

Vision and Core Values

This General Plan provides a vision, core values and policy guidance to balance the needs of a growing city while enhancing quality of life for current and future San Diegans. It provides a strategy, the City of Villages, for how the City can enhance its many communities and neighborhoods as growth occurs over time. It does not, however, encourage or mandate a specific amount of growth. Rather, it presents ten elements that overall provide a comprehensive “blueprint” for the City of San Diego’s evolution in the next twenty-plus years.

Vision Statement

We have a special role as stewards of a remarkable resource, a city on the Pacific of great cultural and physical diversity. In the 21st century, San Diego must continue to evolve in harmony with its exceptional natural environment, always treasuring the unique character of its neighborhoods, striving for equity, and celebrating the rich mosaic that is San Diego.

Core Values

The following values provide the foundation of the General Plan and they will help preserve and build on what is good in San Diego. These core values were developed with the guidance of the Strategic Framework Citizen Committee and through a multi-year dialogue with San Diegans in numerous community forums. They fall into three categories: our physical environment, our economy, our culture and society.

Our Physical Environment

We Value:

- The natural environment.
- The City’s extraordinary setting, defined by its open spaces, natural habitat and unique topography.
- A future that meets today’s needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- The conservation, preservation, and environmental quality of natural resources.
- Parks and public spaces, accessible by foot, transit, bicycle, and car, as areas for neighborhood, community and regional interaction and convenient recreation.
- The availability of public facilities, infrastructure, transit, information infrastructure, and services as essential to neighborhood quality and as necessary companions to density increases.
- A compact, efficient, and environmentally sensitive pattern of development.
- Walkable communities with tree-lined streets.
- A convenient, efficient, aesthetically pleasing, and multi-modal transportation system.

Our Economy

We value:

- The health, economic prosperity, and well-being of our citizens.
- A diverse economy to achieve a rising standard of living for all San Diegans.
- Mutually beneficial cultural and economic ties with Mexico and our neighbors in Latin America.
- Regional coordination to resolve regional growth issues, and regional collaboration to meet economic prosperity goals.

Our Culture and Society

We value:

- Social equity.
- Safe and secure neighborhoods.
- The physical, social and cultural diversity of our City and its neighborhoods.
- Housing affordability throughout the city and an overall diversity of housing types and costs.
- Schools as an integral part of our neighborhoods and equitable access to quality educational institutions.
- The City's multiplicity of arts, cultural, and historical assets.

Foundation for Planning

San Diego has the location and the physical foundation in general for an important, perhaps a great city. Its people are awake to its needs, and are resolved to meet them.

-John Nolen, 1908

The City's Modern Planning History

Planning consultant John Nolen wrote these words as a preface to San Diego's first grand vision statement of the 20th century. He looked at a young city (incorporated on March 27, 1850) with a population of less than 40,000 and imagined what it could become.

Against the backdrop of what Nolen considered San Diego's "permanent attractiveness beyond all other communities," he envisioned development of a civic center of downtown public buildings, more urban open space, parks and playgrounds, and a bayfront with promenades and public amenities. He urged San Diegans to build a city that capitalized on its many natural assets and enviable climate. Nolen's goals are still relevant today and they were the basis for many of the planning decisions that shaped San Diego in the past century.

Since the Nolen Plan was commissioned, San Diego has grown from a small border town to a thriving metropolis of nearly 1.3 million people, complete with many distinct and diverse neighborhoods. Approximately one-half of the county's growth traditionally occurs within the City. The City's growth and evolution have served as a catalyst for the development of numerous planning visions and plan documents. Through the years, all of the plans have shared a somewhat common vision. They have sought preservation of unique neighborhoods, good jobs and housing for all San Diegans, protection and enhancement of the environment, development of a diverse economy, an efficient and useful public transit system, well-maintained public facilities and services, and careful management of the growth and development of the city.

During the 1960s, the City engaged in a comprehensive planning process to prepare the first Progress Guide and General Plan, and in 1967 the City Council adopted and the electorate ratified that document as the first General Plan for the City of San Diego. In 1974, planning consultants Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard, with funding received through a grant from the prominent San Diego Marston family, produced *Temporary Paradise?* This groundbreaking study focused upon the natural base of the city and region; it recommended that new growth complement the regional landscape to preserve its precious natural resources and San Diego's high quality of life. *Temporary Paradise?* served as the foundation for, and major influence on, the subsequent comprehensive update of the Progress Guide and General Plan adopted in 1979.

The City experienced both significant growth and a serious recession over the two following decades. Residential development reached the city's jurisdictional boundaries. Also, the City's economic base evolved from tourism and defense to include high technology research and manufacturing, and international trade. The citizens of San Diego reacted to the growth and change by participating in numerous visioning efforts; they produced several documents, ballot initiatives, and programs of note: Urban Form Action Plan, Regional Growth Management Strategy, the Livable Neighborhoods Initiative, Towards Permanent Paradise, the Renaissance Commission Report, and many others.

Based upon the planning principles and shared common values in all of these documents, the City Council adopted the Strategic Framework Element in 2002 to guide the comprehensive update of the entire 1979 Progress Guide and General Plan and the implementation of the Action Plan. The 1979 Progress Guide and General Plan primarily addressed the development of vacant land and it was largely successful in ensuring that new communities were built with adequate public facilities. It presumed, however, that the City's Capital Improvements Program would provide public facilities needed by infill growth in urbanized communities. Due to reduced City revenue available for public facilities following adoption of the Progress Guide and General Plan, new facilities were not built concurrent with infill growth. While a program of creating financing plans for urbanized communities was subsequently adopted, collecting a "fair share" from infill development has not provided enough funds to build new facilities. Additionally, new development cannot be held accountable for the facilities deficiencies that preexisted in urbanized communities. New strategies, therefore, are necessary to address existing public facilities shortfalls and growth pressures within those neighborhoods.

Role and Purpose of the General Plan

Planning is a critical component in assisting a city in its evolution, as well as protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. The State of California considers the general plan to be a "constitution for development," the foundation upon which all land use decisions in a city or county are to be based. It expresses community vision and values, and it embodies public policy relative to the distribution of future land use, both public and private. Recognizing this, State law requires each city (and county) to adopt a general plan to guide its future, and mandates through the Government Code that the plan be periodically updated to assure its relevance and value. It also requires the inclusion of seven mandatory elements: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Noise, Open Space, and Safety. In addition, State law permits the inclusion of optional elements which address needs, objectives, or requirements particular to that city or county.

The land use element of the City's General Plan is called the Land Use and Community Planning Element, and it incorporates more than 50 community, specific, precise, and subarea plans. Few jurisdictions in the State have the size, diversity, and land use patterns that the City has that necessitate community-based land use plans. Nine additional elements address issues of citywide and regional significance: Mobility, Economic Prosperity, Public Facilities/Services and Safety, Urban Design, Recreation, Cultural Resources, Conservation, Noise, and Housing. State law requires internal consistency, meaning that no policy conflicts can exist, either textual or diagrammatic, between components of the General Plan, including optional elements, and that no one element may take precedence over another. This also means that community plans, while addressing community-specific issues, must be consistent with the policies of the rest of the General Plan and with each other.

The updated General Plan offers new policy direction in a variety of areas dealing with urban form, neighborhood character, historic preservation, public facilities, recreation, conservation, mobility, housing affordability, economic prosperity, environmental justice and equitable development. As we find that less than 10 percent of the City's land is vacant and available for new development, the City must shift from developing vacant land to reinvesting in existing communities. Therefore, new policies have been created in order to support changes in development patterns that emphasize combining housing, employment centers, schools, and civic

uses in high level activity areas in the city. The General Plan also recognizes and explains the critical roles of the community planning program and the various community plans as the vehicles to tailor the City of Villages strategy for each community in the city. It also outlines the plan amendment process, other implementation strategies, and considers the continued growth of the city beyond the year 2020.

Other Applicable Planning Law

In addition to the State Planning and Zoning Law, which addresses a variety of planning related issues, including but not limited to the preparation, adoption or amendment of a general plan, there are other State and Federal laws that also influence development of local policies found in the City's General Plan. For instance, Federal laws such as the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and Clean Air Act have been instrumental in shaping local policies designed to achieve stated purposes under these acts. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 was enacted by the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to provide for the conservation and protection of endangered and threatened species of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitat. Subsequent to this enactment, the California Endangered Species Act was ratified, which generally parallels the main provisions of the federal act. Based on principles from both laws and the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) was developed at the local level. It is a comprehensive, long-term habitat conservation planning program that covers approximately 900 square miles (582,243 acres) in southwestern San Diego County. It was developed cooperatively by participating jurisdictions/special districts in partnership with federal/state wildlife agencies, property owners, and representatives of the development industry and environmental groups.

The Clean Water Act, formerly known as the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, which was renamed in 1977. This law is intended to protect water quality. As the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) implements sections of the Clean Water Act, and State laws, it develops programs to prevent, reduce, or eliminate ground and surface water contamination and requires point source dischargers to obtain waste discharge permits. Under this permit, the City was required to develop a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) which specifies year-round storm drain monitoring, pollution elimination programs, code compliance, reporting to the RWQCB, and public education.

The primary objective of the Clean Air Act is to establish Federal standards for various pollutants from both stationary and mobile sources and to provide for the regulation of polluting emissions via State implementation plans. The act stipulates requirements to prevent significant deterioration of air quality where air quality exceeds national standards, and to provide for improved air quality in areas which do not meet Federal standards. The General Plan's Mobility Element and Conservation Element contain policies designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as pollution resulting from motor vehicles.

As previously mentioned, State laws also play a role in shaping City policies as they are related to a variety of topics, including but not limited to the following: housing, redevelopment and airport land use planning. State law requires preparation of a Housing Element every five years to set forth housing policies and to assess how successful the City has been in meeting the goals and objectives of the previous Housing Element. A key requirement is that the City show how many units of housing could potentially be developed on land that is zoned and designated for housing and that is currently vacant or underdeveloped.

Under the California Community Redevelopment Law, redevelopment is a tool created by State law to assist local governments in eliminating blight from a designated area, where blight consists of the physical and economic conditions within an area that cause a reduction of, or lack of, proper utilization of that area. Redevelopment can also assist with aspects of development, reconstruction and rehabilitation of residential, commercial, industrial and retail districts. Specific redevelopment related policies are found under the Economic Prosperity Element, and these policies are intended to help the City redevelop and revitalize underutilized areas.

With regards to airport land use planning, State law's purpose is to protect public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring the orderly expansion of airports and the adoption of land use measures that minimize the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within areas around public airports, to the extent that these areas are not already devoted to incompatible uses. Airport land use compatibility issues are further addressed under the Land Use and Community Planning Element to meet the purpose and intent of the law.

Coastal Act

The California Legislature adopted the California Coastal Act in 1976 to “protect, maintain, and, where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment and its natural and artificial resources (Public Resources Code Section 30001.5) for the benefit of current and future residents and visitors.” The law applies to property within the Coastal Zone as delineated on a set of maps adopted by the Legislature. The law establishes the Coastal Commission to regulate development in portions of the Coastal Zone and to work in partnership with local government, specifically 15 coastal counties and 58 cities, of which the City of San Diego is one, to manage the conservation and development of coastal resources through comprehensive planning and regulatory programs, and Local Coastal Programs (LCPs). A Local Coastal Program is the Coastal Act term referring to certified land use plans and implementing ordinances (see sidebar below).

In the City, Coastal Act policies are integrated into each of the community plans, as they are updated, to govern the land uses within the coastal zone and to provide protection to coastal resources as further specified under Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. This is true of community plan areas located either wholly or partially within the coastal zone. See Figure FP-1 for the Coastal Zone Boundary and community plans that implement the Coastal Act.

Regional Context/Inter-jurisdictional Coordination

In a county that continues to grow both through redevelopment of existing areas and in new communities, regional coordination is critical to help guide the location of new growth and the placement of regional-serving facilities.

The City of San Diego plays a leading role in regional planning. This role includes working with other cities throughout San Diego County and agencies in allocating the region's population projections and necessary housing units, refining the regional arterial transportation network, expanding transit services, developing a long-term airport solution for the region, assuring availability of adequate sources of water and utilities for urban needs, and achieving goals for a regional open space network.

The City continues to coordinate and work closely with San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), the region's land use and transit planning agency. The City of San Diego General Plan is designed to complement and support the Regional Comprehensive Plan adopted by SANDAG in 2004, which addresses the region's growth, while preserving natural resources and limiting urban sprawl. The objective to increase residential and employment concentrations in areas with the best existing and future transit connections supports regional planning goals and transit vision. In addition, it is important to recognize that San Diego's location on the U.S.-Mexico border offers many distinct opportunities and continued coordination on binational planning is needed to promote collaborative solutions. SANDAG's Binational Planning and Interregional Planning Program, through its Borders Committee of the SANDAG Board of Directors, addresses important binational, intergovernmental, and interregional issues, such as transportation infrastructure, economic development, and environmental planning as well as preservation.

San Diego Planning Area/Sphere of Influence/Municipal Boundary Adjustments

Under the authority of the State, the Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCO) regulates, through approval or denial, any boundary changes proposed by a city. Although LAFCO does not have the power to initiate boundary changes on its own, LAFCO coordinates the orderly development of a community through reconciling differences between city and county plans, so the most efficient urban service arrangements are created for the benefit of area residents and property owners.

The City of San Diego's lead role in regional planning includes working with other jurisdictions and agencies in refining the City's boundaries. The expansion of city boundaries can help discourage urban sprawl by providing organized and planned growth, the efficient delivery of urban services, such as police, fire, water and sanitation, and the preservation of open space. By discouraging sprawl, the City can limit the misuse of land resources and promote a more cost-efficient delivery of urban services. Both the State and County of San Diego support the expansion of cities to provide urban services, rather than the expansion of special districts.

The City of San Diego is generally bounded by the County of San Diego and City of Escondido to the north; cities of Poway, Santee, El Cajon, La Mesa, and Lemon Grove to the east; the Mexican border to the south; and the Pacific Ocean as well as cities of Solana Beach, Del Mar and Imperial Beach to the west. The city covers nearly 330 square miles and is located in the southwestern corner of California.

A "Sphere of Influence" which is used to determine the most logical and efficient future boundaries for cities, is the physical boundary and service area that a city is expected to serve. In 1985, LAFCO determined the City of San Diego's Sphere of Influence to be co-terminus with its jurisdictional boundaries. The entire planning area for the City is also comprised of 50 community planning areas where 42 of these areas have recognized community planning groups that are responsible for advising the City on community goals and development proposals as well as providing official recommendations to the City on land use related matters.

Areas shown in the Figure FP-2, Prospective Annexation Areas map, include both islands of
February 2006 Working Draft

unincorporated land within the city, and unincorporated areas that share common geographic features and are bordered by the same natural boundaries as the contiguous city area. Land within the areas designated on the map can be reviewed for the possibility of annexation upon the initiative of either the landowner or the City. Additionally, from time to time, the City may determine that services could be provided more efficiently to areas just inside or outside our boundaries. In those cases, there may be consideration of jurisdictional boundary adjustments after appropriate land use, fiscal and economic analyses are prepared.

Relationship to Other City Policy/Plan Documents

Other City policies and plan documents provide support to the General Plan as they further strengthen the citywide policies stated in the General Plan by providing specific guidance on a variety of development-related matters. For instance, several City Council Policies adopted by resolution of the City Council provide direction on a variety of development-related subject areas and they also establish procedures by which certain actions and/or functions are performed. Existing Council Policies cover topics, such as public infrastructure, facilities and services, engineering matters, economic development, code enforcement, and real estate management. Additionally, the City has adopted master plans, such as the Bicycle Master Plan, park master plans, Utilities Undergrounding master plan, Metropolitan and Municipal Wastewater master plans, and master street tree plans that guide certain aspects associated with development.

While master plans and other policy documents exist in the City, the General Plan is the primary land use planning document that establishes citywide policies and provides guidance for future development in the City. Therefore, all other policy or planning documents must be consistent with the General Plan's goals and policies.

In order to address the need for public facilities in the various communities as related to their growth, the City has public facilities financing plans which are companion documents to community plans. These documents identify lists of major public facilities in the areas of transportation (streets, storm drains, traffic signals, etc.), libraries, park and recreation facilities, and fire stations that are needed to serve the needs of the community over the upcoming years. These documents also identify fees that are necessary to help mitigate costs of public facilities required as a result of development in the communities.

In terms of regulatory policies, the Land Development Code chapters 11 through 15 of the Municipal Code contain the City's planning, zoning, subdivision and building regulations that help implement the General Plan. Also, a Land Development Manual provides information to assist in the processing and review of applications by covering aspects of submittal requirements, required fees and deposits as well as establishing development standards and guidelines.

Plan Organization: Elements/Topics/Focus

The General Plan is comprised of ten elements that together provide direction for growth and development in the city in the next twenty-plus years. All of the elements are interlinked through common goals where there is synergy among the elements. No one element takes precedent over another and each element must be considered in the context of the entire General Plan. Balancing a variety of important issues is a constant challenge; however, the General Plan has reconciled any apparent inconsistency between goals and policies of the various elements. It

is the vehicle for dealing with competing interests. The ten elements are listed further below, but first, it is important to mention that the Strategic Framework Element that was adopted in October of 2002 established the vision and guiding policies upon which this General Plan is based. It included citywide goals, policies and a comprehensive strategy, known as the City of Villages, to determine where and how new growth and development should occur to ensure the long-term environmental, social, and economic health of the City and its many communities.

Land Use and Community Planning- The Land Use and Community Planning Element provides direction regarding location and method for future growth and development that will ensure creation of balanced communities, preservation as well as enhancement of the many communities and neighborhoods located within the city. This Element establishes and identifies the strong linkage between the General Plan and community plans. It also provides the overall policy direction for preparation and updates of community plans.

As the General Plan provides an overall vision, core values and policy guidance to balance the needs of the City of San Diego, the community plans provide specific policy direction that is tailored for specific community planning areas from the general citywide policies contained in the General Plan. Community plans together represent a very significant and vital component of the Land Use and Community Planning Element of the General Plan as they provide the more detailed land use designations and distribution of land uses at the smaller geographic level of community or neighborhood planning areas. Community plans also provide the level of specific detail and tailored policy recommendations that are needed when recognized community planning groups and City staff review development projects being proposed in the community.

Mobility- The Mobility Element contains policies designed to help the City manage congestion and develop a multi-modal transportation network. This Element emphasizes the importance of linking land use and transportation planning. Its policies address the need to develop a balanced transportation system that meets the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

Urban Design- The Urban Design Element offers guidance on how to create great buildings, neighborhoods, and public spaces. The policies strive to capitalize on San Diego's natural beauty and unique neighborhoods by calling for development that respects the natural setting, enhances the distinctiveness of our neighborhoods, strengthens the natural and built linkages, and creates mixed-use, walkable villages.

Economic Prosperity- The Economic Prosperity Element is a new element combining the previous Commercial, Industrial, and Redevelopment elements. It provides comprehensive and cohesive citywide policies to address employment land availability, regional infrastructure, business development, education and workforce development, the jobs-housing balance, and border issues.

Public Facilities, Services, and Safety- The Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element addresses public facility standards and guidelines and the equitable provision of public facilities and services throughout the city. The Element provides policy direction on citywide priorities for facilities, guidance for community plan facilities elements, financing options for public facilities, and establishes policies to maintain service levels as the population grows.

Recreation- The Recreation Element sets forth policies to improve equitable public access to recreational resources and facilities, protect and enhance population and resource-based parks and open space, and expand options for how communities can meet existing park and recreation standards. This Element also establishes and refines recreation standards that are flexible but provide an equivalent level of service.

Conservation- The Conservation Element addresses natural resource conservation and preservation, pollution prevention, and sustainable environmental practices. Conservation policies seek to achieve healthy natural ecosystems, and to protect and enhance the quality of life in San Diego for existing and future generations. Policy topics include landform preservation, water supply, biological diversity, waste management and efficient building design among others.

Cultural Resources- The Cultural Resources Element includes policies to ensure protection and enhancement of historic and cultural resources as future growth in San Diego shifts from building on vacant land to reinvesting in existing communities. The Element also emphasizes the need to foster greater public participation and education as part of the preservation effort as well as the need to strengthen historic preservation planning within a broader land use planning process.

Noise- The Noise Element includes policies to establish a pattern of land uses and noise abatement measures to ensure that future development and redevelopment minimizes the exposure of community residents to excessive noise. The Element is especially important as the City of San Diego begins to target growth into specific commercial infill areas consistent with transit-oriented development design guidelines and with a mix of uses.

Housing- The Housing Element is updated in accordance with the five-year cycle mandated by State law and is produced under separate cover. It includes policies and programs to assist with the provision of adequate housing to serve San Diegans of every economic level and demographic group.

With the City of Villages in mind as the main strategy or focus for how the City can enhance its many communities and neighborhoods as growth occurs over time, each of the elements identify plan issues that need to be addressed to implement this strategy and that in fact helped guide the creation of specific policies for the updated General Plan. These issues cover areas dealing with urban form, neighborhood quality, mobility, public facilities, economic prosperity, environment, conservation, noise and housing affordability. Detailed policies under each of the ten elements cover aspects and topics that provide a comprehensive understanding of the City's "blueprint" for future development.