

## Plan Amendment Initiation

The City is unique among jurisdictions in that the process to amend the General Plan requires either Planning Commission or City Council initiation before the plan amendment process and accompanying project may actually proceed. While it is the first point of consideration by a decision-maker (the Planning Commission or City Council<sup>1</sup>), it is a limited decision. It is neither an approval nor denial of the plan amendment and accompanying development proposal (some plan amendments are presented without a development proposal). The purpose of the hearing is not to discuss the details of the development proposal, but rather focus upon the more fundamental question of whether the proposed change to the General Plan is worthy of further analysis based upon compliance with the initiation criteria. Here is a brief summary of the criteria:

1. The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria.
2. The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design
3. Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.

Although applicants have the right to submit amendment requests to the City, not all requests merit study and consideration by City staff and the decision-makers. The initiation process allows for the City to deny an application for amendment if it is clearly inconsistent with the major goals and policies of the General Plan. **Most importantly, the initiation process allows for early public knowledge and involvement in the process as a whole.** Additionally, the Planning Commission has the opportunity to advise City staff to evaluate specific factors during the processing of the proposed plan amendment.

### *Public Hearing Process*

After initiation, a plan amendment may be processed and brought forward to public hearing, subject to the permit processing, environmental review, and public hearing procedures specified in the Land Development Code. The Planning Commission and the City Council will consider the factors as described in LU-D.10 and LU-D.13 in making a determination to approve or deny the proposed amendment during the public hearings.

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<sup>1</sup> A Community Planning Group recommendation is required prior to consideration by a decision-maker.