

DATE ISSUED: February 5, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-019

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee  
Agenda of February 12, 2003

SUBJECT: General Plan Work Program

REFERENCE: Minutes of the City Council of the City of San Diego for the Regular Meeting of Tuesday, October 22, 2002, Item # 330.

SUMMARY

Issue - Should the Planning Department proceed with the General Plan work program prioritized as proposed?

Staff Recommendation - Proceed with the General Plan work program as proposed.

Planning Commission Recommendation - The Planning Commission considered the proposed work program at their meeting of January 30, 2003. Comments from the Planning Commission discussion will be presented as part of the staff presentation to the Land Use and Housing Committee.

Fiscal Impact - Carrying out the 2003-2008 work program is dependent on continued staffing at current levels through the General Fund, General Plan Application Fee, and Service Level Agreements with other City Departments. Any cutback in staffing would require a corresponding reduction in the proposed work program.

Funding is also required to implement the pilot village program. Until pilot projects are identified the fiscal impact is unknown. However, pilot projects will include partnering with the private sector and other government agencies, securing grant funds and redevelopment funds, and reallocating existing City funds, such as undergrounding utilities.

Housing Impact - The proposed work program includes staff support to the Affordable Housing Task Force and staffing for the preparation of a new Housing Element. Both the Housing Task Force and the Housing Element have a primary objective of increasing the supply of housing available to all San Diegans, with a particular emphasis on providing for the housing needs of low and moderate income residents, and residents with special housing needs.

Environmental Impact - This activity is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

## BACKGROUND

The City Council adopted the Strategic Framework Element and Five-Year Action Plan on October 22, 2002. The Strategic Framework Element provides the overall structure to guide the General Plan update, including future community plan amendments. The Strategic Framework Element contains a strategy called the City of Villages to direct future growth as San Diego shifts from an era of building upon abundant open land to one of reinvesting in existing communities. It represents the City's new approach for shaping how the City will grow while preserving the character of its communities and its most treasured natural resources and amenities.

The City of Villages concept builds upon what San Diego already has by creating a network of vibrant village centers served by an excellent transit system. The strategy addresses the urban development trends of the past and the challenges of the near future, while outlining implementation strategies for the continued growth of the City beyond the year 2020. Neighborhood enhancement is an ultimate goal of this comprehensive strategy. Each community will help determine where and how new growth in their community should occur through amendments and/or updates to community plans.

The City of Villages reinforces and enhances the existing patterns of development found in the City's communities. It draws upon the strengths of San Diego's natural environment, neighborhoods, commercial hubs, and employment centers, and utilizes existing and new village centers for further intensification. The strategy envisions the preservation of the City's dedicated and designated open space areas and single-family neighborhoods, and directs higher-density redevelopment into five distinct land use districts or village types.

## DISCUSSION

The Strategic Framework Element Action Plan, adopted by the City Council, outlines a five-year implementation program for the Strategic Framework Element. In their motion, the Council adopted recommendations contained in memos written by Mayor Murphy and Councilmembers Atkins and Peters (October 16, 2002) and by Councilmember Atkins (October 22, 2002), with amendments. Among other topics, the Mayor's memo calls for the Planning Department to "prepare a detailed work program for simultaneous updating of the critical elements of the City's Progress Guide and General Plan such as Housing, Transportation, Public Facilities, Open Space, Recreation, and Conservation elements." The memo goes on to state that the work program "should include a detailed inventory and mapping of the existing land uses, current planned land

use capacity, existing and planned public facilities, and a detailed inventory of existing infrastructure deficits by community planning areas.” Councilmember Atkins’ memo of October 22, 2002, emphasizes the importance of facilities financing strategies, phasing, and thresholds, as well as the need to develop a Park Master Plan. The proposed 2003-2008 work program (Attachment 1) is an aggressive plan that addresses many, but not all, of the high priority items identified by the Action Plan and the two memos. The proposed work program was drafted within the constraints of existing staffing levels.

The work program has been separated into two phases: Phase I covering January 2003 - June 2005, and Phase II extending from July 2005 - June 2008. The proposed actions fall into five categories: Existing Conditions, Pilot Villages, General Plan Elements, Community Plan Initiatives, and Key Implementation Activities. The following summary of actions identifies the top priority items.

### **Existing Conditions**

The Existing Conditions report will provide a citywide inventory of existing facilities and conditions including, but not limited to land uses, transportation facilities, and open space. This is our highest priority action item as the information generated will be used as a baseline for the preparation of environmental documents, community plan amendments, and other elements of the General Plan, such as Land Use, Public Facilities and Recreation.

During Phase II, the data will be further analyzed and reported as needed to complete community plan amendments, facilities financing plans, and General Plan elements.

### **Pilot Villages**

For many, the village concept is still unfamiliar and is difficult to visualize. The Pilot Village program will involve the selection of sites around the City to demonstrate how a village can be built, and how it will evolve and function depending on the neighborhood and community in which it is sited. The City will partner with communities, agencies, property owners and developers to implement the Village strategy, in a timely fashion, in three locations. It is a goal that this process will serve as a catalyst toward implementation of the strategy around the City. This effort will require extensive coordination with all other City departments and proactive work in the community to enhance existing, and build new relationships

Phase I will include site selection, site planning work, initial entitlements, and identification of funding sources. Phase II will include development approvals, procurement of funds, and construction.

### **General Plan Update**

Key to implementing the Strategic Framework Element is updating the balance of the City’s 1979 General Plan as follows.

#### **Phase I**

- Mobility - A new Mobility Element will have a multi-modal focus to implement the policies of the Strategic Framework Element and MTDB's Transit First initiative.
- Housing - The Housing Element must be updated in accordance with the five-year cycle mandated by state law. The objective of each update is to provide an adequate supply of housing to serve San Diegans of every economic level and demographic group.
- Economic Prosperity - The new Economic Prosperity Element will provide comprehensive and cohesive citywide economic and land use policies, and guide the development of implementing strategies, programs, and regulations.
- Conservation and the Environment - The Conservation and Environment Element will combine the existing Conservation and Energy Conservation elements. This new element will establish policies to conserve and restore renewable and nonrenewable resources, protect air, water, biological resources, habitat, and open space, and promote a sustainable future.

## **Phase II**

- Land Use - The Land Use Element will clarify and strengthen the relationship between the General Plan and community plans, outline a format for preparation of community plans, and incorporate the City of Villages Opportunity Areas Map.
- Public Facilities - The Public Facilities Element will address the equitable provision of public facilities and services throughout the City.
- Recreation Element and Park Master Plan - The Recreation Element will include policies to improve equitable public access to recreational resources, protect and enhance regional parks, and expand options for how communities can meet park and recreation standards. A Park Master Plan will be developed that includes a needs assessment and implementation strategies to meet urban park needs.
- Urban Design - The Urban Design Element will contain policies to address San Diego's natural setting, diverse neighborhoods, and need for high quality developments and public spaces.

## **Community Plan Initiatives**

A number of actions are needed to ensure that the community plan process, as well as content, is aligned with the General Plan, as follows:

### **Phase I**

- Priorities - Update existing criteria for prioritizing community plan amendments and

updates to reflect policies in the Strategic Framework Element.

- Amendment Process - Revise the community plan amendment initiation and approval process to implement recommendations raised by the Planning Commission and City Council during the Strategic Framework hearing process that include: developing criteria for community plan amendments that propose an increase in residential density, ensuring that appropriate zoning is applied to implement the community plans, and preserving the integrity of community plans.

### **Phases I and II**

- Community Plan Amendments and Updates - Work with community groups and organizations to amend or update community plans to reflect Strategic Framework Element policies, update community goals, and implement housing, public facilities needs, and other policy goals, and ensure that there is consistency with General Plan policies.
- Development Project Review - Planning Department staff will review development projects with respect to the Strategic Framework Element and Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines to help realize the City of Villages strategy.

### **Key Implementation Activities**

#### **Phase I and II**

- Financing Strategy - A Financing Strategy for public facilities must be developed to remedy existing facilities shortfalls. For Phase I of the work program, the Planning Department proposes to work with the City Manager to identify a broad range of citywide needs (including public facilities and infrastructure, maintenance, affordable housing, and open space acquisition), then link these needs to existing and new potential funding sources. During Phase II, the City Council could potentially make decisions on funding sources and place financing measures on the ballot for a public vote.
- Public Outreach - Continue a coordinated outreach effort to involve community planning groups, other government agencies, a broad range of civic, environmental, professional and other interest organizations, and all City departments in work program activities.
- Regional Planning - Take a leadership role as a part of SANDAG, as well as other regional forums, to accomplish open space preservation, mobility, economic prosperity, and other regional policy goals identified in the Strategic Framework Element.
- Legislation - Assist in a unified City effort to further a legislative agenda for smart growth.
- Inter-Agency Coordination - Continue to work with other agencies and coordinate on

projects of mutual interest.

- Environmental Analysis - Conduct required environmental analysis for the activities identified in the work program in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Monitoring/Annual Report - Monitor implementation of the Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan, and prepare an annual report to the Planning Commission and City Council.

## CONCLUSION

Phase I (January 2003 - June 2005) of the proposed General Plan work program contains many of the key actions necessary to implement the Strategic Framework Element. However, a number of high priority items would be deferred until Phase II (July 2005 - June 2008) in order to work within existing staffing levels. Staff has made an attempt to prioritize items in the work program. However, through its discussion, the Land Use and Housing Committee may choose to adjust priorities.

Respectfully submitted,

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S. Gail Goldberg, AICP  
Planning Director

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Approved: P. Lamont Ewell  
Assistant City Manager

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Note: Attachment 2 is not available in electronic format. A copy is available in the Office of the City Clerk.

- Attachments:
1. [Work Program – Description of Activities](#)
  2. Work Program – Graphic Overview
  3. [Work Program – Timeline](#)
  4. [Existing Conditions Report Outline](#)