

Agenda Report

JULY 30, 2001

TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE CITY OF PASADENA

RECOMMENDATION:

There is no recommendation; this is an information item only. The purpose of the CEQA workshop is to update the City Council on:

1. The changes to the State Guidelines for implementing CEQA since 1996;
2. Changes in how City staff handles projects subject to CEQA; and
3. Preview of changes proposed to the City's Environmental Guidelines

BACKGROUND:

The City Council in its role as a lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act has reviewed, adopted or requested changes in both Negative Declarations and Environmental Impact Reports. With the increase in proposed projects and the broadened definition of a project under CEQA, the number of Negative Declarations and Environmental Impact Reports has increased. Council and the public have questioned the environmental analysis of impacts for several projects. Recent projects raising questions on environmental review include the amendment to PD-21 for Montgomery Engineering and the future use of the Raymond Theater. Among the concerns raised most often are individual traffic impacts and the cumulative traffic impacts from related projects.

Materials included with this information item are intended to: outline the CEQA process; describe changes to the CEQA Guidelines which need to be incorporated into the City's Guidelines; and describe ways in which the City meets and, in some cases, exceeds CEQA requirements.

CEQA Guidelines are subject to change every two years and cities with their own environmental guidelines must incorporate these changes. Staff is currently in the process of revising the City's guidelines to concur with the changes since 1996 to the CEQA Guidelines.

In addition to revising the City's environmental guidelines, the City is developing thresholds of significance with the assistance of Sapphos Environmental, Inc. Adoption of significance thresholds by Cities is voluntary, however, the implementation of thresholds creates a standardized process that is more efficient and has stronger legal grounding. These thresholds will be used in determining levels of significance for environmental impacts such as traffic, biological resources and historic significance. During this process, interim traffic study thresholds have been developed by staff to help capture and analyze cumulative impacts.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Changes in the "Environmental Guidelines for the City of Pasadena", implementation of the interim traffic study thresholds and adoption of thresholds of significance may increase staff workload leading to an increase in fees in the General Fee Schedule. Staff will bring forward recommendations to amend the Fee Schedule at the appropriate time.

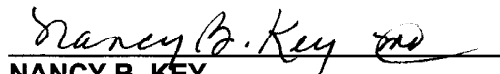
Respectfully Submitted


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