



## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

# REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: June 8, 2006 REPORT NO. PC-06-149

ATTENTION: Planning Commission  
Agenda of June 15, 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 Nos. 06-025, 06-056  
Planning Commission Report Nos. P-03-183, P-03-227, P-03-333, PC-04-220, PC-05-070, PC-05-183, PC-05-26, PC-05-304; PC-06-092

### SUMMARY

This is an information item only. No action is required on the part of the Planning Commission (PC) at this time. This report presents working drafts of the proposed General Plan for PC discussion. The draft introductory sections and the Land Use and Community Planning, Mobility, Urban Design, Conservation, Historic Preservation, and Noise elements are included in Attachment 1, and the draft Recreation Element is a part of Attachment 2.

### 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 first complete public review draft of the updated plan was released in July 2005. Since then, significant revisions to the draft plan have been made based on Land Use and Housing Committee (LU&H), PC, Community Planners Committee, general public, and other stakeholder comments. Upon release of the second public review draft, staff will provide a table identifying major edits to the July 2005 Draft.

On July 14, 2005, the PC held a workshop covering the entire July 2005 Draft General Plan. The Planning Commissioners had extensive comments, and asked staff to return for additional workshops, which were held on September 22, 2005, and October 13, 2005. On March 16, 2006 the PC held a workshop to discuss major proposed edits to the July 2005 Draft General Plan, including new working drafts of the Land Use and Community Planning and Urban Design elements. Planning Commissioners' comments focused largely on the Recreation and Economic Prosperity elements. Economic Prosperity comments will be discussed at the next PC workshop. Specific comments on other elements included:

- there is a need for a citywide parks master plan

- explain and quantify proposed recreation enhancements and use of regional parks
- look for creative, alternative ways to meet recreational needs
- evaluate how recent adopted transit operations changes affects planned village areas
- revised introductory sections look good
- the proposed “Village Propensity” map is a good approach
- the revised Urban Design Element shows lots of improvements

These comments helped shape the working drafts of the maps and elements attached to this report.

## DISCUSSION

### **May 2006 Working Drafts – PC Report Attachment 1**

Staff prepared working drafts of the Foundation for Planning and Strategic Framework sections, along with the Land Use and Community Planning, Mobility, Urban Design, Conservation, Historic Preservation, and Noise elements of the General Plan for the LU&H Committee agenda of May 17, 2006. These working drafts are included in City Council Report 06-056 (see PC report Attachment 1). Working drafts discussed in the City Council report are as follows:

Foundation for Planning (see City Council report Attachment 1) - this section covers background information and establishes the role and purpose of the General Plan.

Strategic Framework (see City Council report Attachment 2) – this section 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 (see City Council report Attachment 3) – incorporates the Strategic Framework Element City of Villages strategy, provides land use policy direction covering various topics, and establishes community plans as integral components of the General Plan. The “Village Propensity” map is proposed to help illustrate the City of Villages strategy (see PC report Attachment 3).

Mobility Element (see City Council report Attachment 4) – 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. Policies call for working proactively with regional agencies to plan and fund transportation projects/services that the city has identified as a high priority. The “Transit/Land Use Connections” map has been updated to reflect recent transit operational changes (see PC Report Attachment 4).

Urban Design Element (see City Council report Attachment 5) – 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.

Conservation Element (see City Council report 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.

Historic Preservation Element (see City Council report Attachment 7) – strives 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.

Noise Element (see City Council report Attachment 8) – 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.

## **LU&H Comments**

At the May 17, 2006 LU&H workshop, committee members stressed the importance of providing public facilities to support growth, and warned that the City of Villages strategy cannot be successful without financing for infrastructure. Other comments included:

- consider changing the name of the draft “Village Propensity” map
- need to work on state legislation to provide financial incentives to smart growth
- some communities are already experiencing higher density development based on existing community plans – this may cause a “backlash” of negativity toward density
- the design of infill development is very important
- development impact fees are needed for expansion of existing facilities
- more regional funds need to be directed toward transit; SANDAG needs to make a commitment to transit and put more money into transit operations
- it makes sense to make government more efficient, then to go out to the public with proposals to fund infrastructure
- a status report on pilot villages is needed
- no one wants density or taxes, but density may be needed to help pay for infrastructure
- we have a responsibility to plan for adequate facilities for future residents

The committee’s formal action was to direct staff to continue to refine the draft elements and return to LU&H on July 19, 2006 for a workshop on the Public Facilities, Services and Safety; Recreation; and Economic Prosperity elements.

## **Recreation Element Working Draft and Report – Attachment 2**

The draft Recreation Element contains policies which are intended to result in increased and enhanced public recreation opportunities and facilities throughout the city for all users. The proposed element includes policies to protect and preserve our regional resources, to prepare a citywide Park Master Plan, and to provide population-based along with other types of park lands. The current proposal to establish a citywide population-based park guideline of 2.4 useable acres per 1,000 residents has been widely debated and is explained in greater detail on pages 3 and 4 of the Park and Recreation Board report (see Attachment 2). The current draft also calls for greater flexibility in the implementation of population-based guidelines, which builds upon the 1979 General Plan recognition that there is “considerable variation among the various communities and areas of the City with respect to the actual facilities provided, total acreage, and acres/1000 population (1979 General Plan p. 312).” The 1979 General Plan further states:

“An ideal balance of recreational opportunities cannot be achieved through just citywide application of numerical standards for physical facilities. These standards are important,

however, they should be used with discretion rather than mechanically. They are only a basic tool for guiding and evaluating the adequacy of service to a given area and to the City as a whole. Their application should be related to economic feasibility and the nature of the specific neighborhood or community, and should allow for flexibility as specific areas change or the needs and desires of the residents change (p. 313).”

The current working draft Recreation Element adds greater definition to the 1979 General Plan’s call for flexibility by proposing the use of park and recreation “equivalencies,” particularly in areas that were developed prior to implementation of the 1979 standards, where park acreage is difficult to acquire. “Equivalencies” can be provided in the form of: “alternatives,” a category of improvements that provide additional park land/recreation facility space; and “enhancements” which are physical improvements to existing park lands that do not provide additional park lands or space (see Park and Recreation report Attachment 1, Policy RE-F.13 on page 29). While the provision of increased park acreage in under-served communities will still be aggressively sought, the use of equivalencies can play a significant role in meeting some of the city’s park and recreation needs. As the city evolves into a fully urbanized environment (currently, only about 4 percent of the city’s land is vacant and available for development), the need for creative solutions to meet park and recreation needs has become increasingly important.

The key to providing increased/enhanced recreation opportunities on a long-term basis is to provide adequate financing for park development, maintenance and staffing. The need to secure funding to remedy existing park needs and the role of development impact fees will be further discussed at the next PC workshop in the context of the Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element.

The draft Recreation Element also proposes to use limited portions of resource-based parks to satisfy neighborhood and community park guidelines. Attachment 3 of the Park and Recreation Board report provides an example of how portions of a resource-based park, Balboa Park, could be used to satisfy some of the park needs of the surrounding communities. Park and Recreation department staff will be present at the workshop to further discuss this concept and the example provided. Park and Recreation department staff have been partners in the Recreation Element update process and are continuing to offer edits to improve the element.

Planning Department and Park and Recreation staff presented the May 2006 working draft of the Recreation Element to the Park and Recreation Board as an information item on May 18, 2006 (see Attachment 2). Staff provided an overview of the General Plan update and highlighted key policies from the draft Recreation Element. Park and Recreation Board members individually provided their input on the Recreation Element. The following points summarize the main conclusions from the members present:

- The population-based park standard should be 2.8 net usable, no less. If the issue is net usable, don’t lower, just specify “net usable.”
- The issue of non-developed vs. developed portions of resource-based parks being considered for credit by developers still needs to be discussed and fully understood.
- The development and funding of a Parks Master Plan is critical to the success of the Recreation Element.
- A discussion/understanding of Development Impact Fees (DIFs), Quimby Act and other mechanisms to secure parkland must be provided. Financing is the key.

- Joint-use agreements to provide park lands should be strengthened (there have been cases where schools which were intended to provide park space were never built).
- The use of private recreational facilities to meet population-based standards must be carefully reviewed.
- Enhancements, although acknowledged to have use in some areas and have a basis in the existing Progress Guide and General Plan, were generally disliked because we are still short on acreage in many areas of the City.
- Regional parks should be protected from over-commercialization (i.e., Mission Bay).
- There needs to be more of a focus on resolving issues in underserved/deficient areas and equitable development.
- Do not redefine parks to meet a standard.

The Park and Recreation Board requested a presentation on impact fees in order to get a clear understanding of how park financing works in the city. This presentation is in the process of being scheduled.

### **Next Steps**

Staff is continuing to refine the draft elements as needed, and to complete revised working drafts of the Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element, and Economic Prosperity Element. As much of the policy language in the draft General Plan is substantially complete, attention is now shifting toward production of the next complete public review draft. The draft document still needs graphics and formatting work, including the addition of photos, captions, figures and sidebars, and insertion of web links. In addition, staff will enhance the introduction section in a manner that will allow it to be used as a stand-alone summary document. Key upcoming dates are identified on the General Plan Update Timeline (see PC Report Attachment 5).

### **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS**

Public 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 Community Planners Committee (CPC) and the CPC General Plan subcommittee. General Plan update stakeholder presentations/consultations are identified in Attachment 9 of the City Council report. The CPC's recommendations, and staff's responses, are documented in Attachment 10 of the City Council report.

### **CONCLUSION**

The revised working drafts represent significant edits to the July 2005 draft. Additional workshops with the PC and the LU&H Committee will be held in July 2006 to focus on the Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element, the Economic Prosperity Element, and unresolved Recreation Element issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nancy S. Bragado  
Acting Program Manager  
City Planning and Community Investment

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William Anderson, FAICP  
Director  
City Planning and Community Investment

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- Attachments:
1. General Plan Update Report to the LU&H Committee, Agenda of May 17, 2006
  2. General Plan Update Recreation Element Report to the Park and Recreation Board, Agenda of May 18, 2006
  3. Revised Village Propensity Map
  4. Revised Transit/Land Use Connections Map
  5. General Plan Update Timeline

\*Limited distribution of Attachments 1-4. Available on the web at <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning-commission/#reports>.