



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FACT SHEET

**MAYOR SANDERS ANNOUNCES FINAL PUBLIC REVIEW OF
CITY'S DRAFT 'BLUEPRINT' FOR FUTURE GROWTH
OVER NEXT 20 YEARS**

*Final Public Review Draft General Plan Released;
Most Comprehensive Update Since 1979; Final Public Comments Sought*

Mayor Jerry Sanders announced today that the City's draft General Plan, its constitution for development, has been released for final public review. The General Plan is the foundation upon which all land use decisions in the City are based. It expresses community vision and values, and it embodies public policy for the distribution of future land use, both public and private.

The draft General Plan proactively addresses the challenges of growth by:

- seeking solutions to infrastructure challenges and housing needs
- establishing better linkages between transit and land use planning
- preserving important open spaces
- strengthening existing communities
- creating new neighborhood centers

San Diego's General Plan was last updated comprehensively in 1979—a time when the City had thousands of acres of undeveloped land. Because less than 4 percent of the City's land now remains vacant and available for new development, the plan's policies represent a shift in focus from how to develop vacant land to how to design infill development and reinvest in existing communities.

“The draft plan brings renewed emphasis to preserving open space and habitat. It will also help stabilize more than 90 percent of San Diego's neighborhoods by clustering future development in mixed-use areas of various scales. By design, these neighborhoods will be walkable, they'll provide a variety of housing, and they will be served by existing and future transit systems. To do this well, the draft plan adds and strengthens policies related to public facility financing and urban design. The General Plan is the citywide strategy and related policies under which the City's community plans will be updated over time.”

-- Mayor Jerry Sanders

A NEW GENERAL PLAN FOR SAN DIEGO'S FUTURE GROWTH

- The General Plan provides policy guidance to balance the needs of a growing city while enhancing quality of life for current and future San Diegans.
- It presents 10 elements that overall provide a comprehensive “blueprint” for the City of San Diego’s growth over the next 20 plus years.
- It provides a primary strategy, the City of Villages, for how the City can enhance its many communities and neighborhoods as growth occurs over time.

WHAT IS THE CITY OF VILLAGES STRATEGY?

The City of Villages strategy focuses growth into mixed-use activity centers that are pedestrian-friendly districts linked to an improved regional transit system. The strategy was first adopted as a part of the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan in 2002.

The strategy draws upon the character and strengths of San Diego’s:

- natural environment
- neighborhoods
- commercial centers
- institutions
- employment centers

The strategy is designed to sustain the long-term economic, environmental, and social health of the City and its many communities. It recognizes the value of San Diego's distinctive neighborhoods and open spaces that together form the City as a whole.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A “VILLAGE”?

- A “village” is a place where a mix of residential, commercial, employment, and civic uses are present and integrated.
- Each village will be unique to the community in which it is located, yet all villages will be pedestrian-friendly, and characterized by inviting, accessible and attractive streets and public spaces.
- Individual villages will offer a variety of housing types affordable for people with different incomes and needs.
- By directing growth primarily toward village centers, the strategy works to preserve established residential neighborhoods, to efficiently provide public facilities, and manage the City’s growth over the long term.

WHY IS THE FINAL PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT IMPORTANT?

- The Final Public Review Draft represents an important step toward completion of the General Plan update.
- The draft incorporates new policies to further implement the Mayor’s goals, and to be responsive to Land Use & Housing Committee, Planning Commission, Community Planners Committee, general public, and other stakeholders’ comments.
- The update of the General Plan also satisfies state planning law which requires each city to adopt a general plan to guide its future development, and mandates that the plan be periodically updated to assure its continuing relevance and value, usually over a 20-year horizon.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The General Plan includes the Strategic Framework, an introductory section of the General Plan that describes the role and purpose of the General Plan, outlines the City of Villages strategy, presents 10 Guiding Principles that helped to shape the General Plan, and summarizes the plan’s 10 elements.

THE 10 ELEMENTS OF THE GENERAL PLAN

- Land Use and Community Planning Element
- Mobility Element
- Recreation Element
- Urban Design Element
- Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element
- Economic Prosperity Element
- Conservation Element
- Historic Preservation Element
- Noise Element
- Housing Element

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING ELEMENT

The Land Use and Community Planning Element of the General Plan contains policy direction for implementing the City of Villages strategy, provides citywide land use policies, and establishes community plans as integral components of the General Plan. It includes a General Plan Land Use and Streets Map, which is a compilation of adopted community plan land use and circulation system maps.

What’s New?

- The 1979 General Plan did not include a citywide land use element, relying instead on community plans

- Policies support changes in development patterns to combine multiple uses in village centers
- Sets the stage for more focused community plans that will work in concert with the General Plan
- Categorizes 160 community plan designations currently in use into 26 recommended community plan designations for application in future plan updates
- Relies upon community plan updates/amendments to designate village sites
- No land use designation or zoning changes will occur concurrently with the update

What’s Controversial?

- Overall, some planning groups and citizen activists are opposed to the City of Villages strategy as it plans for future growth to occur in the City, and they would prefer to minimize new growth.
- Some planning groups would prefer the existing community planning program where, in practice, the General Plan is rarely used and each community plan functions as a complete general/community plan for their geographic area.

MOBILITY ELEMENT

The Mobility Element advances a strategy for congestion relief and increased transportation choices in a manner that strengthens the City of Villages land use vision. Policies call for working proactively with regional agencies to plan and fund transportation projects/services that the City needs. The “Transit/Land Use Connections Map” shows the relationship between existing and planned transit services and the City’s planned land uses.

What’s New?

- “Toolboxes” (illustrated tables) are proposed that provide citywide direction while recognizing the need for site-specific solutions to community parking and traffic issues
- The 2007 General Plan will have a greater emphasis on considering all forms of transportation—pedestrian, bicycling, mass transit, city streets, freeways, etc., than in the past.

What’s Controversial?

- City of Villages strategy relies on an improved transit system, but regional funding is not adequate to dramatically improve transit services at this time

RECREATION ELEMENT

The Recreation Element seeks to acquire, develop, operate/maintain, increase and enhance public recreation opportunities and facilities throughout the City. The element contains guidelines for park and recreation facilities and presents alternative strategies to meet those guidelines.

What's New?

- Calls for the creation of a comprehensive, citywide Parks Master Plan to guide park and open space acquisition, design and development, recreational programming and needed maintenance over the next 20-30 years.
- Maintains existing guidelines for a minimum of 2.8 useable acres of population-based park land to be provided for every 1,000 residents, but allows for the use of “equivalencies” to meet no more than 50% of the total acres.

What's Controversial?

- Allowing the use of equivalencies which: 1) may result in additional recreational facilities, but not necessarily additional park land, and 2) allows portions of resource-based parks (e.g., Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park) to satisfy population-based park needs.

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

The General Plan's Urban Design Element establishes a set of design principles from which future physical design decisions can be based. Policies call for respecting San Diego's natural topography and distinctive neighborhoods, providing public art, and encouraging the development of walkable, transit-oriented communities.

PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES AND SAFETY ELEMENT

The General Plan's Facilities, Services and Safety Element includes policies on the prioritization and provision of public facilities and services, evaluation of new growth, guidelines for implementing a financing strategy, and guidelines for the provision of specific facilities.

What's New?

- Recognizes that there is a public facilities deficit
- Calls for facilities deficiencies to be remedied through diverse funding resources
- Calls for broader areas of benefit when establishing assessment districts
- Updates facilities guidelines to take into account infill development needs

What's Controversial?

- Some people would prefer to stop development from occurring until public facilities deficiencies are remedied. The plan policies instead support continued growth, as long as development pays its fair share and does not make matters worse.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY ELEMENT

The Economic Prosperity Element of the General Plan includes policies aimed at supporting an innovative and sustainable local economy, and achieving a rising standard of living for San Diego's workforce.

This element includes policies to protect remaining industrial lands.

What's New and Controversial?

- Inclusion of a Prime Industrial Land map that identifies lands that should be preserved for industrial use. The map does not redesignate property; it is to be used in plan updates, amendments, and discretionary project review.
- An industrial lands conversion/collocation policy that sets forth criteria for where residential uses are appropriately mixed with employment uses.

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

The Conservation Element of the General Plan calls for the City to be a model for sustainable development and to preserve quality of life in San Diego.

Policies under this element are designed to:

- conserve natural resources
- protect unique landforms
- preserve and manage our open space and canyon systems, beaches and watercourses
- prevent and reduce pollution
- promote clean technology industries

What's New?

- Policies to encourage clean tech industries to benefit San Diego's environment and economy.
- Incorporation of policies (here and in other elements) to support aspects of the *Canyonlands* initiative.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

The Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan strives to guide the preservation, protection, restoration and rehabilitation of historical and cultural resources so that a clear sense of how the City gained its present form and substance can be maintained.

NOISE ELEMENT

The Noise Element of the General Plan contains policies addressing compatible land uses and the incorporation of noise abatement measures for new uses to protect people from living and working in an excessive noise environment. It includes a matrix that identifies compatible, conditionally compatible, and incompatible land uses by noise decibel level.

HOUSING ELEMENT

The Housing Element of the General Plan serves as a comprehensive plan with specific measurable goals, policies, and programs to address the City's critical housing needs. The Housing Element is provided under separate cover and timeline from the rest of the General Plan due to the need for frequent Housing Element updates, and to facilitate compliance with state reporting requirements.

INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY: THE CITY'S PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

From January 2003 to the present the City has engaged the public through the following:

- A series of forums entitled "From Controversy to Solutions" was held. The public was invited to the forums which were televised, and often repeated, on the City's public access television channel, City TV24. City Council members and other community leaders participated as panelists. Each forum provided 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 was developed with over 2,100 individuals and organizations that expressed interest in the general plan update process. 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. 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.
- Nearly 20 public workshops (combined total) were held by the City Council's Land Use and Housing Committee and the Planning Commission to discuss General Plan issues and policies.
- More than 200 meetings with community planning groups, stakeholders, and other interest groups were held to present information and receive input.
- The Community Planners Committee (CPC), the CPC General Plan Subcommittee and staff held more than a dozen meetings to complete an exhaustive review of draft General Plan policies, which resulted in many edits that have been incorporated in the Final Public Review Draft General Plan.

OPPORTUNITY FOR FINAL PUBLIC COMMENT AND TIMELINE

The draft General Plan is available on the City of San Diego's Web site at www.sandiego.gov. Printed copies will be available for review at all City libraries and community service centers, and at the City Planning Division's office, City Administration Building, 202 C Street in Downtown by 11/6/06. The draft will also be available (by 11/6/06) on compact disc together with introductory sections of the draft General Plan, and as a complete printed document, for the cost of reproduction. For more information, contact (619) 235-5200.

The timeline for submittal of public comments will be linked to the project's Environmental Impact Report public review period, which is not yet confirmed, but is **anticipated to begin in early January 2007**. Public comments will be taken into consideration for inclusion in an errata sheet, or in a reprinted draft document that will be presented to the City Council for adoption in the spring of 2007.