



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: April 19, 2007 REPORT NO. PC-07-071

ATTENTION: Planning Commission  
Agenda of April 26, 2007

SUBJECT: General Plan Update Program Status Report

REFERENCE: Manager's Report Nos. 03-019, 03 11503 204, 03-205, 03-206, 04 149  
05-03805 161  
Council Report Nos. 06-025, 06 05606 095  
Planning Commission Report Nos. P-03-183 P-03-227 P-03-333,  
PC-04-220P C-05-070P C-05-183P C-05-26, PC-05-304 PC-06-092  
PC-06-149, PC-06-215, PC-06-216

### SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION ONLY TO PROVIDE THE PLANNING COMMISSION WITH A GENERAL PLAN PROGRAM STATUS REPORT. NO ACTION IS REQUESTED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION.

### BACKGROUND

In 1999, the City started the planning process for the Strategic Framework Element (SFE) of the General Plan. The goal of the SFE process was to establish a working vision and set of core values for the City that would guide future planning and development review efforts, and be the foundation for the comprehensive update to the 1979 *Progress Guide and General Plan*. The SFE planning process integrated the work contained in planning documents generated by citizen committees, workshops, and City Council actions from previous years. It included five phases of public outreach as follows:

- Growth projections forums;
- Growth issues forums and Citizen Committee formed to guide development of the element;
- Alternative strategies and preferred strategy selection workshops and meetings,
- Citywide community planning group workshops; and
- Public workshops and hearings.

In October of 2002, the San Diego City Council adopted the SFE and certified the Final Environmental Impact Report (LDR No. 40-1027; SCH No. 2001061069 dated August 27, 2002).

In January of 2003, following the SFE adoption, the City began the comprehensive General Plan update to the *Progress Guide and General Plan* (1979 General Plan). Since January 2003, over 200 workshops, forums, presentations, and working meetings have been held with community planning groups, the Community Planners Committee (CPC), the general public, and stakeholder and interest groups. Workshops and presentations have been given to the full San Diego City Council, the Land Use and Housing Committee of the City Council, and the Planning Commission. The public and stakeholders have had opportunities to both receive information and provide input on the Draft General Plan at each of these public meetings.

Milestones in the General Plan update process include:

- January 2003 – Following the SFE adoption, the City began the comprehensive General Plan update. The Housing Element update was underway under separate cover and timeline to facilitate compliance with state requirements. Over a two-year period a series of panel discussions/public forums and stakeholder meetings were held, and preliminary drafts of elements, or sections of elements, were distributed to interested parties.
- February 2004 – The City Council approved five innovative projects to become Pilot Village demonstration projects for the City of Villages strategy of smart growth in San Diego. The projects that were selected are dispersed throughout the City and represent a variety of approaches and styles to demonstrate how City of Villages can revitalize existing neighborhoods while retaining their individual character. The pilot villages are in various stages in the planning process.
- July 2004 – The General Plan Monitoring Report was prepared to fulfill an Action Plan requirement that staff monitor progress in implementing the SFE.
- April 2005 – The Discussion Draft General Plan was released for public review.
- May – June 2005 – The Discussion Draft General Plan was presented to nearly all of the community planning groups and numerous interest groups and stakeholders. Edits were made to the Discussion Draft General Plan, based on written comments and comments provided at public meetings.
- July 2005 – The July 2005 Draft General Plan was released for public review. Planning Commission, Land Use and Housing Committee, community planning groups, and the public expressed concerns with this draft.
- August 2005 – July 2006 – The Draft General Plan was edited based on input from the public, elected officials, and Planning Commissioners. A subcommittee of the CPC provided a detailed review of the July 2005 Draft General Plan.
- May – June 2006 – Revised working drafts of the General Plan elements were posted to the City's website.
- October 2006 – The October 2006 Draft General Plan was released for public review and work began on a Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR) for the General Plan Update.
- December 2006 – The Housing Element update was adopted.
- April 25 2007 – Anticipated date to release the Draft EIR for public review.

## DISCUSSION

### **Final Public Review Draft General Plan**

The Final Public Review Draft General Plan (Draft General Plan) was released for public review in October 2006 (available at <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/genplan/draftfinal.shtml>). It sets out a long-range vision and comprehensive policy framework for how the City should grow and

develop, provide public services, and maintain the qualities that define the City of San Diego over the next 20 to 30 years. The Draft General Plan does not change land use designations or zoning on individual properties, but rather provides the framework and policy direction for future community plan updates, discretionary project review, and implementation programs.

Since less than four percent of the City's land remains vacant and available for new development, the Draft General Plan policies focus on the reinvestment in existing communities needed to support additional development. The Draft General Plan policies support development patterns that emphasize focusing on future housing, retail, employment uses, educational, and civic uses in mixed-use village centers of different scales. By directing growth primarily toward village centers, the Draft General Plan supports the preservation of established residential neighborhoods and the management of growth over the long term. The City has developed the Draft General Plan within the context of state requirements, regional plans and population forecasts, and the issues and needs unique to the City of San Diego.

California mandates that all local jurisdictions prepare a general plan that establishes policies and standards for future development, housing affordability, and resource protection. With the exception of the Housing Element, the state does not mandate when a general plan should be updated, but it does encourage jurisdictions to keep general plans current through regular updates. A general plan must include the following mandatory elements: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Noise, Open Space, and Safety. However, the state provides flexibility in the presentation of elements and the inclusion of optional elements that best meet the needs of a jurisdiction. Attachment 1 identifies where state required and optional elements are addressed in the City of San Diego's Draft General Plan.

The Draft General Plan is comprised of an introductory Strategic Framework chapter and nine elements: Land Use and Community Planning; Mobility; Economic Prosperity; Public Facilities, Services and Safety; Urban Design; Recreation; Historic Preservation; Conservation; and Noise. The update to the Housing Element was adopted by the City Council under a separate cover on December 5, 2006.

The Draft General Plan's guiding principles and primary objectives are to achieve:

1. An open space network formed by parks, canyons, river valleys, habitats, beaches, and ocean;
2. Diverse residential communities formed by the open space network;
3. Compact and walkable mixed-use villages of different scales within communities;
4. Employment centers for a strong economy;
5. An integrated regional transportation network of transit, roadways, and freeways that efficiently link communities and villages to each other and to employment centers;
6. High quality, affordable, and well-maintained public facilities to serve the City's population, workers, and visitors;
7. Historic districts and sites that respect our heritage;
8. Balanced communities that offer opportunities for all San Diegans and share citywide responsibilities;
9. A clean and sustainable environment; and,
10. A high aesthetic standard.

The Draft General Plan reflects these principles through new policy direction in its nine elements, combined with the adopted Housing Element. Each of the elements, and the most controversial issues associated with each, are summarized in Attachment 2.

### **Draft Program EIR**

The City has prepared a Draft Program EIR for the Draft General Plan. A Program EIR as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) 15168, is:

“ . . . an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either geographically, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions, in connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effect which can be mitigated in similar ways.”

The Draft Program EIR outlines the environmental setting for the Draft General Plan and identifies potential environmental impacts, the significance of the potential impacts, and a mitigation framework to avoid or reduce potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. It also addresses cumulative impacts, growth-inducing impacts, effects found not to be significant, irreversible environmental effects, and alternatives.

The City of San Diego is the lead agency for preparation and adoption of the Draft General Plan Program EIR. This Program EIR is intended for use by City of San Diego decision-makers, other responsible or interested agencies and the general public in evaluating the potential environmental impacts that may result from the implementation of the Draft General Plan.

### **General Plan Implementation**

Implementation of the General Plan will be accomplished through a broad range of legislative and regulatory actions that ultimately influence private and public development. Key implementation tools include: community plan and facilities financing plan updates, Land Development Code amendments, redevelopment plans, Capital Improvement Program projects, and development permits. Specific implementation measures that will be brought forward concurrent with the General Plan include: a Public Facilities Financing Strategy, a Quimby Act/Park Fee Ordinance, and Land Development Code amendments to reflect changes to the plan amendment initiation criteria and to the 1979 Progress Guide and General Plan growth management tier system.

When the SFE was adopted in 2002, a Five-Year Action Plan was brought forward as a companion item to identify specific measures needed to implement the element. Many of the identified action items were related to completing the comprehensive General Plan update. To close out this Five-Year Action Plan, staff will bring forward an updated General Plan Monitoring Report that identifies actions completed, underway, or not completed at the time of General Plan adoption. Within sixty days subsequent to General Plan adoption, a new Mayor's Action Plan will be prepared to identify implementation measures associated with each element of the updated General Plan.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

Public outreach has taken place throughout the General Plan update process. Outreach efforts have included public forums, mass e-mail distributions, workshops, presentations and meetings, and planning group communications including more than twenty working sessions with the CPC and the CPC General Plan subcommittee (combined total). To date, the CPC has completed their review of the Noise, Historic Preservation, Conservation, Land Use, and Urban Design Elements. The CPC anticipates concluding their review of the Draft General Plan at their meeting scheduled for May 22, 2007. The final CPC recommendations will be documented for General Plan adoption hearings.

To provide an additional opportunity for the public to comment on the Draft General Plan, three public meetings have been scheduled as follows:

- Wednesday, May 23, 2007, 5:30 – 7:00 PM – Valencia Park/Malcolm X Library
- Wednesday, May 30, 2007, 5:30 – 7:00 PM – Mira Mesa Library
- Saturday, June 9, 2007, 10:00 – 11:30 AM – Mission Valley Library

City Planning & Community Investment staff is working on publicizing these meetings, and will report back on public comments received following their completion

## CONCLUSION

Major remaining General Plan work program items include: completion of the Program EIR, documentation of public comments, preparation of General Plan edits as needed based on public input and staff refinements, and public hearings. It is anticipated that the General Plan will be brought forward to a Planning Commission hearing on August 2, 2007. Additional key upcoming dates are identified on the General Plan Update Calendar (see Attachment 3).

Respectfully submitted,

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- Attachments:
1. Draft General Plan Mandatory and Optional Elements
  2. Mayor's Fact Sheet for the October 2006 Final Public Review Draft General Plan, dated October 25, 2006
  3. General Plan Update Calendar dated April 9, 2007