



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

DATE ISSUED: May 10, 2006 REPORT NO. 06-056

ATTENTION: Land Use and Housing Committee  
Agenda of May 17, 2006

SUBJECT: General Plan Update Workshop

REFERENCE: Manager's Report Nos. 03-019, 03-115, 03-204, 03-205, 03-206, 04-149,  
05-038, 05-161  
Council Report No. 06-025  
Planning Commission Report Nos. P-03-183, P-03-227, P-03-333, PC-04-220,  
PC-05-070, PC-05-183, PC-05-261, PC-05-304

REQUESTED ACTION:

Provide input on new working drafts of the proposed General Plan Land Use and Community Planning, Mobility, Urban Design, Conservation, Historic Preservation and Noise elements.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to continue to refine the draft elements, and to return to the Land Use and Housing Committee (LU&H) on July 19, 2006, for a workshop on the Public Facilities, Services and Safety; Recreation; and Economic Prosperity elements.

SUMMARY:

**Background**

The General Plan update is underway to replace the 1979 Progress Guide and General Plan (1979 General Plan). The update has been guided by the City of Villages strategy and citywide policy direction contained within the General Plan Strategic Framework Element, which was adopted by the City Council on October 22, 2002. 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 latest public review draft of the updated plan was released in July 2005. Since then, significant revisions to the content and organization of the draft plan have been made based on LU&H, Planning Commission, Community Planners Committee, general public, and other stakeholder comments. Upon release of the next public review draft, staff will provide a table identifying major edits to the content of the July 2005 Draft.

**Discussion**

Introductory Sections

Two new introductory sections are proposed to be a part of the updated General Plan: Foundation for Planning, and Strategic Framework. The Foundation for Planning section (see Attachment 1) covers background information and establishes the role and purpose of the General Plan. The Strategic Framework section (see Attachment 2) memorializes the adopted Strategic Framework Element with its summary of interrelated policies. Policies that were originally contained within the Strategic Framework Element have been refined, modified, and expanded as needed in the appropriate General Plan elements.

Land Use and Community Planning Element

The proposed new Land Use and Community Planning Element (Land Use Element, see Attachment 3) incorporates the adopted Strategic Framework Element City of Villages strategy and provides policy direction in the areas of community planning, zoning and policy consistency, plan amendment process, coastal planning, airport land use planning, balanced communities, equitable development, environmental justice, and annexations. The element includes the General Plan Land Use and Street Systems Map, a generalized land use and streets composite map based upon adopted community plans.

The City of Villages strategy is a major component of the Land Use Element. This 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 helps to ensure that growth and redevelopment will contribute towards long-term healthy environmental, social, and economic conditions within the city and its communities.

In addition, the Land Use Element clarifies the roles of the General Plan and community plans and their relationships. It establishes community plans as integral components of the General Plan, as the community plans provide the parcel-level detail regarding land use designations, density 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.

Key points:

- The General Plan identifies seven generalized land use categories and a menu of 27 community plan land use designations that would be applied in appropriate locations as community plans are updated and/or amended in the future.
- No land use or zoning amendments are proposed as a part of the General Plan update. Implementation of the General Plan will occur as community plans are updated or amended subsequent to the adoption of the General Plan.
- The element identifies a hierarchy of village categories where growth will be focused, and provides village locational criteria. Actual village sites are to be designated in community plans with input from Council-recognized community planning groups.
- The element includes a new Village Propensity Map (to be distributed at the workshop) which illustrates where village-like characteristics already exist, or are compatible with

adopted community plan land use designations, as well as areas that may have a propensity to develop as village areas, based on having some of the village-like characteristics. The map identifies physical characteristics and existing conditions including the location of parks, transit routes, and existing and planned land uses.

- 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 policies applicable to all communities located in the General Plan. 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. A companion manual to the General Plan to guide community plan preparation is also being prepared.
- 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 plan/community plan specified land use, range of density/intensity, site design, and other general plan/community plan policy objectives.
- Revisions to the initiation criteria, and their inclusion in the General Plan, are focused upon strengthening the criteria to ensure that amendment proposals are consistent with the overall vision of the General Plan and the community plans. A General Plan Amendment Manual, a companion document to the General Plan, is being prepared to provide more specific guidance on plan amendment issues.

### Mobility Element

An overall goal of the Mobility Element (see Attachment 4) 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.

#### Key points:

- 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 creation of walkable, tree-lined streets in new development projects as well as through incremental redevelopment and street retrofit projects that occur over time.
- Seek greater street, trail, and path connectivity at the city, community, neighborhood, and project levels.
- Proactively work with San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) to plan and fund projects that the city has identified as high priority. Continue to collaborate with SANDAG to influence transportation system planning, policy development, project prioritization, and financing.
- Support expansion of the regional transit system, better bicycling infrastructure, walking as a mode of transportation, and alternatives to single-occupant automobile use.

- Develop multi-modal level of service measures to gauge performance of the transportation system and to help design improvements that benefit multiple modes of transportation.
- Expand use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to improve the efficiency and safety of the transportation system.
- Develop community-specific parking solutions through use of a Parking Strategies Tool Box.

### Urban Design Element

The purpose of the Urban Design Element (see Attachment 5) is to establish a set of design principles from which future physical design decisions can be based. Urban design is the visual and sensory relationship between people and the built environment. The built environment includes not only buildings and streets, but also the natural environment as it is incorporated into the urban context. Urban design describes the physical features which define the character or image of a street, neighborhood, community, or the city as a whole. The Urban Design Element contains policies that are intended to be responsive to the core values and recommendations on urban form identified in the Strategic Framework Element. These include allowing the city's urban form to be defined and shaped by the natural environment, and creating diverse village centers where commercial and residential development is concentrated.

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. New sections are proposed on Public Art and Cultural Amenities, and Safety and Security. The revised element was reorganized and edited since the July 2005 Draft in response to Planning Commission (PC) and public comments. Stakeholder meetings held in April 2006 also helped shape this element.

#### Key Points:

- Design the built environment to respect and enhance San Diego's natural features.
- Preserve the individuality of our distinctive neighborhoods and encourage a continuing protection of positive 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.
- Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) measures to promote the development of safe and secure neighborhoods and village centers.

### Conservation Element

The Conservation Element (see Attachment 6) focuses on conserving natural resources; protecting unique landforms; preserving and managing our open space system, beaches and watercourses; preventing and reducing pollution; and ensuring preservation of our quality of life in San Diego. A wide range of policies are proposed in the General Plan update to help guide development and provide a conservation "blueprint" so that San Diego's environmental quality and heritage are preserved, maintained, improved and can be sustained for current and future generations. Many of the policies described in the element are already being implemented

throughout the city, via specific programs and plans administered by various city departments, such as the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program, the Sustainable Communities Program, and the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The General Plan provides the broad overall context to view the purpose and interrelationships of these and additional programs, and to establish citywide goals for conservation of resources that will be refined based on individual community's conservation goals.

#### Key Points:

- Protect and conserve landforms, community open spaces, habitat areas, agricultural areas, and other environmentally sensitive lands through a variety of available tools, such as easements or dedication of lands to be preserved in their natural state.
- 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 MSCP 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.
- Support environmental education so that people are aware of and more responsible for their impacts on the environment.

#### Historic Preservation Element

The purpose of the Historic Preservation Element (see Attachment 7) is to guide the preservation, protection and restoration of historical and cultural resources so that a clear sense of how the city gained its present form and substance can be maintained. Preservation of important historical resources enhances the quality of life in San Diego. It improves the quality of the built environment, encourages appreciation for the city's history and culture, maintains the character and identity of communities, and contributes to the city's economic vitality. In the July 2005 Draft General Plan, historic and cultural resources were addressed in Section L of the Conservation Element. Staff is now proposing that Historic Preservation be a separate element since historic preservation policies relate to land use and urban design, as well as conservation topics. Related policies addressing cultural heritage tourism will be included in the Economic Prosperity Element.

#### Key Points:

- Integration of historic preservation planning in the larger planning process.
- Identification of the historical resources of the city.
- Historical preservation incentives as an important component of the overall program.
- Creation of opportunities for historical resources sponsorship.
- Foster public education in the importance of historical resources.
- Increased opportunities for cultural heritage tourism.

#### Noise Element

The Noise Element (see Attachment 8) provides goals and policies to guide compatible land uses and the incorporation of noise abatement measures for new uses to protect people living and working in the city

of San Diego from an excessive noise environment. This purpose becomes more relevant as the city continues to grow with infill, mixed use, and transit-oriented development. Recent revisions to the element include expanded Land Use – Noise Compatibility Guidelines that use a matrix to identify compatible, conditionally compatible, and incompatible land uses by noise decibel level.

**Key Points:**

- Consider existing and future noise levels when making land use planning decisions to minimize exposure to excessive noise.
- Separate excessive noise-generating uses and residential and other noise-sensitive land uses with sufficient spatial buffer of less sensitive uses.
- Limit future residential and other noise-sensitive land use in areas exposed to high levels of noise.

**FISCAL CONSIDERATION:**

Staffing for the General Plan update is dependent on funding through the General Fund, General Plan Application Fee, and Service Level Agreements with other city departments. The Service Level Agreements are in place through the end of Fiscal Year 2007.

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE AND PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS:**

On March 1, 2006, the LU&H Committee was briefed on the progress of the draft General Plan and provided with draft text of selected sections and elements (see Report No. 06-025 for more information). The LU&H discussion time was limited and not all committee members had a chance to speak. However, comments by individual committee members supported draft Recreation Element policies calling for a citywide parks master plan, and a 2.4 acre per 1,000 residents population-based park standard. There were varied opinions on proposed Economic Prosperity Element policies related to industrial lands. In addition, Councilmember Donna Frye testified before the committee recommending inclusion of a General Plan policy or goal calling for “no net loss of industrial lands.”

The LU&H Committee and the PC have played significant roles in the General Plan update process over the past three years. The following table identifies dates and topics of LU&H and PC meetings on the General Plan since February of 2003. Direction received at the workshops described below has been incorporated into the draft General Plan.

DATE	FORUM	TOPIC
2-12-03	LU&H	Approved the General Plan Work Program including tasks to: incorporate and refine the Strategic Framework Element and citywide community plan policies into the General Plan, draft additional policies to address citywide issues, and format the document to be more reader- and web-friendly.
7-30-03	LU&H	Action to prepare a Master Environmental Assessment to provide an inventory of existing facilities and land uses in community planning areas.
10-22-03	LU&H, PC	Workshop covered the new General Plan format, public outreach strategy, existing conditions data collection, draft Mobility Element policies, and draft community plan amendment/update policies.

DATE	FORUM	TOPIC
11-18-04	PC	Workshop on Land Use Element issues including community plan format, initiation and amendment criteria, and proposed land use designations.
3-9-05	LU&H, PC	Workshop on six major policy areas including: collocation of housing and employment uses, alternative methods of providing parks and recreation areas, solutions to community facilities deficits, General Plan consistency.
3-9-05	LU&H, PC	Workshop on the community plan update process, and community and general plan amendment issues.
3-10-05	PC	Workshop on the Economic Prosperity Element.
4-20-05	LU&H	Public review of the Discussion Draft General Plan was initiated.
7-14-05	PC	Workshop covering the entire July 2005 Draft General Plan. Planning Commissioners had extensive comments.
7-27-05	LU&H	Workshop to review and comment on the July 2005 Draft General Plan.
9-22-05	PC	Previous PC and LU&H workshop comments were documented along with the Planning Department's suggested course of action-See Report No. PC-05-261. <a href="http://www.sandiego.gov/planning-commission/pcreports/pc261gp.pdf">http://www.sandiego.gov/planning-commission/pcreports/pc261gp.pdf</a>
10-13-05	PC	Presented a revised outline for the General Plan.
12-1-05	PC	Director's report briefed Planning Commissioners on the General Plan work in progress, including interaction with Community Planners Committee (CPC).
2-1-06	LU&H	Briefing on General Plan update program.
3-2-06	LU&H	General Plan workshop. Presented revised Land Use and Urban Design elements; received input on key policies in progress. Identified major changes to July 2005 Draft General Plan.
3-16-06	PC	General Plan workshop. Presented revised Land Use and Urban Design elements; received input on key policies in progress. Identified major changes to July 2005 Draft General Plan.

#### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS:

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 the new General Plan. Outreach has taken place through a series of forums; mass e-mail distributions; workshops, presentations and meetings; and planning group communications including working sessions with the CPC and the CPC General Plan subcommittee. A listing of many of the interested groups consulted with, or that received presentations, is provided in Attachment 9. The primary methods of public outreach are described below.

## Public Forums

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.

## E-Mail Distribution

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. For members of the public without e-mail, hard copy mailings were provided. 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 PC and City Council meetings.

The Discussion Draft of the General Plan (April 20, 2005) and the July 2005 Draft of the General Plan were each posted on the department’s website, and hard copies were provided to the City Council, PC, and each of the recognized community planning groups. The full public distribution also included: public libraries, community service centers, and city staff. In addition, notices of availability were sent to the e-mail distribution list. The next draft of the General Plan will also be distributed through these channels.

## Workshops and Meetings

In addition to the formal workshops with PC and LU&H described above, presentations and stakeholder meetings were held on specific topic areas with public agencies, professional organizations, community activists, the general public, and other city staff.

## Community Planning Groups

Initially, 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. In the summer of 2005, staff presented the Discussion Draft General Plan to each of the city’s Council-recognized community planning groups. Since then, staff has gone to individual planning groups upon request. In addition, staff has consulted with the community planning groups that have lands identified on the draft Prime Industrial Land map.

## Community Planners Committee (CPC)

The CPC initially discussed the July 2005 Draft General Plan at their meeting of August 23, 2005. Since then, the CPC formed a General Plan subcommittee to undertake a detailed, element-by-



element review of the draft document. This subcommittee presented recommendations on element edits to the full CPC at each of the CPC meetings held in October 2005 through February 2006, and on April 25, 2006. This subcommittee has now completed their review of the July 2005 Draft General Plan. CPC's recommendations, and staff's responses, are documented in Attachment 10.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS:

The General Plan update is a program of citywide significance that has drawn a great deal of public comment. Many of the stakeholders that we have worked with during this process are identified in Attachment 9. The General Plan is a long-range policy document that does not result in direct impacts to specific properties or individuals.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Betsy McCullough, AICP  
Acting Planning Director

---

James T. Waring, Deputy Chief  
Land Use and Economic Development

WARING/MCCULLOUGH/NSB/ah

- Attachments:
- [1. Draft Foundation for Planning Section](#)
  - [2. Draft Strategic Framework Section](#)
  - [3. Draft Land Use and Community Planning Element](#)
  - [4. Draft Mobility Element](#)
  - [5. Draft Urban Design Element](#)
  - [6. Draft Conservation Element](#)
  - [7. Draft Historic Preservation Element](#)
  - [8. Draft Noise Element](#)
  - [9. General Plan Update Stakeholders](#)
  - [10. Community Planners Committee Recommendations](#)

Note: Due to the size of the attachments, distribution will be limited to Committee binders. These attachments are available on the City's website at <http://clerkdoc.sannet.gov/cmrcmr/CMRFullListSearch.html>, and a copy is available in the Office of the City Clerk.