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CITY OF SACRAMENTO

CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

725 "J" STREET

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. 95814

TELEPHONE (916) 445-5604

MARTY VAN DUYN
PLANNING DIRECTOR

August 6, 1981

APPROVED
BY THE CITY COUNCIL

City Council
Sacramento, California

AUG 11 1981

Honorable Members in Session:

OFFICE OF THE
CITY CLERK

SUBJECT: Accelerating the EIR Processing Procedures (M-600)

SUMMARY

The City Council requested staff to consider methods to accelerate the processing of EIRs. The Planning Department has recently experienced a substantial increase in large and complex proposals necessitating the preparation of Environmental Impact Reports. The EIR process takes about one year, but includes procedures that do not directly relate to the actual preparation of the EIR, such as: the applicant's appeal or depositing funds; City administrative tasks, consultant selection, and public review periods. Staff recommends additional planner and clerical positions, as well as more flexible consultant selection procedures, in order to assist in reducing the present processing time periods.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The City Council, on July 21st, requested Planning staff to review the present EIR processing procedures and determine if there were any methods to reduce processing time. Exhibit A indicates the key procedures necessary to prepare an EIR along with estimated time frames. The procedures can be combined into six categories.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Applicant	4 weeks	8%
City Administration	5 weeks	10%
City Project Process	9 weeks	17%
City EIR Preparation	9 weeks	17%
Consultant Preparation	16 weeks	31%
Public Review	9 weeks	17%
	<u>52 weeks</u>	<u>100%</u>

The schedule reflects all recommendations made by the 1978 Environmental Evaluation Task Force, such as focusing on bio-physical impacts which exclude extensive analysis of social and economic aspects. The EIRs are processed in accordance with the State required procedures. In addition, staff conducts some procedures concurrently, such as: determining complete application, along with consultation and preparation of the Initial Study, during the same three week period. In addition, the consultant selection process occurs concurrently with the Notice of Preparation procedures. Many of the indicated time frames are mandated by City and State regulations.

The following methods to reduce EIR preparation time are provided along with an evaluation with regard to their effectiveness.

1. Flexible Consultation Selection. Allow the Environmental Coordinator to directly select a consultant without having to distribute Request for Proposals (RFP) and conduct interviews. This would save approximately six weeks in processing time. However, this process is in conflict with adopted City Consultant Selection Procedures that require a competitive process.
2. EIR Preparation by Applicant's Consultant. This procedure eliminates the City's responsibilities for consultant selection and administrative procedures. This system may save time in selecting a consultant because the applicant can quickly retain a consultant and develop a contract for services. The disadvantage of that system is the EIR generally tends to justify the project, ignores or minimizes adverse impacts, and may not reflect the considered opinion of the City which is a requirement of State law.
3. Contract with Sacramento County. The County has a section that prepares EIRs for a multitude of projects. Their staff has accumulated a large amount of environmental data. The County staff indicates that they can prepare an EIR in three to four months depending on workload and the complexities of the project. The disadvantage of their system is that the County would require the City to pay for additional staff for a minimum of one year regardless of the number of EIRs prepared for the City. In addition, the EIR would be prepared in conformance with County Guidelines which may not be as detailed or of sufficient scope as the City may believe is necessary. The County's EIR processing appears to take about a year for major projects, so there does not seem to be any time savings.
4. EIR Prepared by City Staff. A City staff prepared EIR would reduce the current schedule by 13 weeks, because the consultant selection procedure, and the City staff's review and editing would be eliminated. In order to adequately address all of the different aspects in an EIR, the City staff would have to be substantially increased, not only in total number, but also in a variety of technical expertise. The small volume of private

project EIRs (average of two per year), would not seem to justify the enlargement of the Planning Department's Environmental staff unless an EIR Section were created which would handle both private and public (Engineering) EIRs which are also currently being handled by private consultants.

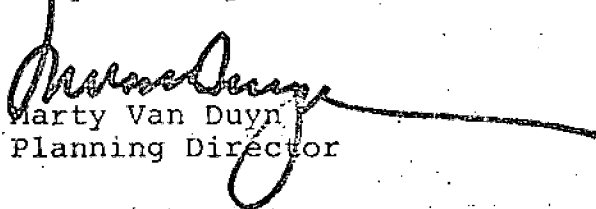
Within the last year, the number of EIRs being prepared by the Planning staff has substantially increased. Currently, the Planning Department is in the process of preparing six EIRs and will begin another in September for the North Sacramento Community Plan. In addition, there are another six EIRs that would be required once existing applications filed with the department are completed. The Planning Department has prepared ten EIRs in the past five years (an average of two per year). Consequently, the Department has been staffed according to past workload trends. Although the Planning Department's Environmental Section has three positions (one Senior and two Assistant Planners), none of the planners work full time on environmental reviews. Presently, all Environmental personnel work about ten to fifteen percent on the General Plan Update, while one Assistant Planner spends about 40 to 50 percent on Solid Waste Enforcement, and the other Assistant Planner spends ten to fifteen percent on current planning matters. An additional planner and clerical position would assist in reducing the present processing time in order to meet present project workloads.

Environmental fees for 1980 generated approximately \$22,000, which nearly represents the actual cost of conducting 335 environmental reviews but excludes reviews of other agencies' environmental documents. Environmental fees would have to be tripled to generate funds for another planner and clerical position.

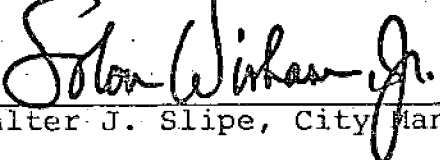
RECOMMENDATION

This report is for the Council's information and does not require any action. However, staff believes the most effective method to reducing the EIR processing time would be to allow more flexible consultant selection procedures, as well as to add a planner and clerical position.

Respectfully submitted,


Marty Van Duyn
Planning Director

FOR CITY COUNCIL INFORMATION:


For: Walter J. Slipes, City Manager

MVD:CC:jm
Attachment
M-600

August 11, 1981
All Districts

TENTATIVE PROCESSING TIME SCHEDULE

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Date</u>
Receive Pre-Application		
Review Pre-Application (7 days)*		
Determine Entitlement & Fees		
Determine Application Complete (30 days)*		
Request Additional Information & Fees or Starts One Year Time Requirement		
Environmental Determination (45 days)*		
Consultation to Prepare I.S.	3 Weeks	
Letter Requiring EIR	1 Week	
Applicant Appeals EIR Determination or Deposits Consultant Selection Fee (10 days)*	2 Weeks	
City Prepares and Distributes RFP	1 Week	
Notice of Preparation (45 days)*		
Review with Planning Commission	1 Week	
Consultants Prepare Proposals	2 Weeks	
Consultant Interview/Selection	2 Weeks	
City Prepares Contract	2 Weeks	
Determine City & Consultant Cost		
Applicant Deposit Estimated Preparation Cost (10 days)*	2 Weeks	
Council Amend Department Budget and Approve Contract		
Consultant Begins Preparation of EIR	9 Weeks	
City Reviews Preliminary EIR	2 Weeks	
Consultant Makes Revisions	2 Weeks	
City Review Revisions	2 Weeks	
City Publishes and Distributes Draft EIR	1 Week	
Draft EIR Review Period (CPC Hearing Within Review Period)	45 Days*	
Consultant Prepares Preliminary Final EIR	3 Weeks	
City Review of Preliminary Final EIR	2 Weeks	
City Publishes and Distributes Final EIR	1 Week	
Final EIR Review Period (7 days)*	2 Weeks	
Receive Comments & Prepare Staff Reports	2 Weeks	
Planning Commission Hearing on Final EIR and Project (Recommendation)	3 Weeks	
Council Hearing on Final EIR & Project Final Action		
		52 Weeks

*Mandatory Time Frame