



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM NO. G.2
11/14/2023

SUBJECT: Review and discussion of the actions contained within the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, including prioritization, implementation status, and cost

DEPARTMENT: Community Development Department

STAFF: Alexis Morris, Director of Community Development
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TITLE/RECOMMENDATION

Review and discussion of the actions contained within the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, including prioritization, implementation status, and cost. Staff recommends that the Council review the information contained within this report and the attached table, and prioritize those actions remaining to be implemented within their respective terms.

FISCAL IMPACT

The 2023/24 General Fund Operating Budget includes a \$115,000 Strategic Plan budget for the estimated cost of implementing certain actions contained within the Conservation and Open Space Element that may be prioritized by the City Council. Once City Council direction is received and before performing any actions, a formal scope of work, schedule for implementation and budget update, if necessary, will be brought back to the City Council for approval.

BACKGROUND

The City's General Plan was comprehensively updated in July 2014. It is organized into elements, or chapters, many of which are mandatory according to state law. Two of the mandatory elements are Conservation and Open Space. It is common for cities and counties to combine these two into a single element since there tends to be a fair amount of overlap between them. This is the way Brentwood has historically organized its General Plan, including the current version adopted in 2014, with the Conservation and Open Space Element being Chapter 4.

Each element begins with a brief overview, followed by a series of goals, policies, and actions:



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- A **goal** is defined as a description of the general desired result that the community seeks to create.
- A **policy** is defined as a specific statement that guides decision-making as the City works to achieve the various goals and objectives.
- An **action** is defined as an implementation measure, procedure, technique, or specific program to be undertaken by the City to help achieve a specified goal or implement an adopted policy.

The Conservation and Open Space Element includes nine goals that are supported by 80 policies and 47 actions. The last chapter (Chapter 12) of the General Plan specifically addresses implementation. At the time the General Plan was adopted in 2014, each action was included in Chapter 12 and was assigned a relative priority level (A, B, or C):

- **Priority level A** implies that the start of the action will be implemented in the relatively short-term (approximately 1-5 years).
- **Priority level B** implies a somewhat longer-term implementation (approximately 5-10 years).
- **Priority level C** indicates a longer-term implementation schedule (approximately 10-20 years).

A number of other actions are referenced as "ongoing," which refers to them either already being undertaken by the City or those that are expected to continue on either a periodic or perpetual basis. Of the 47 actions contained within the Conservation and Open Space Element, 13 are designated as priority level A, nine are priority level B, one is priority level C, and 24 are ongoing. While 28 of the 47 actions have been implemented, the majority of those designated as priority levels A-C have either not been started or are still in progress.

As noted in the preface to the Implementation chapter of the General Plan:

The implementation schedule includes some caveats. One is that many of these actions will require both staff and financial resources to implement, thus making them difficult to definitively schedule, given the annual nature of the budgetary process and changing priorities over the years. Another is that it is often difficult to clearly state the duration of tasks; therefore, estimated starting dates (priority levels) are presented for actions rather than completion dates. Finally, in some instances, the selection of priority level (A, B, or C) reflects the level of complexity and the level of effort required to implement an action rather than the importance of the action itself.



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In addition, the General Plan's implementation schedule addresses not only action items within the Conservation and Open Space Element, but also dictates the schedule of implementation for action items contained within every other element of the General Plan. It was thus created with a comprehensive perspective on the work of implementing the entire General Plan. As such, it represents a balancing of a number of factors, including staff time, funding, community priority, difficulty of implementation, and so forth.

Following the Council discussion in October and December of 2021, staff reviewed the actions contained within the Conservation and Open Space Element to determine status and, for those not yet completed, a preliminary estimate of the staff time and/or cost to do so. A table excerpted from Chapter 12 of the General Plan, listing all of the Conservation and Open Space Element actions, is attached for the Council's review and reference. The table has been modified slightly by sorting it according to priority level and adjusting the last column, which includes notes about the status of each action, along with a preliminary estimate of the staff time and/or cost for those actions remaining to be completed.

The Council discussed this item at length in February 2022. While that discussion touched on what actions could be implemented relatively quickly with minimal cost, there was no consensus on how to prioritize them. Rather, recognizing the significant amount of information involved with this item, the Council directed staff to return at a future meeting for a more detailed discussion. It should be noted that a large portion of the Council's discussion at the time focused on how to protect parks and open space from future development. Staff prioritized this in terms of spending time and resources, ultimately addressing it in an expedited fashion through the preparation of Measure Q and its adoption by the voters in November 2022.

At this time, staff recommends that the Council review the information contained within this report and the attached table, and provide direction in terms of how the various actions should be prioritized. This could include prioritizing the actions within each of the priority levels (A, B, and C). After performing any additional research on certain actions, staff would coordinate with other departments (and potentially consultants) as necessary and come back to the Council with a formal scope of work, schedule for implementation, and budget update, if necessary.

Staff has prepared two versions of the implementation table, with one being ordered by priority level and the other being ordered by ease of implementation, to assist with the Council's discussion. For example, there are certain actions that require updates to the City's website that can be implemented relatively quickly with no additional cost (other than staff time).



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It should be noted that if the Council determines changes to the actions themselves are needed (e.g., deleting one or more of them, modifying their text, or adding new ones), then a formal amendment of the General Plan to the Conservation and Open Space Element would be required as a separate process.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Not Applicable.

PREVIOUS ACTION

Previous Action by the City Council is included on Attachment 1.

DATE OF NOTICE

Not Applicable.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Not Applicable.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Action
2. General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element
3. General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element Implementation Table - Chapter 12