# Staff Report

Meeting Date: January 17, 2023

To: Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

From: Hailey Lang, Planning Director

Subject: Approve Contract with Mintier Harnish in an amount not to exceed $999,318 for a comprehensive General Plan Update, Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and associated Zoning Code Amendments.

## Background

California law requires that each county and city in the state develop and adopt a General Plan. The General Plan consists of a statement of development policies and includes a diagram or diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles standards, and plan proposals. It is a comprehensive long-term plan for the physical development of the county or city. In this sense, it is a "blueprint" for development.

The General Plan must contain seven (7) state-mandated elements. It may also contain any other elements that the legislative body of the county or city wishes to adopt. The seven (7) mandated elements are: Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, Housing, Circulation, Noise, and Safety. The General Plan may be adopted in any form deemed appropriate or convenient by the legislative body of the county or city, including the combining of elements. By law, the legislative body of the County or City can amend any mandatory element of the General Plan only four (4) times a year.

The General Plan is more than the legal underpinning for land use decisions; it is a vision about how a community will grow, reflecting community priorities and values while shaping the future. As of 2015, more than half of local jurisdictions have general plans that are over 15 years old. Often, this is because the process of adopting a general plan has become too time–consuming and costly.

## Discussion

The County’s existing General Plan consists of eleven elements and one specific plan. The Housing Element is the only element within the County’s General Plan that has been continuously maintained and updated.

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| **Element** | **Adoption Year** |
| Circulation | 1987 |
| Conservation | 1973 |
| Energy | 1983 |
| Geothermal | 1984 |
| Land Use | 1980 |
| Land Use Policies | 1997 |
| Noise | 1978 |
| Open Space | 1972 |
| Safety | 1976 |
| Scenic Highways | 1974 |
| Housing | 2014 |
| Scott Valley Area Plan | 1980 |

The County released an RFP to secure a consultant to update the General Plan. Through this process, staff has chosen consultant, Mintier Harnish to update the General Plan. This project will occur over a two-year period, completing in August 2025. The total project cost will not exceed $999,318.

Mintier Harnish will work to update the Land Use Element, Noise Element, and Open/Conservation Element. The County will not be updating the Geothermal, Energy, or Scenic Highways Elements as they are not required by the State of California. The County will be adopting the Siskiyou County Local Transportation Commission’s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) as its Circulation Element and the County’s Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) as its Safety Element. The Scott Valley Area Plan is not scheduled for any updates.

A comprehensive update for the General Plan is overdue to satisfy State compliance with statutory requirements, internal consistency, and inclusion of County planning programs. A new visioning document is needed to define the County’s current and long-range planning goals for the next 20 to 25 years. The County needs to rely upon the General Plan to ensure that growth within the County and infrastructure and services, occur in a deliberate, guided, and intentional manner to ensure the County is prepared for the next generation of development and growth.

*Project Objectives*

The objective of the County of Siskiyou General Plan Update effort is to develop a comprehensive and internally consistent General Plan with Goals, Policies, Objectives, Land Use Designations, Program Policies, and Process Policies that are consistent with major policy directions of Siskiyou County, and which provide guidance to the County for the next 25 years. As part of this comprehensive update, the County will engage the community and stakeholders for their input, as well as work with the Consultant(s) to analyze current and future trends, including advancements in technology, changes in industry, and other local and regional trends that impact local land use and the economy. This analysis will help the County develop policies and recommendations that will best meet the current and future needs of the community. The final draft of the General Plan will be comprehensive, internally consistent, and conform to state law requirements.

The completed General Plan will address the following:

* Vision and Guiding Principles
  + The new General Plan will include a vision for the future of Siskiyou County created by the community. The Community’s Vision will be presented to the County decision makers at the beginning of the process for their review and confirmation of the direction for the new General Plan. The General Plan will incorporate a set of Guiding Principles, each with key strategies for achieving the community’s vision.
* Authenticity
  + The new General Plan will identify, evaluate, and highlight the physical, social, and cultural identities and community assets of Siskiyou County’s communities and provide policies to enable community cohesion.
* Sustainability
  + The new General Plan will integrate sustainability polices throughout and provide a path to improving outcomes on a range of environmental, economic, and social measures. This will be accomplished by analyzing the sustainability of community infrastructure systems and identifying potential sustainable infrastructure projects and improvements that touch on multiple elements of the Plan such as recreation, conservation, agriculture, health, and economy, as well as sustainability.
* Community Enhancement
  + This new General Plan update allows for consideration of specific needs experienced by existing communities and an opportunity to identify potential General Plan enhancement strategies and implementation measures.
* Healthy Communities
  + The new Plan will make improved health outcomes a key objective against which policies are measured. In addition to physical health outcomes, a broad definition of health may also consider well-being, happiness, and kindness. The Plan will explore the initiatives in each element to ensure that Siskiyou County is a community that supports healthy and active living from youth through old age.
* Community Resiliency
  + The new Plan will include extreme weather events and mitigation policies and strategies, in compliance with State law and to increase the resiliency of the County and its most vulnerable communities through an integrated “in all policies” approach.
* Fiscal and Economic Development
  + The County of Siskiyou is committed to responsibly fostering economic development. Through economic and fiscal analyses of existing and projected conditions, the draft General Plan will enhance economic development activities, business retention and expansion, and will optimize the mix, amount, types, and location of land uses with the goal of achieving the highest possible quality of life and best future fiscal and economic health for the County. Identifying underutilized land will be key in this analysis.
* Implementation
  + The County is committed to creating a Plan that is immediately ready for implementation. The Plan will include short, medium, and long-term steps for County leadership and departments to implement its policies and objectives. Each of these will be paired with measurable, tangible indicators against which progress can be assessed.

## Attachments

1. Draft Contract with Mintier Harnish for Board Signature