

General Plan Community Workshop Comments
City Hall Mitchell Room
April 29, 2009



COMMENTS RECEIVED AT THE GENERAL PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Comments regarding city identity / vision / goals:

1. Maintain Quality of Life standards, concerns cited regarding schools, libraries, public safety and economic development
2. Several comments were raised regarding the state's population projection process and encouraged the City to challenge state and regional mandates to accommodate increases in population without regard to holding capacity / sustainability
3. The City should maintain its 165,000 General Plan population build-out and either not plan for expanded facilities or suffer diminished quality of life for increased growth
4. Increases in population are inevitable and that not planning for growth will lead to overcrowding, failing infrastructure and other undesirable effects
5. Smart Growth is too intense, the City will not have the ability to effectively implement Smart Growth policies, facilities won't be timed properly with growth, it won't attract transit, it will adversely change "small town" character of Escondido, etc.

6. Smart Growth will energize the community, provide entertainment and opportunities for younger population, small businesses can be established to cater to a new downtown population, it will allow opportunities for older citizens to stay in Escondido after selling their larger single family homes, etc.
7. There should be a focus on assets and opportunities; Grand Avenue, Grape Day Park, etc.
8. Arts and Culture needs to be a focus ...possibly a Quality of Life Standard
9. Downtown multi-family development needs to be senior friendly with elevators, single-level flats, and other design features to attract empty nesters
10. Ensure planned growth pays for itself
11. Smart Growth must include good design
12. Consider inclusionary housing policies/programs to maintain a full range of housing opportunities
13. Building fees need to be aligned with the true cost of growth
14. Sidewalks need to be wider in front of the Paramount housing project because pedestrians are too close to fast moving traffic.
15. The City's Capital Improvement Program should address older neighborhoods where opportunities for pedestrian orientation are lost due to a lack of sidewalks and street improvements
16. New development must upgrade antiquated schools; the Quality of Life Standard for schools needs to accommodate the ability to serve increased growth, playground facilities, modernization plans, and unreliable school funding because good schools are necessary to attract quality projects

Comments regarding General Plan Boundaries:

1. Rancho Guejito should not be included in Escondido's General Plan– Rancho should be preserved.

Comments regarding parks / open space / habitat:

1. Restore / protect Escondido Creek headwaters
2. Provide better trail linkages to connect parks
3. Provide more pocket / urban area parks

Comments regarding traffic / circulation / transit:

1. Street Maintenance needs to be upgraded to improve quality of life
2. Improve street crossings at E. Valley Parkway, cited mid-block crossings as a safety hazard
3. Noise walls should be installed along Circulation Element Streets
4. Transit needs to better accommodate ridership; buses frequently run less than half-full and at inconvenient schedules
5. Provide pedestrian linkages for better access throughout the community, improve aesthetics along the Channel Trail
6. City should not look toward adding more traffic lanes to solve congestion; transit needs to be a focus...consider hubs for people to drive to in order to access mass transit
7. Prepare Circulation Element and downtown parking in advance of General Plan Update

Comments regarding utilities / infrastructure:

1. Recycled water should not be expanded for drinking purposes; health concerns cited
2. Reclaimed water should be included in the Water Quality of Life Standard
3. Include policies that prohibit water-intensive uses (lawns, etc.) and encourage solar generators
4. Consider more incentives promoting alternative energy, incorporate green sustainability policies
General Plan should have an energy/climate change element
5. Assembly Bill 32 goals need to be addressed (the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, which set the 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal into law)

Comments regarding land use:

1. Undesirable land uses near residential need to be controlled; liquor stores, gasoline service stations, and businesses that require night time deliveries are inappropriate near homes.
2. Buffer between residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Particular attention should be paid to noise, lighting, traffic, and air quality
3. Grand Avenue should include more mid-priced restaurants to offer a wider dining variety and more nighttime uses to attract a younger crowd
4. Escondido needs to include attractions for every age group; not enough for younger population
5. Increasing densities in Smart Growth areas will impact school population; City needs to work closely with school district to ensure facilities are in place to accommodate students
6. Police station site (across from transit center) should be redeveloped with pedestrian bridge

Comments regarding City appearance:

1. Escondido should consider a “market branding” plan to improve city image
2. Don’t neglect appearance of the rest of the City when concentrating on Smart Growth

Comments regarding economic development:

1. The General Plan needs to include policies attracting bio-tech to the community
2. Tailor economic policies to our community...consider “Green Jobs” incubator businesses
3. Include policies that promote jobs centered around the arts industry
4. Escondido should work more closely with local universities to understand job growth
5. Streamline process for incoming business, provide better support for small businesses

General Comments:

1. In staff’s follow-up reports to decision-makers include all public comments that were not incorporated into the General Plan explaining rationale for staff recommendations
2. Implementation is vital to ensuring the General Plan is successful
3. Consider General Plan subcommittees by topic

OBSERVATIONS

1. There was mixed reaction regarding Escondido needing to accommodate for a build-out population larger than 165,000 persons. Some felt that sizing facilities and infrastructure for our desired population will effectively control growth. Generally those opposed to increasing Escondido’s build-out population did not favor Smart Growth.
2. Those who felt that Escondido should plan for serving a larger population seemed to endorse Smart Growth principles as a way to focus growth in key locations.
3. The character and densities of existing single family neighborhoods should be retained
4. Older neighborhoods need the city’s attention with regard to capital improvements and maintaining and/or upgrading aesthetic qualities to make them desirable places to live
5. The City needs a variety of uses that can attract and sustain a population of all age groups
6. There was no consensus of how to disperse the anticipated regional population growth in the proposed Smart Growth areas
7. There is desire to strengthen policies on aesthetics and improving the City’s image
8. There was sensitivity to amending the Quality of Life Standards