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August 4, 2015

Board of Supervisors  
County of Ventura  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**SUBJECT: Receive and File a Report and Provide Further Direction to Staff regarding the Scope of Work for the Ventura County General Plan Update.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **RECEIVE & FILE** staff's presentation providing additional information about potential tasks, elements and options for the General Plan Update (GPU) Scope of Work;
2. **PROVIDE DIRECTION** to staff to assist in the preparation of a Recommended GPU Scope of Work to be presented to the Board at a later date for formal consideration and action.

**FISCAL/MANDATES IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended actions. At such time the Board takes action to formally adopt a GPU Work Program and/or initiate activities associated with elements of that program, specific fiscal impacts associated with those actions will be addressed.



## **DISCUSSION:**

On July 7, 2014, the Board of Supervisors held a Joint Study Session with the Planning Commission and received a detailed presentation from the consultant on the purpose, content and approaches to preparing a General Plan Update. The consultants outlined the statutory requirements and shared their assessment of the County's current General Plan. The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission provided comments and direction to County staff and the consultant to help guide the preparation of the General Plan Update (GPU) Scope of Work and budget, which was tentatively scheduled to come back to the Board for consideration at the Board meeting on August 11th. At the Joint Study Session, the Board also encouraged the staff and consultant to return to the Board on August 4<sup>th</sup> if needed to seek any further comments and direction that might be needed prior to preparation of a final recommended GPU Scope of Work.

County staff has been working with the consultant since the Joint Study Session, and several issues remain where additional Board discussion and direction are needed. The remainder of this report is a brief description of these issues and preliminary recommendations from the consultants.

## **Economic Development Element/Chapter**

Counties that include Economic Development Elements/Chapters in their General Plan do so in order to identify long-range economic development strategies that would lead to a stronger, diversified local economy, stimulate job growth, and help generate public revenues commensurate with a high quality of public services. In the case of Ventura County, increasing job opportunities could also help decrease out-of-county commuting. An Economic Development Element/Chapter would include goals, policies, and implementation programs. Potential topics that could be addressed include:

- The Agricultural Economy
- Farmworker/Workforce Housing
- Workforce Training and Education
- Tourism
- County Fiscal Conditions
- Economic Base Diversification
- Existing Business Expansion and Retention
- New Business Attraction and Recruitment
- Public/Private Partnerships

To provide a sample of what an Economic Development Element or Chapter might look like, attached as Exhibit 1 is the Economic Development Element from the Merced County General Plan (2013).

There are several additional tasks typically used to prepare an Economic Development Element/Chapter. The existing conditions task would be expanded to include economic background information and possibly market studies or other additional relevant analyses. Some counties have added additional, focused public engagement activities for economic and business groups. Finally, the actual development of economic goals, policies, and implementation programs requires additional effort. Cost implications for these tasks, unchanged from those reported at the July 7, 2015 Joint Session, are:

Background Report Economic/Fiscal Analysis .....	\$59,800
Market Analysis .....	\$33,500
Economic Development Element.....	\$28,100
<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL COST .....</b>	<b>\$121,400</b>

Attached as Exhibit 2 is a letter received by the County from the Economic Development Collaborative - Ventura County (EDC-VC) recommending the preparation of an Economic Development Element as part of the General Plan Update.

### **Area Plan Updates**

As described in the report presented to the Board in early July, there are three basic options for updating the Area Plans:

**Reformatting Option.** Review of each Area Plan comparing the Area Plan goals, policies, and programs for consistency with the updated Draft General Plan. Area Plan text would be amended where necessary to eliminate redundancy or inconsistencies. All goals, policies, and programs not specific to the areas would be eliminated (similar to the new Saticoy Area Plan). Area-specific goals, policies, and programs would be reviewed for relevance and reduced to essential, area-specific topics. The Area Plan land use and circulation diagrams would be similarly compared and revised as necessary. The Area Plans would be reformatted consistent with the updated General Plan. The Area Plans would also be reorganized using a consistent table of contents to provide continuity and consistency among the plans. The land use and circulation diagrams would be similarly reformatted and reorganized. Under this option, the Area Plans would remain separate, free standing documents from the countywide General Plan.

**Integration Option.** Instead of only reformatting each Area Plan, under this option the Area Plans would be streamlined and reformatted (see above), and combined together as a new section or part of the updated General Plan. Under this option, instead of having freestanding, separate Area Plans, the Area Plans would be part of the General Plan. This would also involve incorporating the Area Plans into the web-based General Plan.

**Comprehensive Update Option.** The County could initiate comprehensive Area Plan updates similar to the effort undertaken for the soon-to-be-completed Saticoy Area Plan Update. These updates would include extensive public outreach, visioning, reconsideration of the goals, policies, and programs, and additional CEQA compliance (CEQA compliance for the first two options would be included in the General Plan Program EIR). At the July 7 Study Session, the Board expressed a desire for more information regarding this option and how it might be carried out. As explained in greater detail below, comprehensive Area Plan updates would generally be phased over several years following completion of the General Plan.

The July presentation provided a very generalized view of the issue and the Board asked for a further review of the Area Plans to assess the extent to which the existing Area Plans might need a comprehensive update. While not a detailed review, a further review was completed and it appears that only the North Ventura Avenue and El Rio/Del Norte Area Plans would require updates that are similar in scope and expense to the current Saticoy Area Plan Update (in the \$500,000 range). The relatively recent update of the Piru Area Plan, and the nature of the remaining Area Plans (e.g., Thousand Oaks Area Plan, etc.), suggests that those plans could be updated at a significantly lower cost and level of effort (in the \$200-\$250,000 range).<sup>1</sup> Cost estimates could be more refined once the Draft General Plan Update has been completed.

The Board also indicated it would like the General Plan Update completed in a timely manner, perhaps within three and half to four years. In July, the consultant shared with the Board that, based on their experience, even with a four to five-year schedule, comprehensively updating all the Area Plans concurrent with the General Plan would be extremely difficult. Shortening the schedule as suggested by the Board would only make this task more challenging.

Therefore, the preliminary recommendation is that the County initially refine the Area Plans to be consistent with the Countywide General Plan and integrate them as a new section of the General Plan (i.e. the Integration Option). We also recommend that policies and implementation programs be included in the updated General Plan that establish a consistent format and structure for the Area Plans and that set a schedule for updating the Area Plans so they are all updated in an orderly and timely manner. The one exception to this approach may be the North Ventura Avenue Area Plan, which is discussed further in the Alternatives Analysis discussion below.

The cost estimates for the Reformatting and Integration Options are unchanged from those presented at the July 7, 2015 Joint Session; the costs for the Comprehensive Update Option has been reduced to reflect the lower level of effort required for many Area Plans, and is expressed as a range rather than a uniform cost. The costs for each of the three options is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> The General Plan Update, as presented, does not include an update to the Coastal Plan or address areas covered by the Coastal Zone. Cost estimates for Area Plan Updates do not reflect the cost to update the Local Coastal Plan.

Reformatting Option .....	\$153,100
Integration Option .....	\$165,500
Comprehensive Update Option (per Area Plan) .....	\$200,000-\$650,000

If the Board directs the staff to proceed only with the reformatting and integration option as described above, the total cost is estimated to be \$318,600.

**Alternatives Analysis**

During the July 7, 2015, Study Session, the Board made it clear it was not interested in an alternatives analysis that would simply be an “intellectual exercise.” It was suggested during the discussion that, given the limited growth expansion area in the unincorporated county, a broad analysis of land use alternatives may not be a necessary task in the General Plan Update. While this is certainly a reasonable approach given the long-standing growth policies in the County, one option is to narrow this task to what is often described as “focus area alternatives.” Focus area alternatives would look strategically at specific areas of the unincorporated county (e.g. within existing communities) that present opportunities for the County to consider different land use options. There may also be opportunities to consider policy alternatives and evaluate options for addressing major issues and challenges in different ways.

The Board may wish to consider including the development of several focus area alternative concepts, consistent with the draft Vision and Guiding Principles, and policy option topics within the initial Scope of Work. The focus area alternative concepts will include supporting maps, graphics, and narratives suitable for public viewing that depict the range of alternatives within a specific area, such as the North Ventura Avenue area. If the North Ventura Avenue is identified as a candidate focus area, given the age of the Area Plan for that area, it may be advisable to prepare a comprehensive Area Plan Update concurrently with the GPU. The policy option alternatives would include narratives and data supporting the need to find solutions to the identified challenges or conflicts that might be identified in the focus area alternatives and policy options.

This process will enable the County to consider detailed land use and policy alternatives for key growth areas without introducing the growth issue on a county-wide basis. If during the earlier phases of the project the County determines that, in fact, a focus areas alternatives analysis is unnecessary, the task can be dropped.

The total cost for the Alternatives Phase of the Work Program presented to the Board in early July was \$358,800. This scope anticipated the development of several county-wide land use alternatives. The scope of work for a focus area alternatives analysis is likely to be less than this amount, but the final costs will depend largely on the number and size of the focus areas to be analyzed. If the Board is interested in including focus area alternatives, the consultant recommends the Board target at least \$300,000 for this effort to provide the flexibility needed to refine the scope once the earlier phases of the project are completed and focus areas and policy options are identified. Also, as noted

above in the Area Plan Update discussion, if the Board were to eventually direct the preparation of the North Ventura Area Plan Update concurrently with the GPU, this would add an estimated \$500,000.

### **Public Engagement**

Public engagement will occur throughout the General Plan Update process, from project initiation to final adoption hearings. The recommended work program presented to the Board in July included several outreach tools and methods that will provide part of the overall public engagement program:

- Project brand/logo
- Project website
- Contact Database/Lists
- Email blasts
- Newsletters
- Press releases
- Outreach to the Latino Community
- Community workshops Public input summaries
- Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors meetings and hearings

During the July 7th Study Session, the Board reiterated its desire to rely on the Planning Commission as the primary venue for its workshops and to use the Municipal Advisory Councils for community meetings/outreach. The Board also expressed an interest in broadening the public engagement program to include public opinion surveys and other means of gathering direct input from the community. The following describes additional survey activities and options for the Board's consideration.

**Community Surveys.** The County could conduct one or more community surveys. A detailed summary of the different survey options is attached as Exhibit 3. The five options are:

- Telephone
- Personal intercept (Home)
- Personal intercept (storefront)
- Questionnaire (hard copy)
- Questionnaire (online)

The attached summary describes the advantages and disadvantages of each method as well as the range of costs for each option.

**Focus Groups.** As an alternative to conducting community surveys, Focus Groups are often utilized as a means of garnering direct public input. One option would be to create four or five Focus Groups to solicit comprehensive, focused input on key topics

throughout the Update process. Each Focus Group would consist of 10 to 12 members who are recognized experts or leaders in a given topical field, and should include a broad range of perspectives and opinions to provide a balanced view of issues and potential solutions. The Focus Groups would provide informed input at key points in the process.

The cost estimate for public engagement activities in the recommended work program presented in early July was \$362,600. Included in this amount was \$131,700 for the conduct of focus groups (four to six meetings of four groups). No community surveys were included in the previously recommended work program.

### **SUMMARY**

The Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission provided valuable comments and direction to County Staff and the Consultant at the July 7, 2015, Joint Study Session. To assist staff and the consultant in the preparation of the final recommended GPU Scope of Work, additional direction is being sought today on the topics of an Economic Development Element/Chapter, Area Plan Updates, Alternative Analyses and additional Public Engagement. The cost estimate provided at the July 7, 2015 Joint Study session for the recommended scope of work was approximately \$3.75 million; based on the direction provided at the Joint Session, and the information outlined in this report, it is estimated that the total cost for the General Plan Update in the range of \$4.0 to \$4.25 million. More refined estimates will be developed in keeping with Board direction received today and as the General Plan Update process moves forward.

This Board item was reviewed by County Counsel, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and the County Executive Office. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at (805) 654-2481 or Chris Stephens at (805) 654-2661.



Chris Stephens, Director  
Ventura County Resource Management Agency

### **EXHIBITS:**

- Exhibit 1: Merced County General Plan Economic Development Element
- Exhibit 2: July 27, 2015 Letter from EDC-VC
- Exhibit 3: Community Opinion Survey Options