within Fremont, particularly in areas where flat vacant land and low rise buildings may be developed in multi-story residential and non-residential structures oriented toward increased transit use. The character of Fremont will also change in strategic locations to an “Urban” design approach that supports street-level interest and activity rather than expansive views and openness. These changes in land use could result in significant impacts to the visual character of such areas and their surroundings. The EIR will describe the existing visual conditions within Fremont and will address the potential effects on scenic resources or any degradation to the existing visual character. Additionally, although Fremont is already largely developed, development under the General Plan 2030 could introduce new sources of light to the some areas. The EIR will discuss the potential adverse effects of lighting types within these areas. Mitigation measures will be identified to address significant impacts, as appropriate.
- c. Population, Employment and Housing.** Implementation of the General Plan 2030 would enable increased housing and job growth in Fremont. The EIR will describe the current demographics of Fremont and assess the impacts of the increased growth associated with anticipated development, to the extent that they might directly or indirectly result in physical changes to the environment. Appropriate mitigation measures will be identified for any significant population, employment, or housing impacts resulting from implementation of the General Plan 2030.
- d. Transportation, Circulation and Parking.** Development enabled by the General Plan 2030 would affect the traffic and circulation patterns in and around Fremont. A Traffic Impact Analysis will be prepared for the Plan that studies the most likely impacted intersections and effects on Congestion Management Program (CMP) roadways in 2015 and 2035. The transportation impact analysis will evaluate baseline 2007 conditions against traffic and transit impacts and the transportation improvements under the proposed 2030 project conditions. The City will employ its Travel Forecast Demand Model to generate vehicle trip rates and travel. Plan-related traffic, including planned roadway improvements in Fremont, will be evaluated for conformance with the City's current Level of Service (LOS) policies that identify an acceptable LOS of D and a change to LOS E or waiver of LOS standards in the City Center, Town Centers and near transit (i.e., those strategic locations where the City wants to grow more urban). The study will also analyze the Plan's compliance with adopted policies, plans, and programs supporting alternative modes of transportation. A core assumption of the Plan is the extension of BART and construction of the Irvington and Warm Springs stations. Mitigation measures for significant impacts and determination of feasibility will be identified. The results of this study will be incorporated into the EIR.

e. Air Quality. Development activity associated with implementation of the General Plan 2030 could potentially increase emission concentrations in Fremont through increased vehicle trips and demolition/construction. The EIR will address potential air quality impacts resulting from these activities and their potential effects on existing and future sensitive receptors. The EIR will also discuss Plan compatibility with regional air quality plans. Construction-related air quality impacts, such as vehicle exhaust and dust will be qualitatively discussed. Odors that may result from potential restaurant uses will also be discussed. Mitigation measures will be identified for potentially significant air quality impacts, as appropriate.

f. Noise. The existing noise environment in Fremont is primarily influenced by proximity to busy local roadways and railroads. Construction and operation anticipated under the General Plan 2030 will increase noise levels in some areas. Existing and proposed land uses within Fremont include sensitive uses, such as existing and future residential uses. The EIR will assess potential noise impacts associated with Plan implementation, including impacts to existing and future development. Noise levels will be evaluated for consistency with City of Fremont standards and guidelines. Mitigation measures to reduce noise impacts will be identified, as appropriate.

g. Hydrology and Water Quality. The EIR will address any hydrology and storm drainage impacts that may occur as a result of implementation of the General Plan 2030. The Plan would facilitate beneficial impacts related to stormwater runoff as sites redevelop and include new treatment measures consistent with the current NPDES Permit requirements. The majority of development will be infill development, and minimal changes are predicted for existing waterways and drainage patterns in the City. The analysis will discuss whether water quality and discharge requirements would be met, whether existing drainage patterns would be affected or altered, and if water resources would be degraded or depleted. Mitigation measures will be recommended, as appropriate.

h. Geology, Soils and Seismicity. Fremont is located in a seismically active region of the State. The EIR will assess soil and geologic conditions in Fremont to address seismic hazards, including the potential for landslide, liquefaction, ground-shaking, soil erosion, and subsidence. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where appropriate.

i. Hazards and Hazardous Materials. Development within Fremont under the General Plan 2030 would require the use of hazardous materials present in fuels, lubricants, and building materials. Operations following anticipated development may include the use of hazardous materials in large quantities in some industrial areas. Past releases of hazardous materials on some sites within Fremont could expose construction workers to hazardous materials during development and, if present, hazardous materials, soils and groundwater could potentially affect future workers and users. The EIR will include a general description of the potential hazards city-wide and the health and safety effects associated with development anticipated under the General Plan 2030. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where appropriate.

j. Cultural and Paleontological Resources. Cultural, Native American, or paleontological resources that have been formally identified within Fremont will be listed in the EIR. However, there is a possibility that unidentified prehistoric archaeological sites may exist within Fremont. This section of the EIR will address potential impacts to historic, archaeological, and paleontological resources. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where appropriate.

k. Public Services. All areas suitable for development within Fremont are within the service boundaries of police, fire, park, and school services. The change in use and intensity envisioned by the General Plan 2030 would exert additional demands on service providers. The EIR will identify existing service providers serving Fremont, and will quantify the increase in service demands

l. Infrastructure and Utilities. All areas suitable for development within Fremont are currently within the geographical boundaries of the providers of water, wastewater, solid waste disposal, and other utilities. Major utility providers in the City include the Union Sanitary District and the Alameda County Water District. Some isolated sites may require annexation to utility service areas prior to their service upon development. The change in use and intensity envisioned by the General Plan 2030 may exert additional demands on utility providers and infrastructure. The net effect of this demand increase could result in the need for new water supply and sewer infrastructure. Mitigation measures addressing capacity planning and development requirements will be recommended for significant utilities and infrastructure impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan 2030.

m. Global Climate Change. The EIR will quantify the annual greenhouse gas emissions associated with development anticipated under the General Plan 2030. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with development under the General Plan 2030 will originate from two main sources: automobiles and energy use for operations. The EIR discussion of greenhouse gases may highlight potential Plan features which may lead to reduced vehicle travel, greater energy efficiency, reduced water demand, or other reductions in pollutants associated with global climate change.

n. Planning Policy Analysis. This section of the EIR will summarize General Plan 2030 consistency with City plans and policies, such as the current City of Fremont General Plan. The *physical* impacts associated with any plan or policy conflicts would be addressed. Likewise, conflicts relating to federal, state, and regional policies would be addressed in the EIR.

o. Cumulative and Growth Inducing Impacts. The analysis of cumulative effects will address the potential impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan 2030 in conjunction with other permitted, under-construction or probable future projects associated with the projected build-out of the current General Plan. This analysis will cover all environmental topics discussed in the EIR (e.g., traffic, air quality, etc.) and will specify which areas are anticipated to result in significant cumulative impacts. Potential growth-inducing impacts will also be evaluated to adequately describe the nature of the General Plan 2030 in relation to existing and proposed development. Mitigation measures will be recommended, where appropriate.

p. Alternatives. The EIR will examine a reasonable range of alternatives to the project, including the CEQA-mandated No Project Alternative. The No Project alternative would be based on assumptions regarding the level of development which could currently be permitted and expected to take place under the current General Plan designations and zoning. Other potential alternatives that may be capable of reducing or avoiding potential environmental effects may be examined based on comments received on this Notice of Preparation or based on preliminary impacts analysis.

Attachment A

