



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Planning Commission

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REPORT NO. PC-22-048

HEARING DATE: September 22, 2022

SUBJECT: Blueprint SD Workshop

SUMMARY

This is a workshop for the Planning Commission to provide input on Blueprint SD. No action is required on the part of the Planning Commission at this time. This workshop is intended to provide background information on Blueprint SD and serve as a forum for the Commission to discuss and share input. Blueprint SD will amend the General Plan to revise and add new policies, discussion, and figures to reflect the 2021 Regional Transportation Plan and the 2022 Climate Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

General Plan

The [General Plan](#) serves as the City's constitution for development. It is the foundation upon which all land use decisions in the City are based. It provides a Citywide vision and values, and it embodies public policy for the distribution of future land use, both public and private. The General Plan contains ten elements or chapters that address a variety of mandatory and optional topics. State law requires each city to adopt a general plan to guide its future development and mandates that the general plan be periodically updated to assure its continuing relevance and value with the exception of the Housing Element, which is required to be updated every eight years. The Governor's Office and Research publishes [guidelines](#) to assist cities in maintaining relevant general plans. The General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2008 and is based on the City of Villages Strategy.

The General Plan's City of Villages strategy focuses growth into mixed-use activity centers that are pedestrian-friendly districts linked to an improved regional transit system. A "village" is defined as the mixed-use heart of a community where residential, commercial, employment, and civic uses are all present and integrated. While the General Plan update did not include land use or zoning changes, it did provide policy and land use guidance for future community plan updates. The General Plan contains the following ten elements and the City is in the process of preparing an Environmental Justice Element.

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

Village Propensity Map

The General Plan [Village Propensity Map](#) (Figure LU-1), which is in the [Land Use Element](#), identifies the City of Villages features and areas with key village-like characteristics. The Village Propensity Map is intended to guide potential locations that could be designated as village areas during a community plan update process. Using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) based process, the Village Propensity Map shows areas that currently exhibit village characteristics and areas that may have a propensity to develop as village areas based on having certain existing or planned characteristics when the General Plan was updated in 2008. These key village characteristics include the location of parks, public facilities, and existing and community plan designated land uses and transit routes.

Prior Amendments

Since 2008, the City has approved the following seven amendments to the General Plan to address changes in state law and minor amendments to correct errors, to ensure consistency with other adopted City documents and programs, and to refine policies.

- [2022 Amendments to the Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element](#) (Build Better SD)
- [2021 Amendment to the Recreation Element](#) (Parks for All of Us/Parks Master Plan)
- [2021 Amendment to the Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element](#) (Climate Resilient SD)
- [2018 Amendments to Public Facilities, Services and Safety Element](#)
- [2015 Amendments to Land Use, Mobility, Economic Prosperity, Public Facilities, Services and Safety, Recreation, and Noise Elements](#)
- [2012 Amendments to Conservation Element](#)
- [2010 Amendments to Land Use and Community Planning, Public Facilities, Services and Safety, and Recreation Elements and Glossary](#)

Community Plans

The General Plan designates community planning areas in the City in which specific land use proposals are made in the form of community plans. This process allows the community plan to refine the Citywide policies at the community level, within the context of Citywide goals and objectives. A community plan is developed when City staff and the community, usually coordinated through community planning group forums, work together to identify changes in land use or revisions to policies to make them consistent with the General Plan. Since the adoption of the General Plan in 2008, the Planning Department has completed a comprehensive plan update to fourteen community plans and three Specific Plans to better reflect current conditions and the long-term vision under the General Plan City of Villages strategy. The Planning Department is currently in the process of [updating five community plans](#).

Community Plan Updates (Completed)

- Otay Mesa (2015)
- Ocean Beach (2015)
- Navajo (Grantville Focused Plan Amendment) (2015)
- Encanto (2015)
- Southeastern San Diego (2015)
- San Ysidro (2016)
- Greater Golden Hill (2016)
- North Park (2016)
- Uptown (2016)
- Old Town San Diego (2018)
- Midway-Pacific Highway (2018)
- Mission Valley (2019)
- Kearny Mesa (2020)
- Barrio Logan (2021) *Pending California Coastal Commission certification

Specific Plans (Completed)

- San Ysidro Historic Village (San Ysidro)
- Morena Corridor (Linda Vista)
- Balboa Station Area (Pacific Beach)

Community Plan Updates (In Process)

- Clairemont Mesa
- College Area
- Mira Mesa
- University
- Uptown (Hillcrest Focus Plan Amendment)

Climate Action Plan

The City Council adopted its first Climate Action Plan in 2015. Most recently in August 2022, the Council adopted an update to the [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP), which sets a goal to achieve net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2035. To support this goal, the CAP identifies a 50 percent mode share target for all daily residential trips to take place through walking, biking, and transit within the next 13 years.¹ The CAP includes various actions related to this goal, specifically with respect to locating new development in areas located near transit, with a focus on providing needed active transportation and transit investments to serve these areas.

Regional Transportation Plan

In December 2021, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) adopted the [Regional Plan](#). The Regional Plan serves as the Regional Transportation Plan for the San Diego region and includes an updated transportation network. The Regional Transportation Plan is required to be updated every four years. Consistent with the goals of the City's CAP, the Regional Transportation Plan contains policies to improve transit access and options for everyone and reduce GHG emissions. The 2021 Regional Plan includes a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) which provides a coordinated transportation and land use planning framework for reducing per capita GHG emissions in the region.

DISCUSSION

Blueprint SD will provide a framework to grow in a climate-friendly way that also addresses the City's housing, infrastructure, conservation, and equity goals. Specifically, Blueprint SD will identify a land use strategy and complementary mobility policies to support GHG emissions reductions. It is a focused effort to refresh the Citywide General Plan land use strategy to revise and add new policies, discussion, and figures to reflect the 2021 Regional Transportation Plan and the 2022 Climate Action Plan. The General Plan and the City of Villages Strategy, which is the cornerstone of the General Plan and provides the strategy for how the City will plan for future development, were adopted prior to the adoption of the Climate Action Plan, necessitating these General Plan amendments.

To achieve greater consistency with the CAP, Blueprint SD will include amendments to the General Plan to refine existing policies to encourage more homes and jobs in areas that demonstrate the greatest transit competitiveness and improve opportunities to walk, bike, and take transit for daily needs. Blueprint SD will identify additional opportunities for producing homes to help address the housing crisis and ensure future generations have an opportunity to live in San Diego. This framework will guide future community plan updates and other planning efforts to make progress toward the City's housing, climate, infrastructure, conservation, and equity goals.

¹ Climate Action Plan (2022). Refer to Strategy 3: Mobility and Land Use. Measure 3.1 identifies a 25 percent walking and 10 percent cycling mode share of all daily residents' trips by 2035. Measure 3.2 identifies a 15 percent transit mode share of all daily residents' trips by 2035.

Why is Blueprint SD needed?

Blueprint SD will amend the General Plan to refine Citywide policies to reflect the recently updated Climate Action Plan and Regional Transportation Plan. Blueprint SD will build upon the General Plan City of Villages Strategy to further support the basic principles of smart growth. Blueprint SD will update the Village Propensity Map in the General Plan's Land Use Element to identify potential infill opportunities to increase new homes near transit and employment areas as part of community plan updates to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Rather than addressing these larger Citywide issues on a community-by-community basis, Blueprint SD provides an opportunity for comprehensive planning to achieve the City's ambitious climate goals by identifying potential locations and density thresholds for additional homes and jobs across the City that could have the best opportunities to increase transit, bicycle and walk mode share. Blueprint SD is intended to help achieve our climate action goals to create more walkable and connected neighborhoods.

How will Blueprint SD update the Village Propensity Map?

Blueprint SD will update the Village Propensity Map to include areas with the greatest transit competitiveness (also known as transit propensity) and areas where new home opportunities will have the greatest benefits in order to guide and align future community planning efforts with CAP mode share goals. City staff has been working with a consultant team to prepare an updated map that incorporates additional GIS data analysis such as transit competitive areas based on the SANDAG 2050 regional transportation network and model. Using regional transportation modeling data, the updated map is intended to identify areas where additional homes and jobs across the City could have the best opportunities to increase transit, bicycle, and walk mode share. Staff is finalizing a draft map and it will be presented at the workshop for Commission discussion. It is important to note that just as with the existing Village Propensity Map, the updated map would not mandate any particular land use map in a particular community, but would instead continue to guide land use as community plans are updated. Opportunities for future community input would continue, as it currently does with the existing Village Propensity Map.

Will Blueprint SD identify density minimums needed to meet mode share goals?

Blueprint SD will use a process that incorporates forecast model data to identify density thresholds that could best meet CAP goals for mode share. While these thresholds are intended to serve as a guide for future community plan updates, more refined decisions at the community plan level will be needed at that time, taking into consideration existing conditions and ongoing community input. As discussed above, Blueprint SD will not mandate any particular land uses in a particular community, and is instead intended to guide those decisions in a manner that comprehensively addresses the City's climate goals, always taking into account local needs and community input.

What is the environmental review process for Blueprint SD?

A Citywide Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) will be prepared to evaluate the environmental impacts of areas where significant land use changes could be proposed and on a citywide basis. In addition, the analysis will comprehensively identify potential mitigation measures to reduce environmental impacts across the City, in a manner that also best achieves the City's climate goals outlined in the CAP. Once the Blueprint SD PEIR is certified, future community plan updates could tier from the Citywide Blueprint SD PEIR to provide a more efficient environmental review process while still incorporating applicable mitigation and community input identified through Blueprint SD PEIR. While the environmental review process under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) identifies specific public review and comments periods for environmental

documents, it is important to note that community input on the community plans themselves are open and available throughout the entirety of the process, up to and including City Council adoption hearings. Comments received on the draft environmental documents for community plan updates are often related to comments on the underlying community plans themselves, and while this feedback can certainly be received during the environmental review process, it can also be received and can potentially be much more valuable to have these conversations during the underlying community plan process itself.

How will Blueprint SD help make the Community Plan Update process more efficient and transparent?

Blueprint SD will provide a framework with the updated village propensity map, density thresholds, and the PEIR that will assist future community plan updates to be completed within two to three years (versus four to five years). This reduced timeframe could allow the City to conduct additional community plan updates, and also provide an opportunity for more refined and focused discussions with community members that often cannot stay engaged throughout a much longer planning process. The City will continue to focus engagement on important issues such as public spaces and open space, and community specific development regulations. As mentioned above, community plans are a critical plan specific to the needs of each community, informed through community input at the more local level.

What policy refinements and additions are being considered under Blueprint SD?

Blueprint SD will provide a framework for amending the General Plan will include refined and new supportive land use and mobility policies that improve transit competitiveness and overall mobility options and further CAP goals. The policy framework is generally grouped into four categories which is referred to as Sustainable Steps Forward with specific policy concepts under each category (Attachment 1). Based on public feedback, this policy concept framework will be further refined into revised and new General Plan policies to address the City's housing, climate, and equity goals. These Sustainable Steps Forward categories include:

- Provide convenient and affordable transportation options.
- Get to and from work in a climate-friendly way.
- Plan for more homes and jobs near transit.
- Create complete neighborhoods.

What is the relationship to current community plan updates that are in progress?

The community plan updates in process are largely informed by the recently adopted RTP and Climate Action Plan and are anticipated to be consistent with the framework identified in Blueprint SD. It is anticipated that future community plan updates, including ones currently underway, could tier from the Blueprint SD PEIR for their environmental analyses. An environmental document will be prepared for each community plan update that analyzes the proposed plan in more detail and evaluates environmental issues specific to each individual community. The Mira Mesa Community Plan Update, which is further along in the community plan update processes, has released draft Community Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report for public review and comment.

Will Blueprint comprehensively update the General Plan?

Blueprint SD is a focused amendment to the General Plan to refine existing and add new policies to address the Climate Action Plan and the Regional Transportation Plan. It will strengthen the intent of the General Plan City of Villages strategy to identify opportunities for new homes and jobs near transit.

What are upcoming opportunities for public engagement?

Community members and interested stakeholders will be given an opportunity to learn more about Blueprint SD and provide feedback on draft policies for incorporation into the General Plan Amendment as part of ongoing public engagement efforts. A citywide survey, public workshops, and stakeholder interviews will be conducted during the Fall of 2022. More information on engagement opportunities will be posted to the [Blueprint SD website](#).

What are the next steps for Blueprint SD?

Fall/Winter 2022

- Prepare Data Modeling (in progress)
- Release Citywide Web Survey
- Release Initial Draft General Plan Amendments

Winter/Spring 2023

- Release Revised Draft General Plan Amendments
- Release Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

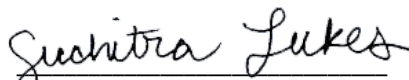
Spring/Summer 2023

- Public Hearings and Adoption

CONCLUSION

Staff will incorporate input from the Planning Commission workshop to further refine the draft Village Propensity map, identify potential thresholds, and make refinements to existing General Plan policies. Staff will collect public input and release the draft amendments to the General Plan which will include revised and add new policies, discussion, and figures to reflect the Regional Transportation Plan and the Climate Action Plan.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

1. Draft Sustainable Steps Forward Policy Categories



SUSTAINABLE STEPS FORWARD

DRAFT – September 2022

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Blueprint SD will amend the Citywide [General Plan](#) to encourage growth in areas that can best help the City achieve its climate goals and improve opportunities to walk, bike, and take transit to meet our residents' daily needs. Four “Sustainable Steps Forward” have been identified to support growth in a climate-friendly way:

- Provide convenient and affordable transportation options;
- Get to and from work in a climate-friendly way;
- Plan for more homes and jobs near transit; and
- Create complete neighborhoods.

Policy concepts under consideration as a part of each Sustainable Step Forward are summarized below.

#1: PROVIDE CONVENIENT AND AFFORDABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Daily transportation choices make up over one-half (55%) of the greenhouse gas emissions in San Diego.¹ To reduce the harmful pollutants entering our environment, a key step forward is to improve the convenience and affordability of climate-friendly transportation options like transit. Policy concepts under consideration include:

- Work with SANDAG, MTS, and NCTD to improve the speed, reliability, and convenience of transit and encourage opportunities to:
 - Implement more frequent transit service (5 to 7 minute headways);
 - Upgrade local bus lines to bus rapid transit (BRT) or subway; and/or
 - Provide a low-cost transit pass to each household.
- Charge parking fees at major job centers and destinations.
- Convert car lanes to priority lanes for buses, bikes, and carpools.
- Remove parking requirements for new buildings, including office, where served by transit.

¹ Climate Action Plan (2022), Appendix B, p. 3.



#2: GET TO AND FROM WORK IN A CLIMATE-FRIENDLY WAY

Many job centers have been built far away from homes. Providing more options to get to and from work in a climate-friendly way can help lower emissions. Providing onsite amenities can also reduce the need for further car travel. Policy concepts under consideration include:

- Require employers to implement programs and amenities to expand transportation options for workers, such as shuttles, subsidized transit passes, bike lockers, etc.
- Require office buildings and complexes to provide amenities for workers onsite, such as a café, gym, etc.
- Provide incentives for employers to be in job centers that are already accessible by transit.
- Create mobility hubs at job centers that connect biking, transit, and shared mobility services (like rideshare and e-scooters/e-bikes).

#3: PLAN FOR MORE HOMES AND JOBS NEAR TRANSIT

The City has identified various transit supportive areas, including Transit Priority Areas and Mobility Zones 1, 2, and 3. Planning for new homes and jobs by transit in areas such as these is another step the City can take to lower greenhouse gas emissions. Policy concepts under consideration include:

- Expedite permits to build new homes and jobs close to transit.
- Provide more flexible regulations such as increased height for buildings close to transit that can also provide more public spaces at the ground level.
- Provide incentives for different type of homes such as homes for families with children, microunits, townhomes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and others so people have more home options close to transit.
- Put a cap on the amount of parking that is built close to transit (i.e., parking maximum).

#4: CREATE COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS

Providing more options for neighborhood-serving shops, services and jobs can help create more complete neighborhoods where most daily needs can be met through a short, safe, and enjoyable walk, bike, or transit ride. Policy concepts under consideration include:

- Add appropriately-scaled retail options to existing residential neighborhoods.
- Redevelop shopping centers with a mix of uses including new homes.
- Require small neighborhood store spaces in new building projects of a certain size.

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