

DATE ISSUED: July 20, 2005 REPORT NO. 05-161

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee
Agenda of July 27, 2005

SUBJECT: Workshop on the General Plan Update

REFERENCE: Manager's Report Nos. 03-019, 03-115, 03-204, 03-205, 03-206, 04-149, 05-038
Planning Report Nos. PC-03-183, PC-03-227, PC-03-333, PC-04-220, PC-05-070, PC-05-183

SUMMARY:

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED BY THE COMMITTEE OR THE CITY COUNCIL

BACKGROUND:

General Plan Update Program

On October 22, 2002, the City Council adopted the Strategic Framework Element as an amendment to the City's 1979 *Progress Guide and General Plan (1979 General Plan)*. This action initiated the comprehensive update of the *1979 General Plan*. The Strategic Framework Element provided a new strategy for the City's future growth and development, a basis for a new land use element, and a general policy framework for updating the existing elements in the *1979 General Plan*.

California requires each city and county to adopt a general plan to guide the growth and development of a community, usually over a twenty-year horizon. A general plan provides the basis for local government decision-making particularly related to legislative and regulatory land use and development, serves as a vehicle for citizens to participate in planning and decision-making for the community, and establishes the ground rules, to be easily understood by everyone, regarding how and where a community can grow. The state mandates the inclusion of seven elements: land use, circulation, housing (updated every five years), conservation, open space, noise, and safety. Interrelated and of equal status, each of the elements is an integral part of a general plan. Elements can be combined, however, and

the existing thirteen elements in the *1979 General Plan* together with the Guidelines for Future Development were combined and reduced to nine: Strategic Framework and Land Use, Mobility, Urban Design, Public Facilities, Services and Safety, Economic Prosperity, Recreation, Conservation, Noise, and Housing (under separate cover).

On February 12, 2003, the Land Use and Housing Committee (LU&H) approved the General Plan Work Program which laid out the major work activities and a timeline to update the *1979 General Plan*. Major tasks were to incorporate and refine the Strategic Framework Element and citywide community plan policies into the Draft General Plan, provide policies which comprehensively address the most significant citywide issues, and format the document to be more reader and web-friendly.

Public Outreach

Outreach Program

It has been the goal of the Planning Department to increase community involvement and expand the role of public participation in the process of developing a new general plan. The Planning Department has engaged the public using four primary methods; a series of forums, mass e-mail distributions, workshops, presentations and meetings. The form and type of public outreach and participation have varied from element-to-element based on the variety and number of interested groups associated with the element. A partial listing of the interested groups that we consulted with, or made presentations to is provided in Attachment 1. The four methods of public outreach are described below.

- A series of forums entitled “From Controversy to Solutions” was developed to provide opportunities for panel based discussions on topics specific to general plan goals and policies. The public were invited to the forums which were televised, and often repeated, on City TV24. City Council members and other community leaders participated as panelists. The goal of each forum was to provide a public venue to discuss a variety of differing points of view, and to assist staff in policy development. The forum topics included the overall general plan update, economic prosperity, mobility, conservation, recreation, commercial development, and public facilities.
- An e-mail database with over 2,100 individuals and organizations that expressed interest in the general plan update process was developed. Interest group e-mail lists were further refined based on individuals’ stated areas of interest. The e-mails were used to provide updated reports on each element, to announce availability of drafts, and to solicit membership for ad hoc issue groups. For some elements, draft sections of the elements were distributed for review as they were being drafted. The goal was to allow the public to participate in early stages of the general plan update process. E-mail notices were also used to provide notice of workshops, and Planning Commission and City Council meetings. For members of the public without e-mail, hard copy mailings were provided.
- The Planning Department conducted several public workshops to discuss the goals and policies of the Draft General Plan. Workshop participants included the Planning

Commission, the LU&H Committee, public agencies, professional organizations, community activists, the general public, and City staff from several City departments.

- Staff attended community planning group meetings to encourage people to join our e-mail interest group lists, provide semi-annual status reports and discuss emerging issues. The Planning Director provided regular updates to the Community Planners Committee (CPC) and Planning staff conducted several workshops at CPC. Staff also met with and made presentations to numerous interest groups.

Discussion Draft of the General Plan Update

On April 20, 2005, the Planning Department posted the Discussion Draft of the General Plan on the department's website, provided copies to City Council, Planning Commission, and each of the recognized community planning groups, and e-mailed notices of availability to the e-mail distribution list. The full public distribution also included: public libraries, community service centers, and City staff. The purpose of the Discussion Draft was to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the draft before additional resources had been invested in a more finished version.

Since May of 2005, staff has made more than 55 presentations on the General Plan update, including visits to nearly all of the community planning groups, and numerous interest groups and stakeholders. The presentation focused on the Draft General Plan structure, major goals and policies, changes between the *1979 General Plan* and the 2005 Discussion Draft, and the anticipated public review and hearing schedule. Staff also attended the CPC subcommittee that was established to review and comment on the entire Draft General Plan. Staff was able to consider comments received by June 3, 2005 for inclusion in the revised July 2005 draft.

Planning Commission and LU&H Workshops

Since adoption of the work program, the Planning Department has conducted several workshops with the Planning Commission and LU&H to seek input on various work products, including a new General Plan format, public outreach strategy, existing conditions data collection, draft Mobility Element policies, and draft community plan amendment/update policies. Additionally, separate workshops were conducted with LU&H and the Planning Commission to discuss more specific issues such as: residential/industrial collocation; community plan format, initiation and amendment criteria; park and recreation issues; and public facility financing and phasing. In March 2005, the Planning Commission conducted a workshop to focus solely on the Economic Prosperity Element.

On July 14, 2005 the Planning Commission held a workshop covering the entire July 2005 Draft General Plan. Commissioners had extensive comments. Staff will be compiling the Commissioners' comments, making recommended revisions, and returning to the Planning Commission for additional workshops.

Summer 2005 Public Outreach

General plan staff will continue to attend planning group, and other public meetings throughout the summer, including an August 23 meeting with CPC. The public will have the opportunity to provide continuing advice and input on the Draft General Plan as we edit the draft and proceed through the workshop and hearing process. It is important to ensure that San Diegans are comfortable with, and can even champion the Draft General Plan upon its adoption.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion provides an overview of each of the nine elements of the Draft General Plan, and summarizes key points of interest. The complete Draft General Plan dated July 2005 is included as Attachment 2, and is available on our website at:

<http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/gpupdate.shtml>

Strategic Framework and Land Use Element

The Strategic Framework and Land Use Element (Land Use Element) is the central organizing element for the Draft General Plan. It incorporates the adopted Strategic Framework Element including the City of Villages strategy and provides an overview of citywide policies in the interrelated areas of: urban form, neighborhood character, public facilities and services, conservation and the environment, mobility, housing affordability, economic prosperity and regionalism. The element also provides more detailed policy direction in the areas of equitable development, environmental justice, coastal planning, and annexations. The element includes the Draft General Plan Land Use Map, a generalized land use composite map based upon adopted community plans; it also depicts the City's planned street network.

The City of Villages strategy is a major component of the Land Use Element. The City of Villages strategy calls for new growth to be targeted in mixed-use village centers in order to create lively activity centers, provide housing, improve walkability, help support a state-of-the-art transit system, and provide an alternative to the development of outlying areas. Combined with the citywide policies, the strategy ensures that growth and redevelopment, regardless of rate, will result in long-term environmental, social, and economic health of the City and its communities.

In addition, the Land Use Element clarifies the role of community plans and establishes community plans as an integral component of the Draft General Plan, as the community plans provide the parcel-level detail regarding land use and intensity that is required by state law. Further, Land Use Element policies require that all projects conform to community plan policies, and that zoning is established which is consistent with the community plan.

In November 2003, LU&H and the Planning Commission held a joint meeting to discuss the initiation and community plan amendment process. The general consensus at that meeting was that the initiation process serves a valuable purpose for the City, applicant, and the

community. Council and commission members voiced support for retention of the initiation criteria and the accompanying public hearing, but with significant revisions. That direction to staff was confirmed with a second workshop in November 2004. The council members and commissioners both recognized that land use plan documents require amendments from time-to-time and that the initiation process must retain some flexibility. The amendment process may also be used to identify neighborhood village centers. Frequent amendments, however, have the potential to diminish the community plan's original vision.

Key points:

- The City of Villages strategy requires identification of a hierarchy of village categories where growth will be focused. The Transit/Land Use Connections Map, referenced as a part of the Land Use and Mobility Elements, identifies existing and potential village sites (see fold-out map in the Draft General Plan, or click on "COV/Land Use Maps" at the website referenced above). The sites were previously identified as a part of the Strategic Framework Element process, based upon a preliminary analysis of village locational criteria.
- The Transit/Land Use Connections Map is a graphic illustration of the strategy; it is not a land use map. The map is to serve as a tool to coordinate land use and transit planning. No land use or zoning amendments are proposed as a part of the general plan update process. Implementation of the Draft General Plan will occur as community plans are updated subsequent to the adoption of the General Plan.
- The Land Use Element helps guide community plan preparation and format. The goal is to have community plans provide community-specific land use planning and development policies, with citywide policies located in the other eight general plan elements. Community plans will focus on their unique community identity, while also contributing to meeting citywide general plan goals, including the provision of housing opportunities. The refined scope of community plans should result in a reduction in the time needed to prepare community plans, and enable the Planning Department to undertake and complete updates in a more timely fashion.
- The Land Use Element specifies that zoning will be applied to implement community plan designated land use, range of density/intensity, and site design, as appropriate. Similarly, it will require projects to be assessed based upon conformance with general/community plan specified land use, range of density/intensity, site design, and other general/community plan policy objectives.
- Revisions to the initiation criteria, and their inclusion in the Draft General Plan, focused upon strengthening the criteria to ensure that amendment proposals are consistent with the overall vision of the Draft General Plan and the community plans. The element provides for an enhanced amendment process by establishing a standardized list of issues to analyze.

Mobility Element

An overall goal of the Mobility Element is to further the attainment of a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that improves mobility and minimizes environmental and neighborhood impacts. The element includes a wide range of policies which advance a strategy for congestion relief and increased transportation choices, in a manner that strengthens the City of Villages land use vision.

The Mobility and Land Use Elements of the Draft General Plan are closely linked. The Land Use Element identifies existing and planned land uses, and the Mobility Element identifies the proposed transportation network and strategies which have been designed to meet the future transportation needs generated by the land uses. The integration of transportation and land use planning is illustrated by the Transit/Land Use Connections Map.

Key points:

- Use the Transit/Land Use Connections Map as the basis for coordinated land use and transit planning. Implement the City of Villages strategy as a means to help support an efficient and extensive transit system and reduce the need to drive,
- Encourage the development and retrofit of existing areas to create walkable, tree-lined streets,
- Support for: expansion of the regional transit system, better bicycling infrastructure, walking as a mode of transportation, and alternatives to single-occupant automobile use,
- Expand use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to improve the efficiency and safety of the transportation system,
- Collaborate with SANDAG on issues of transportation system planning, prioritizing, and financing, including implementation of Regional Transit Vision,
- Seek greater street, trail, and path connectivity at the City, community, neighborhood, and project levels; and
- Develop community-specific parking solutions through use of a Parking Strategies Tool Box.

Urban Design Element

The Urban Design Element offers guidance on how to create great buildings, neighborhoods, and public spaces. The policies continue the 1979 General Plan's emphasis on respecting San Diego's natural topography and distinctive neighborhoods, and incorporate components of the City's *Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines*. In addition, the element contains policies which address how to guide the development of walkable communities and village centers, strengthen natural and built linkages and gateways, and design high quality housing. New sections are proposed on Public Art and Cultural Amenities, and Safety and Security.

Key points:

- Design the built environment to respect and enhance San Diego's natural base,
- Preserve the individuality of our distinctive neighborhoods and encourage a continuing positive evolution of neighborhood character,

- Design villages, transit corridors, and other designated centers to be pedestrian and transit friendly,
- Provide significant public gathering spaces in every neighborhood,
- Promote distinctive civic architecture, landmarks and public facilities,
- Include public art and cultural activities in public and private projects to celebrate and help establish community identity, and to create distinctive public spaces; and
- Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) measures to promote the development of safe and secure neighborhoods and village centers.

Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element

The Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element addresses facilities and services that have a direct influence on the location of land uses. Among these are fire-rescue, police, wastewater, waste management, libraries, and schools. Protection of health and safety is the City's overall priority for providing services and facilities.

Fiscal constraints have severely limited the provision and maintenance of the City's infrastructure, particularly in older urbanized areas. As the City matures and a smart growth strategy is implemented, the timely provision of public facilities is essential to the quality of life of San Diego residents. This element includes policies on the prioritization and provision of public facilities and services that are consistent with the Strategic Framework and other elements of the updated General Plan.

In order to address current and future public facility needs, and to successfully implement the City of Villages strategy, the element contains guidelines for implementing a financing strategy. The element states that the public and private sectors both have responsibilities for providing public facilities.

Key points:

- Prioritize the provision of public facilities and services with consideration of citywide and community level criteria, including community preferences. Citywide priorities focus on public funding of facilities in underserved communities and providing the City's share of the infrastructure needed for the development of villages,
- Phase public facilities with development, and update Public Facilities Financing Plans concurrently with community plan updates or amendments which propose increases in density or intensity,
- Secure the financial resources needed to address existing and future public facility needs; and
- Maximize the return on investments in public resources through joint-use of facilities and sharing of resources.

Economic Prosperity Element

On March 10, 2005, the Planning Commission held a workshop to discuss the draft Economic Prosperity Element. Although several issues were discussed, the primary focus of the workshop was on the use of land use policies to influence the achievement of economic

prosperity goals. One goal is the achievement of a diverse economy focusing on industries that provide middle-income employment. Related goals are the efficient utilization and retention of industrial land since the supply and type of employment land uses in the City are significant factors in San Diego's economic health.

In the last several decades, existing lower technology industrial uses previously established in the central portion of the City have disappeared or relocated. The restructuring of the San Diego economy associated with global and national economic trends, is primarily responsible for this change. Other contributing factors include the high cost of doing business in California, the nature of low technology uses, and the fact that these areas were zoned to permit non-industrial office, commercial service, and retail uses. As a result, the Midway-Pacific Highway area, Grantville, and portions of Kearny Mesa are not well-suited to traditional industrial development, and contain obsolete industrial structures which have been utilized as service and retail uses. These areas are ideally suited to redevelop as office employment, commercial service, and medium- to high-density residential uses.

The local economy enjoys significant benefits from industries that bring wealth into the region and provide middle-income employment. These industries, which include defense, biotechnology, business equipment manufacturing, and international trade and logistics, are likely to remain in San Diego for proprietary reasons and due to the need to locate near intellectual capital. High technology areas such as Sorrento Mesa, Rancho Bernardo, University City and portions of Otay Mesa all contain uses which must be protected from the encroachment of non-industrial uses. Over the long term, existing regulations will allow these uses to intensify as technological advances permit.

Key points:

- Protect middle-income and high technology industrial uses from encroachment by office, residential, and commercial uses through the use of more refined land use designations, business incentives, and collocation policies,
- Intensify employment office uses through infill development in urbanized locations,
- Enhance the viability of existing and new commercial development,
- Increase economic opportunity by improving access to education and supporting higher-paying employment in low-wage industries,
- Support the expansion of small businesses and the redevelopment of older communities; and
- Expand trade-related industries in the border area and seek efficient movement of goods and people across the border.

Recreation Element

The overarching goal of the Recreation Element is to increase recreation opportunity throughout the City. The element is divided into six issue areas containing goals and policies addressing the diversity of recreation opportunity, preservation of existing facilities, accessibility of facilities and services, cooperative efforts to attain parkland and facilities, preservation of open space and resource-based parks, and guidelines for park and recreation facilities.

Many of the goals and policies of the current *1979 General Plan* have been carried into this draft. However, the Element also contains new and revised policies that were developed as a result of public outreach, workshops, community planning group input, research, and the evolving development of the City.

Key points:

- Retain existing guidelines for population-based recreation facilities, with modifications:
 - Alternative means of increasing recreation opportunities have been added to the Park and Recreation Guidelines in the form of “enhancements.” The enhancements are to be used when it is not otherwise feasible to meet community need or population-based park guidelines; and
 - Acreage guidelines for joint-use parks with school districts have been revised to assure that joint-use facilities do not result in a net loss of park acreage.
- Identify, quantify, and consider as serving neighborhood and community park guidelines those portions of regional parks that satisfy population-based park and recreation guidelines,
- Encourage joint use with public and private agencies, in addition to school districts,
- Prepare a citywide Park Master Plan that builds upon the goals and policies of the Recreation Element, and
- Establish priorities that address underserved neighborhoods, existing nonprofit recreation facilities, and scheduling of local youth activities.

Conservation Element

The Conservation Element focuses on conserving natural resources, protecting landforms and open spaces, preventing pollution, and using resources wisely. A wide range of policies is proposed to help ensure that San Diego’s environmental quality can be sustained for future generations. Many of the policies described in the element are already being implemented through specific programs in various City departments such as the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program, the Sustainable Communities Program, and the Multiple Species Conservation Program. The Draft General Plan provides the broad context to view the purpose and interrelationships of these and additional programs.

Key points:

- Protect and conserve landforms, community open spaces, habitat areas, agricultural areas, and other environmentally sensitive lands,
- Use a watershed management approach to protecting water supplies. Seek additional dedicated water supplies and increased water conservation. Use best management practices to help prevent storm water and urban runoff pollution,
- Preserve natural habitats pursuant to the Multiple Species Conservation Program and conserve wetlands through implementation of a “no net loss” approach,
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of fossil fuels,
- Encourage the construction and operation of green buildings. Develop and protect a sustainable urban/community forest,
- Strive for the preservation, protection, and restoration of historic and cultural resources, including archaeological resources; and

- Support environmental education so that people are aware of and more responsible for their impacts on the environment.

Noise Element

The Noise Element continues to maintain goals and polices governing the location and development of land uses and incorporation of noise abatement procedures to minimize the exposure of community residents to excessive noise. These goals are especially important as the City begins to target growth into specific commercial infill areas consistent with transit-oriented development design guidelines and with a mix of uses. Revisions to the element include an expanded noise compatibility matrix by land use and noise levels.

Housing Element

The Housing Element differs from the other elements in the Draft General Plan in several respects. The state requirements for the housing elements are more specific than for other general plan elements and require that, in addition to strategies and policies such as are found in other elements, that quantifiable goals be established and that specific programs be identified to meet these goals. Therefore, the format of the housing element differs significantly from that of the other elements.

California state law requires that the housing element be updated every five to seven years. By contrast, the remainder of a general plan is designed to guide development during a twenty or twenty-five year period. The housing element has been updated several times since the last *1979 General Plan*. In addition, housing elements for all jurisdictions in San Diego County are required to be updated at the same time and to cover the period 2005-2010. Therefore, the 2005-2010 Housing Element is proceeding on a parallel, but somewhat different timeline from the remainder of the Draft General Plan. Planning staff is nearing the completion of a second more complete draft. Staff anticipates finishing the draft in approximately a month, and will be posting it on the City's website. The City's goal has been to complete the Housing Element in summer or fall of 2005 and have it fully adopted by the end of 2005.

The state Housing and Community Development Department and SANDAG set specific five to seven year housing production goals for each jurisdiction. Specific goals are set for production of very low-, low- and moderate-income housing units. Each jurisdiction is required to prepare a detailed inventory of sites available to be developed with housing during a five- to seven-year period, an analysis of how the City met its goals and implemented programs from the previous housing element, and a description of new programs to meet anticipated needs during the next five years.

Environmental Review and Master Environmental Assessment (MEA)

The Environmental Analysis Section of Development Services has determined that an Addendum to the previous Final EIR (LDR No. 40-1027; SCH No. 2001061069 dated August 27, 2002) will be prepared for the proposed Draft General Plan update. This determination is based primarily on the fact that there are no significant environmental

impacts due to changes in land use, and that the policies in the proposed Draft General Plan are consistent with the previously adopted Strategic Framework Element.

The Planning Department is in the process of preparing a Master Environmental Assessment for the City of San Diego. The MEA, per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15169, will be an inventory of the physical and biological characteristics of the City. Wherever possible, the inventoried characteristics and information are depicted on the maps; in addition, lists will also contain certain collected information.

CONCLUSION

The new general plan is intended to proactively address the challenges of growth and development through seeking solutions to infrastructure challenges, establishing better linkages between transit and land use planning, preserving important open spaces, strengthening our existing communities, and creating new neighborhood centers. The July 2005 Draft General Plan represents the results of five years of public input and staff work to prepare the Strategic Framework Element of the Draft General Plan and then to update the balance of the *1979 General Plan*. Staff is continuing to seek public comment on the draft document and is working toward a November 2005 City Council hearing. We welcome committee and public input so we can continue to improve upon the draft document.

Respectfully submitted,

S. Gail Goldberg, AICP
Planning Director

Approved: Ellen Oppenheim
Deputy City Manager

EO/SGG/NB/ALM/je

- Attachments: [1. Public Outreach Consultations/Presentations](#)
2. City of San Diego Draft General Plan, July 2005 (limited distribution, under separate cover, or go to <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/gpupdate.shtml>)