

General Plan Public Outreach and Involvement Strategy Highlights

Rev 9/25/03

Innovative Outreach and Involvement Approaches

Since adoption of the City of Villages strategy and implementation of the Action Plan, a new strategy has been developed to leverage Planning Department resources and to help provide tipping points in the ongoing dialogue with stakeholders. The innovative approach and tools are described below. (Please note that implementation of the shaded items are subject to funding availability.)

- ◆ **Development of a Consolidated Department Mailing Database** - Over the last several months the Planning Department's stakeholder mailing notification system has gone through an extensive conversion. This has included changing the method of updating mailing label lists by hand and sending first class mailings, which are both labor-intensive and costly. Upgrading the data collection system to an Access database has allowed more effective and efficient communication with stakeholders. Some of the benefits realized include:
 1. **Use of the City's Automated Bulk Mailing System** - Having an Access database has allowed the Planning Department to send electronic mailing list files to the City's mailroom to do automated mailings. This has eliminated hours of administrative staff time in processing mailings manually. It has also has allowed large first class mailings to be discontinued and instead send mailings by bulk rate.
 2. **E-mailings** - A concerted effort has been made to collect email addresses for entries in the database wherever possible. This has reduced the number of postal mailings and provided more timely communications with stakeholders at no cost to the City. Examples of emailings being sent include:
 - a. **Interest Group Emails** - When we collected email addresses from stakeholders for our database, we also asked them to specify their areas of interest concerning particular General Plan Elements. Planners now have the ability to send emailings to these individuals to exchange ideas on issue areas and draft policies. This has allowed Planners to receive timely feedback from stakeholders to include in draft revisions. It has also provided stakeholders with another forum for ongoing dialogue with the Planners.
 - b. **Quarterly eNewsletters** to parties interested in the General Plan. These provide timely information about progress on the General Plan Update and draft Elements, meeting announcements, how individuals can get involved in the planning process, and embedded hyperlinks to documents and other useful information on the Planning Department website.
 - c. **Email Blasts** can be sent to key organizations and community leaders to notify constituent membership about General Plan related issues and announcements. This provides timely distribution of information and mobilizes more people to get involved in the planning process. Creating this kind of network also reduces the staff time and cost involved in traditional mass mailings that are often ignored.

- ◆ **The Diversity Database** is being expanded to include those who have traditionally not been involved in the planning process. Some of the target markets currently being expanded include Youth, Seniors, Gays and Lesbians, Veterans, Physically Challenged, African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, Arab Americans, and Native Americans. The email blast system is being utilized to contact key community leaders in these markets, which includes the Mayor’s Advisory Board member lists.
- ◆ **Interest Group Meetings** - In addition to sending emailings, Planners are holding periodic informal meetings with their Element Interest Groups. These meetings are designed to be an open exchange between the Planners and stakeholder on issues and policies related to the Elements.
- ◆ **Land Use Committee** - This formal committee will be established to assist with drafting and evaluating the Land Use Element for the General Plan Update. The committee will use an integrated approach to land use. It will help develop a new tier system for growth in San Diego and make recommendations on how to create consistency between the General Plan and the Community Plans. In addition to organizations that have typically served on planning committees, new ones will also be included (e.g., the military).
- ◆ **Pilot Villages** – The Pilot Villages will serve as important examples to attract interest and to gain community support for citywide implementation of the City of Villages strategy. As part of the involvement strategy, staff is in the process of implementing the following:
 1. A Pilot Village Open House was hosted on January 16, 2003 to provide those interested in participating in the program with information about how to submit applications,
 2. Planning staff members are currently working with applicants, developers, and the Design Council to create viable projects that have community support, and
 3. On three proposed projects, community workshops are being held to incorporate community input into the design process.
- ◆ **“From Controversy to Solution Series.”** These **quarterly public forums** are designed to engage the public in spirited dialogue on the controversial issues related to each of the General Plan Elements. In the June 2003 forum, the theme was introduced. The facilitator reviewed a graphic depiction of how controversy can be creatively focused to develop integrated General Plan policies, procedures, and strategies that not only take into account a variety of perspectives, but also use them to develop more comprehensive and well thought out solutions. Questions were posed to a distinguished panel and the public engaged in meaningful dialogue.

Forums Already Held

 1. March 26, 2003 - Progress since adoption of the City of Villages strategy by the City Council Oct 2002¹,
 2. June 26, 2003 - "Economic Prosperity for All: How Do We Get There?" and
 3. September 25, 2003 - “Breaking the Gridlock: Moving People to New Mobility Choices.”

¹ This forum was held prior to the implementation of the *From Controversy to Solution Series* strategy.

Future forums are scheduled for:

1. December 2003 - Conservation
2. March 2004 - Housing
3. June 2004 - Urban Design
4. September 2004 - Recreation/Public Facilities

◆ **An Integrated Approach to Working Collaboratively with Community Planning Groups (CPG)**

1. The Existing Conditions Data Collection effort, which is progressing on an aggressive schedule, has presented a unique opportunity for collaboration. **Interdisciplinary teams** are coordinating work between departments. The General Plan staff members are working closely with the Community Planner and together they are working directly with the CPGs.
2. General Plan Team members are providing **periodic updates to the CPGs** at their meetings on the status and issues involved with implementation of the General Plan Update.
3. A **Community Plan Profiles Section** has been added to the department website. It contains a community description Community Planning Group contact information and highlights about community services and community happenings.
4. **Community Planning Group Webpage** – A webpage will be created to gather and post general information pertinent to all CPGs.
5. **Emailings on Community Involvement Strategy** - The Public Policy and Outreach staff sent an email to CPG chairs with ideas on how to involve more community members in the Existing Conditions Data Collection effort in their community. The information sent included how to write a press release and contact local newspapers to publicize meetings as well as how to draw new people into the process to increase local participation. **Two additional emails will be sent in FY03 on other aspects of outreach and involvement.**
6. **Community Planning Group Workshops**- On September 24, 2003 the Planning Department will provide a workshop to CPG Chairs and other CPG leaders entitled, “Engaging the Public in Dialogue: How to Run Effective Community Planning Group Meetings.” To design this workshop we enlisted experienced CPG Chairs to give the Planning Department staff input on the workshop agenda. These CPG Chairs will also act as resources at the workshop and provide ongoing support to other Chairs. Establishing this kind of peer support network between the various Chairs will provide another avenue of information exchange between the CPGs.
7. **Working with the Planning Commission and CPGs** to develop effective methods of communication that value all levels of the planning decision-making process e.g., CPG presentations to the Planning Commission on significant issues in their communities.
8. **Emailings** directly to the Community Planners Committee (CPC) and CPG members to notify them about upcoming events, engage them in dialogue on important issues, and receive feedback on how the Planning Department can strengthen its communication and working relationship.
9. A **Toolkit** will be created for CPGs to help them broaden stakeholder involvement in community planning. The information in the toolkit will include techniques to target particular stakeholder groups, how to market and engage those targeted, and how to effectively work with the media.

10. **Quarterly e-Newsletters** will be sent to Community Planning Groups on meeting announcements, how individuals can get involved in the planning process, and embedded hyperlinks to documents and other useful information on the Planning Department website.

- ◆ **Surveys** - Use of formal and informal surveys to get stakeholder input on important issues and possible ballot initiatives such as infrastructure financing.
- ◆ **Collaboration Between Departments** to leverage public outreach and involvement that already exists in each department will continue. To achieve economies of scale, the Planning Department is tying planning related activities to existing programs in other departments, developing strategies for hosting joint forums and workshops, cross-marketing events, sharing databases, and utilizing other department's data to compile statistics for citywide use.

Ongoing Outreach and Involvement Effort

- ◆ **Presentations to Groups:**
 1. Since July 1, 2003 General Plan staff members have attended approximately 20 Community Planning Groups and spoken to over 350 people concerning progress on the General Plan Updates and Existing Conditions Data Collection,
 2. Since July 1, 2003 General Plan staff members have met with over 300 people in various stakeholder groups to discuss the progress on the General Plan Updates and get input on specific elements,
 3. Since May 21, 2003 when the shortlist for the Pilot Village applicants was announced, 12 meetings have been held with the applicants. Staff will also participate in 3 community workshops to assist applicants with their October 31, 2003 proposal submissions for City Council selection of the final Pilot Village projects;
- ◆ **Repeated TV 24 Broadcasts** of the public forums (See above for details);
- ◆ **News Releases and Media Alerts** including the announcement of the Existing Conditions Data Collection effort, the Pilot Village applications received, Pilot Village short list of applicants, and the public forums;
- ◆ **Press Conferences** on major milestones such as the one jointly held by Mayor Murphy and Councilmember Atkins to announce the Pilot Village short list;
- ◆ **Lobby Displays** such as displaying for public review after October 31, 2003, final submittal information for the Pilot Village short list applicants including site designs, artist renderings, and other site details.
- ◆ **Articles and Opinion and Editorial Pieces** including an article for the Daily Transcript's Special Urban Living section on mobility issues entitled, "City living can be a welcome balm to soothe traffic nerves;"
- ◆ **Articles and Announcements in City Publications** including the City Manager's Weekly and Employees Update;
- ◆ **Interviews Broadcast by Local Media** such as the one Planning Director Gail Goldberg did with KPBS Full Focus on "Community Input into the Planning Process;"
- ◆ **Website** development which includes posting of documents, press releases, a schedule of meetings, and other General Plan related information; and
- ◆ **A hotline** where we receive ongoing input and requests from stakeholders.

For additional information, please contact the Public Policy and Outreach Program in the Planning Department.

Program Manager

Catherine Cleary

(619) 533-6417

ccleary@sandiego.gov

Senior Public Information Officer

Marion Moss Hubbard

(619) 533-6199

mhubbard@sandiego.gov