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DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

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December 3, 1990

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Members in Session:

SUBJECT: Key Challenges for Planning Services

SUMMARY

This report outlines a number of challenges which currently face the Planning Division of the Planning and Development Department and certain organizational changes that are proposed by the department's Planning Division in response to these challenges. This report is submitted for information and discussion only; action is neither requested nor recommended at this time.

BACKGROUND

This report is the result of the fourth major organizational review to have been completed by the department during the past three (3) years. Each of the resulting programs for improvement has been developed keeping in mind the concerns and suggestions of line staff, industry representatives, and Councilmembers.

In 1988 an evaluation of the Building Division plan check and permit processing system was instrumental in improving service standards within this division. In 1989 the City's Environmental Services program was expanded. Also, in 1989 changes were made in the Neighborhood Services program to improve complaint tracking and responsiveness. In 1990 efforts have focused on identifying needed improvements within the Planning Division.

During the 1990-91 operating budget reviews before the Joint Committees several organizational proposals were briefly discussed. At that time the committees were informed that the staff would review and update the department's fees and charges with the objective of recommending revenue increases to help finance certain staffing and organizational changes during the current fiscal year.

The department's fee and charge analysis will be completed this month and submitted to the City Council next month. However, it is already known that even if the department's fees and charges are increased, most of the new revenue will be needed to meet current year income projections and existing expenses. Even so, it is important that the City Council review and consider changes that will help meet the urban and regional land use management/planning challenges which face the community. To the extent that the City Council agrees with the proposed changes, then high priority can be given to these improvements in future budgets.

CHALLENGES FOR PLANNING

The growth of the City of Sacramento and the region during the 1980's has created new demands on the City's Planning service programs. These demands largely fall into service areas related to air quality, transportation, neighborhood planning, the monitoring and enforcement of requirements to mitigate the impacts of development, zoning enforcement, and economic development. Individual Councilmembers have also voiced concerns for improved follow-up in numerous special project areas (e.g. infill, design review, community plan updates, sign control, annexation, etc).

With these concerns in mind the Planning Director and the staff of the Planning Division working with the Department Director's Office have identified a series of proposed organizational changes. While most of the proposed changes are dependent on increased staff resources, some of the changes can be accomplished with a minor restructuring and redirection of existing resources.

The principal areas of concern and the proposed organizational response to each are outlined below. The current organization is depicted in Exhibit 1 and the revised organization including all of the proposed new positions is shown in Exhibit 2 attached.

MONITORING PLANNING CONDITIONS

The monitoring of planning conditions during the construction phase of a project has been and continues to be an area of concern to some Councilmembers, to the department and to the community. The responsibility for condition monitoring is shared by divisions in the department which leads to problems of communication and coordination of effort and results in periodic lapses in the monitoring program. The reorganization plan will centralize this activity within one division thus improving communications and the ability to provide an effective monitoring program on a continuous basis.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

The Current Planning section is responsible for enforcing the zoning ordinance, processing entitlement requests, and implementing community plan updates and amendments. This unit is now structured along functional lines which creates within the staff, planners who

become specialists in certain types of entitlement requests. Equally important the same planners that deal with day to day applications are not directly involved in the preparation of the various community plans.

The rapid growth of the community in recent years has created a need to focus more intently on the special concerns and interests of the neighborhoods within the community. In order to provide planning services that are more tailored to neighborhood needs the current planning organization would be restructured along geographic lines with the creation of three service areas; north (north of the American River) south (south of I-50 freeway) and central. This organization structure will develop a planning staff with broad based knowledge of all the issues and concerns of the area they serve. In addition the same planners which update community plan policies will be directly involved in implementing these same policies.

Neighborhoods will benefit from this geographic approach in a number of significant ways. There will be greater continuity and consistency of staff assigned to each geographic area and as a result staff will develop a greater awareness and understanding of the concerns and issues within each neighborhood. In addition, more consistent interpretation and application of policies, ordinances and directives will result from this type of organization.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE SALES

In addition to the reorganization, the Planning Division and the Police Department will soon recommend a proposed amendment to the City Zoning Ordinance regarding special permit requirements for the sale of alcoholic beverages. It is anticipated that workload in the review of special permits for alcohol sale will more than double with the enactment of the ordinance.

ZONING ADMINISTRATION

The permit/entitlement process requires that the City Planning Commission (CPC) hear all planning entitlement requests except for those which can be approved by the Planning Director. Consequently, both the CPC and the Planning Director are required to allocate time to relatively routine planning matters in addition to the consideration of more complex and significant zoning issues and policy decisions.

The proposed organization plan envisions a Zoning Administration function (similar to the County's Zoning Management Program) to administer certain routine planning functions thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the organization in two significant ways. First, the service to applicants with routine requests will benefit from an expedited permit process and second, the Zoning Administrator will assume a portion of the present responsibilities of both the CPC and Planning Director thereby allowing them more time to consider issues of greater significance.

AIR QUALITY, TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Concern about the environment is reflected by new and more comprehensive legislation at all levels of government which necessitates greater coordination between agencies with common interests in these issues. One goal of the reorganization plan is to provide more effective coordination with other agencies on environmental issues and also more comprehensive consideration by staff of environmental issues including air quality, transportation, toxics and solid waste as they affect land use planning.

The proposed organization includes an Assistant Director who will be responsible for the management of the full scope of the permit/entitlement process while the Planning Director will, in turn, focus more time and attention to the management and policy aspects of broad based regional issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PROGRAM

The City's Environmental Services Program was substantially restructured and expanded approximately fifteen months ago. Subsequently new CEQA processing procedures have been implemented and new and existing staff have undergone extensive CEQA training.

Experience with the new CEQA process has pointed out the need to make further changes. At the present, applications are evaluated sequentially by Planning and Environmental staff. Application processing procedures are now being revised so that more evaluations can be done contemporaneously, thus reducing time and avoiding repetition.

In addition, after a year of training for new environmental staff members, some CEQA studies previously contracted to outside consultants can now be done by City staff. This will reduce the cost for certain types of CEQA work.

MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

The increasing demand for services resulting from the growth of the community, combined with the constant pressure to provide more services with limited resources, mandates more effective and resourceful management of the resources available to the planning organization. The management of resources includes identification of new revenue sources, effective collection of revenue, monitoring and control of expenses and effective programs to analyze and evaluate the performance of the organization in the delivery of services.

The reorganization plan recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining effective management controls by providing additional administrative staff and resources for additional automation of information, revenue collection, tracking and control systems.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

A total of eleven FTE costing approximately \$520,000 per year would be required to fully implement the organization and staffing changes mentioned in this report. It is unlikely that these changes can be funded during the current year from fee and charge increases. It is also likely that the proposed staffing changes can be phased in over time. The fee and charge report will be submitted to the City Council in January 1991. Thereafter an action plan related to the organization and staffing proposals mentioned in this report will be submitted to the City Council.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

This report concerns an increase in comprehensive planning services; it does not otherwise concern planning policies.

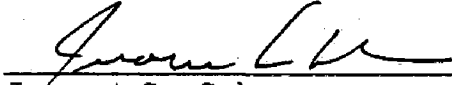
MBE/WBE

N/A

RECOMMENDATION


This report is submitted for information purposes only.

Respectfully submitted,




Jerome C. Cohen
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Approved:



Michael M. Davis, Director
Planning and Development Department

Approved for Committee Information:



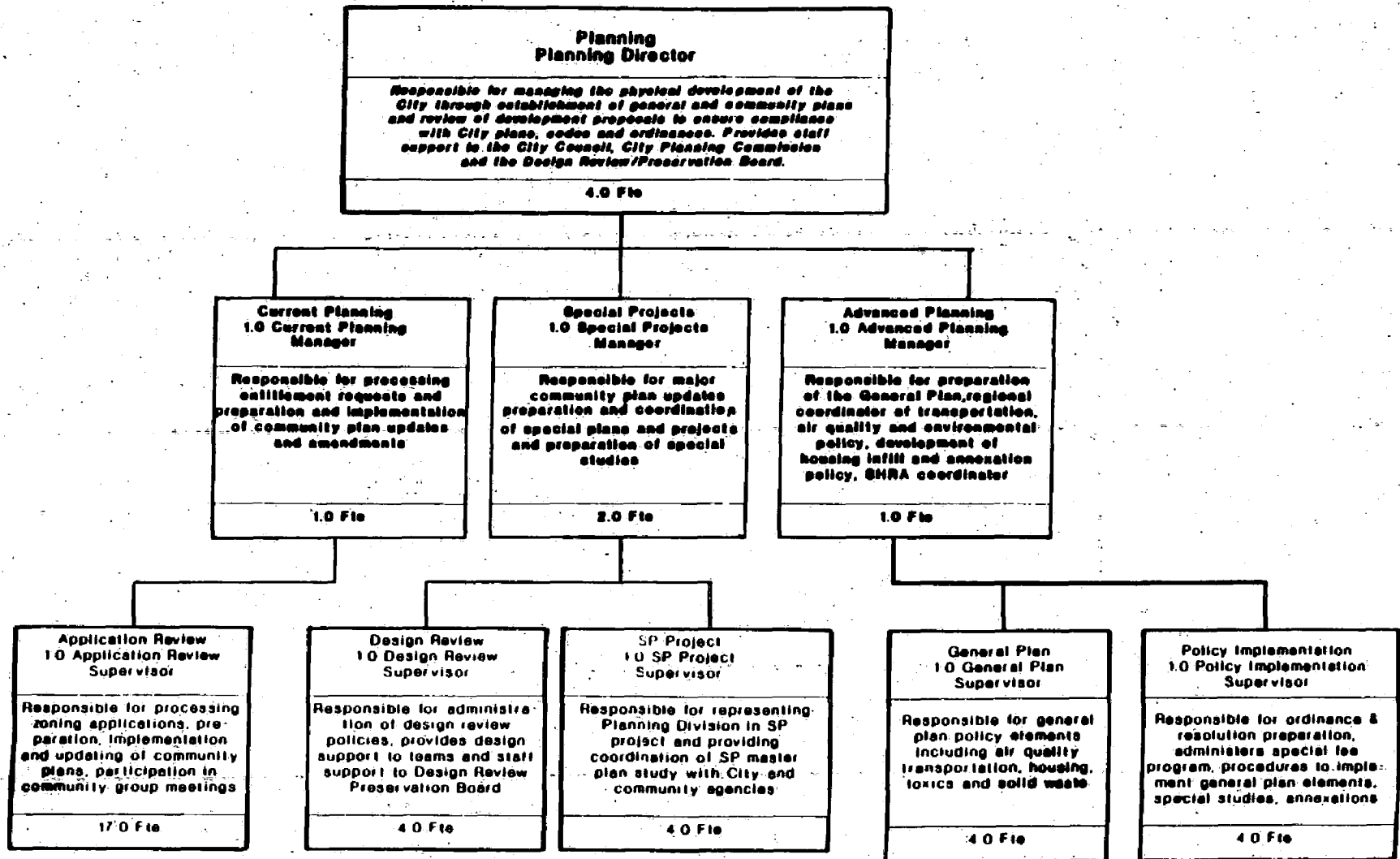
Jack Crist
Deputy City Manager

All Districts
December 11, 1990

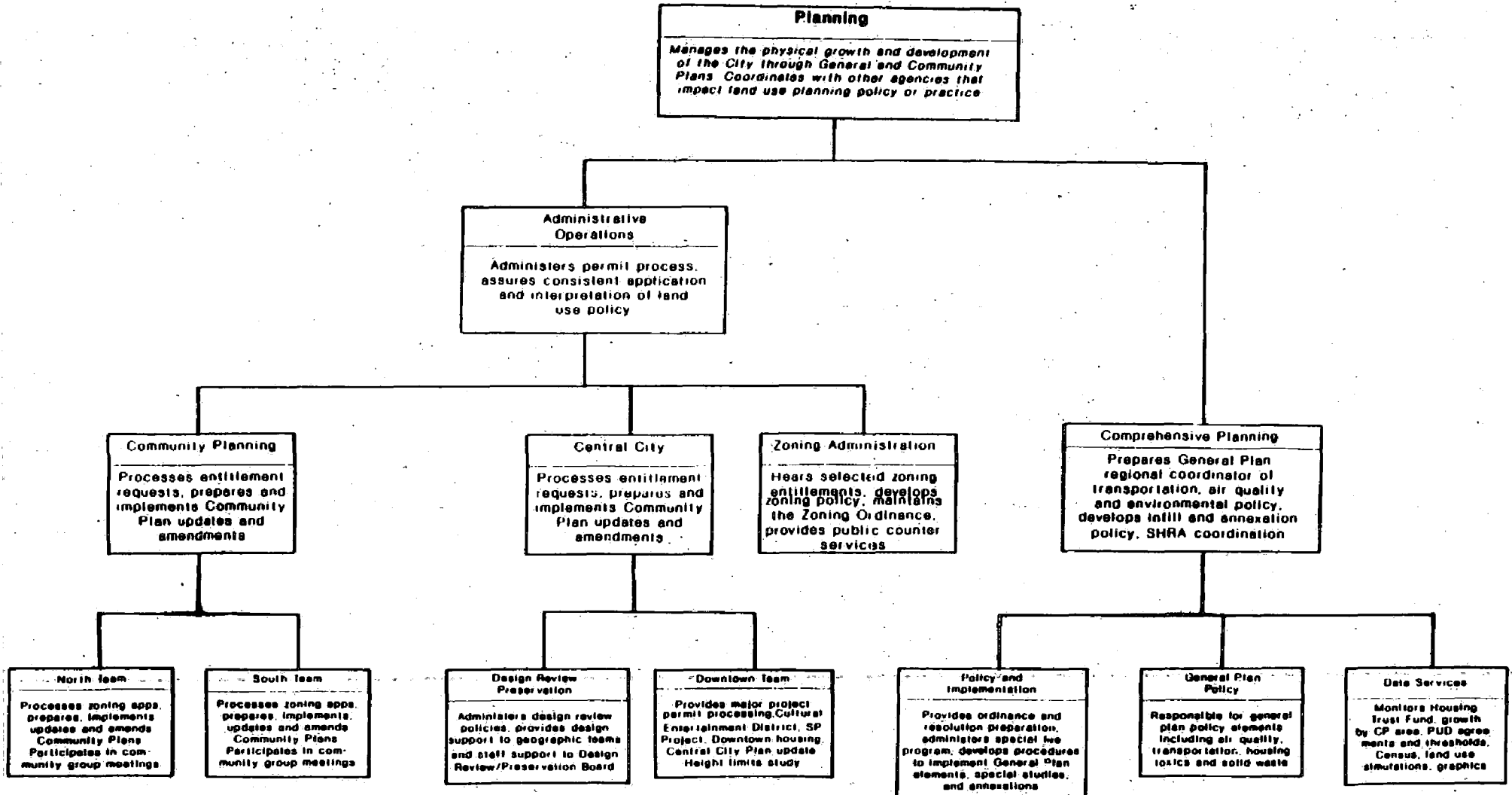
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PLANNING DIVISION ORGANIZATION



PLANNING DIVISION REORGANIZATION



PLANNING DIVISION REORGANIZATION

