

STAFF REPORT

DATE: May 13, 2025

TO: City Council

FROM: Sherri Metzker, Director, Community Development
Dara Dungworth, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: 2025 General Plan Update

RECOMMENDATION

1. Hold a kick-off meeting with City Council regarding the General Plan Update (GPU);
2. Discuss pressing issues for the plan to address and project outcomes; and

FISCAL IMPACTS

Costs associated with the General Plan Update have been addressed in previous staff reports. There is no fiscal impact to this specific item outside of the already budgeted staff and consultant time to prepare the report.

COUNCIL GOALS

All City Council goals will be addressed in the General Plan Update.

- Achieving Greater Fiscal Resilience
- Strengthening Climate Resilience
- Shoring Up the Housing Continuum
- Improving Social Services for Vulnerable Populations
- Maintaining High Quality Infrastructure and Services
- Stepping Up Economic Development Activities

BACKGROUND

The City Council directed staff to begin an update to the current City of Davis General Plan in 2024. The GPU will be a comprehensive update to the General Plan, which is the City's blueprint for future development in the city and contains goals, policies, and implementation activities to guide the community through its next 20 years. It builds on community strengths and assets, while tackling new and emerging challenges.

While the current General Plan has served the city well over the last two decades, it is time for an update. The City last comprehensively updated the General Plan in 2001. Since then, it has been amended several times with regular updates to Elements (or chapters) like the Housing Element. The plan is organized by four overarching topics with twenty-one separate Elements. The 2001 General Plan process included significant community and working group engagement.

For this update, the City will not be starting from scratch, but instead, it will be using the existing 2001 General Plan as a basis for beginning the update process. Many policies are applicable today and simply need adjustments to make them more relevant going into the future. Likewise, the GPU will integrate recent and ongoing planning and implementation efforts, such as the Downtown Specific Plan, Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, Park Needs Assessment, and more.

GPU Update Process

The GPU process is organized into five distinct phases: listening and discovery, land use and mobility plan development, policy development and plan preparation, public plan review, and final plan review and adoption. Each phase helps to organize technical analysis and to cluster community and Commission engagement activities. Engagement activities will be completed during every phase of the process.

City Council Kick-Off

This City Council meeting will serve as the kick-off to the General Plan Update process. City staff and project team will provide a brief presentation on what to expect during the process and the project deliverables. They will identify major phases of the project and outline the community engagement approach. The project team will provide a brief presentation of the draft project outcomes related to housing, environment, climate, equity, and more. The meeting will present feedback on draft project outcomes and pressing issues facing the Davis community provided by six of the City's commissions. The Climate and Environmental Justice Commission, Open Space and Habitat Commission, Recreation and Park Commission, Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, and Social Services Commission participated in a joint Commission kickoff, called the "Commissionapalooza," which took place on April 23, 2025.

Project Outcomes

Project outcomes serve as parameters for the project, process, and community engagement and may be used to evaluate alternatives, policy ideas, and long-term implementation of the GPU. Project outcomes focus on:

- Healthy and Resilient Communities
- Community Engagement
- Leadership
- Document Preparation

The preliminary draft project outcomes for discussion are included as Attachment 1 to the Staff report.

Pressing Issues

The initial phase of community engagement for the General Plan Update will include identification of key issues and opportunities that may be addressed through the planning process and in goals and policies.

At the Commissionapalooza, each of the six participating Commissions provided input on key issues facing the Davis community. Feedback from the meeting is included as Attachment 2 to the staff report. These issues included topics like:

- Balance housing and jobs needs with open space and conservation objectives (Planning, Open Space/Habitat, Transportation)
- Protect high-quality natural areas and creeks; connect with active mobility and wildlife corridors (Open Space/Habitat)
- Set guidance around growth and annexation; expand downtown (Planning)
- Address decline in K-12 school enrollment; look at UC Davis impacts (Planning, Social Service)
- Consider climate change cross-cutting (Climate and EJ, Open Space and Habitat, Transportation, Rec and Park)
- Focus on disadvantaged populations (Climate and EJ, Social Services)
- Use wholistic mobility approach (Transportation)
- Funding and staffing constraints for the City staff (Open Space and Habitat, Rec and Park, Social Services, Transportation)

Upcoming Community Engagement

Many exciting events are slated to take place this spring/summer as the General Plan kicks off. Upcoming activities are listed below:

- **General Plan Interactive Website:** The project website will provide clear two-way communication and the common thread throughout the engagement process, connecting the community to project updates and deliverables, upcoming events, and meeting summaries.
- **Community Partnership Initiative:** Identifying and communicating with key partners will build a network of diverse community representatives. These representatives will help build trust, ensure representation and create a shared understanding of the plan elements and City constraints. The team will hold informal meeting to understand community concerns, priorities, and lessons learned and enhance engagement efforts throughout the planning process.
- **Neighborhood and Stakeholder Meetings:** Meetings with neighborhood and community organizations, businesses, and advocacy groups will be held at preexisting meetings and in neighborhoods across the city. Participants will learn about the General Plan process and specific milestones and can share their input about the GPU and the engagement process.
- **Youth Engagement:** The planning team will partner with the Davis Joint Unified School District, UC Davis and/or non-profit organizations specializing in youth engagement/employment to identify youth engagement coordinators and train coordinators to assist in concept development, planning, logistics and notification for public participation strategies.
- **Pop-Up Outreach:** To meet with community members at times and locations convenient for everyone, “pop-up” workshops or “intercept” meetings will be held at popular locations and well-attended events in Davis, such as the Farmers’ Market, Celebrate Davis, Pride Festival, Discover Davis and more.

- **Community Workshop #1:** The first in-person workshop will inform the Davis community about the General Plan Update process and will solicit feedback on pressing issues and opportunities to be addressed in the General Plan Update.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Outcomes
2. Pressing Issues developed by six Commissions

Memo

Updated May 2025

To: City of Davis
From: The Raimi + Associates Team
Subject: Task 1.4: Project Outcomes

Project Outcomes

Project outcomes will serve as a series of parameters for the project, process, and community engagement. These outcomes will be used to evaluate land use and mobility alternatives, policy ideas and implementation activities developed later in the process. The outcomes may also be the basis for evaluating the long-term performance of the General Plan implementation.

Vision

Davis advances safe, fair, healthy and sustainable neighborhoods where everyone has what they need to thrive and succeed.

Healthy and Resilient Community

- **Complete neighborhoods:** Sustain walkable neighborhoods with a mix of uses to maintain a healthy living environment and vibrant and biodiverse neighborhoods where people live, work and study.
- **Active transportation:** Prioritize multimodal strategies and the city's robust network of bicycle and pedestrian paths to promote a safe, comfortable and equitable network for all. Encourage mode shift by promoting shared rides and active transportation alternatives and public transit to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and climate pollution.
- **Connected and biodiverse park and open space system:** Enhance the city's connected and accessible parks and open space system to support recreation, social gathering, health, biodiversity and ecological resilience.
- **Housing choice:** Provide for a range of housing types that meet housing needs for different income levels, stages of life, disadvantaged populations and generations through the lifespan of the General Plan across multiple Regional Housing Needs Allocations.
- **Jobs-housing match:** Increase the availability of affordable and workforce housing to support the regional economy and local businesses and to lower vehicle miles traveled.
- **Spaces for businesses to flourish:** Provide a continuum of commercial, research and development, and industrial spaces that meet the lifecycle needs of emerging and maturing home-grown businesses and those businesses interested in relocating or expanding in Davis.

- **Climate-ready:** Advance innovative and fair policies to reduce climate pollution and increase community resilience in order to meet the State's carbon neutrality goals.
- **Identify areas to meet housing, business, and community needs.** Establish a long-term vision to meet future needs rather than relying on ad-hoc decision-making on individual projects to enable long-term planning for infrastructure and public facilities needed to provide the desired service levels for the existing community and the areas targeted for change.
- **Davis-Based Approach:** Ensure recommendations are rooted in the neighborhoods, culture, character, communities and land unique to Davis. Maintain those core qualities while allowing the community to evolve and mature over time.

Engagement

- **Building knowledge and ownership:** Work with a diversity of community members and partner agencies to build knowledge, trust and ownership in the GPU process and the fiscal and regulatory framework of the City of Davis.
- **Listen to new voices:** Give voice to priority communities, including low-income households, seniors, LGBTQ+, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community members, students and those with disabilities, who traditionally are not engaged in planning.

Leadership

- **Regional leadership:** Provide regional leadership through actions taken by the City to advance innovative policy, regulation and programs to create a safe, fair and climate-ready community.
- **High-quality community services:** Maintain high-quality community services as Davis's population changes and the community grows over time.
- **Fiscal sustainability:** Maintain positive city revenues through multiple funding streams to continue provision of high-quality services.

Document Preparation

- **Consistency with the State:** Ensure the updated General Plan meets recent and emerging best practice and State requirements that can be anticipated in the future.
- **Adaptability:** Ensure the updated General Plan is flexible to changing local conditions, State priorities and climate change, while still providing a strong vision and roadmap for the future.
- **Focused process and plan:** Guide the planning process and General Plan towards addressing the specific issues and required level of detail to enable the General Plan to serve as an effective guiding document.
- **Ease of use and monitoring:** Ensure the updated General Plan is clear, accessible and easy to use for community members, decision-makers and City staff. Establish quantifiable metrics and targets to monitor progress over time.

Davis Commissionapalooza

Summary of Pressing Issues

May 2025

On April 23, 2025, the City of Davis hosted a “Commissionapalooza” for six City of Davis Commissions to kick-off the General Plan Update process. These six Commissions will be involved throughout the General Plan Update by providing feedback and input on draft materials related to their respective Commission topics.

The following list summarizes feedback from each of the six Commissions relating to pressing issues facing the Davis community that may be addressed in the General Plan Update.

Issues

Climate and Environmental Justice Commission

- Impacts to consider
 - Consider a wide set of affected groups in terms of environmental justice (EJ) / pollutions, agriculture (+1)
 - Pollution from traffic exhaust impacts students and the unhoused population living near roads
 - Unhoused population is most impacted by climate change and extreme weather
 - Loss of urban forest (+1)
- Provide adequate shade in transportation corridors (+1)
- Existing General Plan document
 - No reference to extreme heat and drought
 - Revise the existing Noise element
 - No reference to climate adaptation
 - Air quality section references federal standards, and will need to be updated

Open Space and Habitat Commission

- Land protection around Davis
 - Provide connectivity between protected lands (+1)
 - Rivers/creeks – last remnants of quality habitat and species. Protect these areas.
 - Putah Creek – opportunity for more extensive park/open space presence, including South Fork and Channel A

- Protect and restore habitat (+1)
 - Open to recreation for Davis residents
 - Connect protected lands to bike paths (+2). Balance of public access to public lands, active connectivity
- Conservation areas
 - Protect areas of higher conservation value
 - Stronger protections for open space areas
 - Strengthen agricultural buffer policy
- Open space and protect lands are principles for future growth
 - Maintain ecological value of the open space within the city, not just outside the city limits (+1)
 - Ensure open space accessible for everyone. Not all open spaces can be, including active agricultural lands
 - Create sustainable maintenance policy for flood protection area
 - Lack of funding despite public support and demand for facilities
- Future development
 - Ensure open space amenities for multifamily housing
 - Provide landscaping in commercial areas
 - Study impacts of agriculture/open space from new housing
- Measure O funding use for:
 - High value habitat + open space access (+2)
 - Combine open space planning with HCP/NCP Plan Yolo
- Maintenance of open spaces, parks, and habitat features is an issue

Planning Commission

- Reengaging in the planning process
 - Previous struggle to get Housing Element adopted; needed additional housing sites
 - Looking at development projects in isolation – think about as a whole
 - Never been able to tap into the value of UC Davis in terms of job creation
- Growth and development
 - Setting guidance around annexation, (e.g., UC Davis, El Macero)
 - Infill is the public policy for Davis – what has worked/what hasn't?
 - Strengthen land use policies to address agricultural “moat” around city
 - Support ADUs as an infill option
 - Promote housing turnover to address the stagnation of seniors staying in place
- Downtown

- Desire for revised form-based code (updates in process)
- Expand the Downtown in the easterly direction – outside of form-based code area (+1)
- Further activate Downtown to enhance the community character
- Enhance affordable housing in Downtown
- Transportation
 - Opportunity for a visionary future for the mobility network
 - Expand pedestrian and strolling zones
- Schools and education
 - Declining DJUSD school enrollment
 - UC Davis doesn't build enough housing, which creates an upward housing cost. Desire for UC Davis to house more students
 - Enhance affordable housing around existing school sites

Recreation and Park Commission

- Park staffing and planning
 - Inclusive planning to ensure parks and recreation in all parts of the city
 - Monitor staffing levels and budgeting for contractors
 - Be a leader in switching from gas-powered equipment to battery-operated equipment
 - Prioritize maintenance over establishing new parks
 - Keep green areas green and focus on weeding
 - Establish real mechanism to promote community engagement through parks
- Housing/development and park trade-offs
 - Parks are highly utilized and need more capacity
 - Create housing and play balance while protecting and preserving existing parks and open space
 - Concern about how parks fit into future development (e.g., Village Farms)
 - Preserve the existing +40 parks/+400 acres of parkland that are special to Davis
 - Traffic at schools creates safety issues
 - To combat climate change, prioritize providing shade in parks
- Infrastructure
 - Lack of accessible bathrooms in parks and on bikeways
 - Prioritize play areas and open space for sporting events (e.g., soccer, softball, etc.)
 - Funding needed for pools and parks
 - Lighting
 - Walking paths

- Programming
 - Include flexibility in planning for growing and popular programming in the GP (girls' basketball, pickleball, etc)
 - Summer programs are oversubscribed – more programs needed in the future to create capacity for all children
 - Programming for teens and tweens

Social Services Commission

- Opportunities for improvements
 - DCAN report on upzoning – review report in terms of engagement
 - Existing single-family units need retrofits for climate change
 - What does a safe Davis look like for all people?
 - Affordability at the neighborhood level
 - Need more mixed use and density – incremental infill, duplex and split lots
- Housing
 - Diversity of housing needs not being met
 - Affordable housing
 - Need both “Big A” vs “little a” affordable housing
 - Increasing deed restricted affordable high density multifamily housing
 - Not enough homes for families
 - Supportive housing
 - HOAs set conditions, creating necessary but hard conversations because they have a belief that these changes are “not for us”
- Schools
 - School district boundary conversation is ongoing
 - Develop housing policy in tandem with DJUSD Superintendent Best's housing initiative
 - Shared public spaces and childcare creates quality of life

Transportation and Transit Commission

- Planning considerations
 - We have one shot at this to planning horizon - need to fundamentally reconsider how we travel
 - Be honest about what transportation is available in the city
 - Plan around people

- Holistic approach to development in the city – need to look at the cumulative impacts
- Bikes
 - Road diet/protective bike lanes are getting scaled back – small but loud opposition
 - Consider E-bikes to support trips under 3 miles
- Public Transit
 - Unitrans – 2nd highest per capita ridership (+1)
 - Lots of transit and connections to transit
 - Setting the conditions for future transit
 - Make sure there is good transit available where growth is planned
- Alternative transportation network
 - AT network is the hallmark of Davis - surfacing of streets, rows of comfortable houses
 - Invest in AT infrastructure
 - Develop traffic safety around schools through encouraging AT trips and Safe Routes to Schools programs
- Cars and parking
 - Parking management – good funding source
 - Consider transportation cost in housing – multiple cars
 - Need to move beyond cars
 - EV replacement has been a failure – need EV infrastructure, but State/Federal government funding sources are unclear
 - Need better neighborhood traffic calming