



## Community Development Department Planning Division

### GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT INFORMATION

**PURPOSE:** The General Plan is the most important policy document in the City. As the "constitution" for land use and development in the community, it sets forth the community's goals for its own development, as well as the policies and programs needed to achieve those goals. It provides a common basis of understanding for everyone involved in matters related to community development and conservation. The General Plan provides the means for organized decision-making about the future development of the City, and may be amended from time to time to reflect evolving needs and goals.

**WHEN REQUIRED:** A General Plan amendment is required whenever a proposed project or activity on a site would not be addressed by, or would be inconsistent with, current General Plan policies or goals, or with specific land use designations for a site. General Plan amendments are first reviewed by the Planning Commission, which makes a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council has final approval authority for all General Plan amendments. General Plan amendments may be processed concurrently with other types of applications needed for a given project (such as rezonings and subdivisions). However, General Plan amendments often raise broad, serious issues that go beyond the detailed consideration involved in the review of a subdivision map or building design. Thus, for a project that also involves design applications, staff or the Planning Commission may determine that the review of the General Plan amendment should be completed by the Commission and Council prior to the consideration of the project design.

**PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW:** You may request a pre-application review of your project by City staff. By meeting with staff early in the review process, many issues can be resolved which would otherwise cause later delays. Areas of environmental concern can be identified which then can be addressed prior to project application. Information on pre-application review can be obtained from any planning staff member.

**APPLICATION:** The application submittal requirements for a General Plan amendment are listed on the reverse side of this information sheet. Planning staff will review the material for completeness and will determine if additional information is needed to process the application or to address specific environmental concerns. Once submitted, the plans will be reviewed for completeness. You will be contacted if additional information is required. After staff has determined that the application materials are complete, you will be notified and asked to submit additional copies of the plans and bound documents for Commission and City Council review of the project. If you have any questions regarding a submittal, contact the Planning Department for assistance.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:** The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that certain project applications undergo environmental review. You will be informed if such review is required for your application. Normally, General Plan amendments require the preparation of a negative declaration of environmental impact, or an environmental impact report. Please refer to the separate "Environmental Review" handout concerning additional submittal requirements.

**SCHEDULING:** Once an application is determined to be complete, it is formally accepted. Copies of the application are sent to review agencies and departments. The application is then scheduled for public hearing before the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission meets once a month, usually on the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. The Planning Commission meeting is a public meeting. Prior to the scheduled hearing, the Planning Commission will be provided with a staff report on the application. Please note: State law limits the number of times a General Plan may be amended to a maximum of four times each year. Depending on the number of amendments that have already been approved, consideration of a subsequent proposed amendment may be delayed.

**NOTICING:** Both Planning Commission and City Council hearings are public, and notices are published in a local newspaper at least 10 days prior to each hearing.

**ACTION:** During the Planning Commission meeting, Planning Division staff will present the application and provide comments to the Commission. The applicant will then be given time to present the proposal to the Commissioners, and to answer any questions they may have. Any member of the public attending the meeting may also offer comments. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Planning Commission makes a recommendation to the City Council regarding the application. The City Council then holds a separate hearing to consider the ordinance revision and approves or disapproves the application. The Commission's and Council's decisions are based on a review of the application materials and supporting documents, the City staff's recommendations, and on any testimony received at the hearing. A copy of the Planning Commission's action is mailed to the applicant following the meeting. Copies of the City Council's action may be obtained from the City Clerk's office.

**INITIAL SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:** To file a General Plan amendment application, the following items must be submitted:

1. A Planning Application Form
2. A Project Summary Sheet
3. An Environmental Checklist
4. Six sets of any related plans, supporting bound documents, photographs, etc. – folded and collated to 8.5" x 11" size
5. A written statement or summary regarding the proposed General Plan amendment and the future plans for the project site
6. Any other drawings, reports or data determined by the Planning Division to be necessary to undertake the review of the application
7. Filing fee (see Planning Division Fee Schedule). Checks should be made payable to "City of Benicia"

**SUBSEQUENT SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:** The following items will be required after the initial application is deemed complete:

1. Fourteen sets of any related plans, supporting bound documents, photographs, etc. – collated and folded to approximately 8.5" x 11" size
2. One set of any related plans, full size, rolled (not folded—will be used for display)
3. One set of any related plans, reduced to 11" x 17" size

**RELATED FORMS AND INFORMATION:**

- Planning Application Form
- Project Summary Sheet
- Submittal Standards
- Environmental Review Information
- Environmental Checklist
- Fee Schedule