

Factors Involved with the General Plan Population and Buildout

ISSUE PAPER: GROWTH MANAGEMENT

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF LIFE STANDARDS AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The Growth Management Element integrates the General Plan's Goals and Objectives with adopted Quality of Life Standards through the construction of public improvements and private development. The purpose of the Growth Management Element is to provide a link between the Land Use, Community Facilities, and Open Space Elements and specific implementation techniques to ensure that as the population grows that there are services available to meet citizens' demands. Zoning ordinances, capital improvements programs, impact fee requirements, design guidelines, etc. are implementation techniques of the growth management system that addresses factors associated with location, amount, rate, type, density, quality, timing, and financing in the development process.

The Growth Management Element is used to monitor the impact that all growth has on the community and defines the method by which that impact is addressed. Factors associated with the location, type, amount, density of development are tied to the city's zoning ordinance (and linked with the General Plan Land Use Element) that establishes parameters for land uses constructed in the community. Development quality is associated with adopted design guidelines and policies associated with aesthetics and character. Master Plans that detail facility and infrastructure improvements affect the rate and timing of development

Escondido's Growth Management Program develops community-wide facilities and services plans and for three specific neighborhood "tier" delineations using planning criteria such as topography, existing land use, land use designations, and physical boundaries such as streets or ridgelines:

- Tier 1 (Urbanized): Areas within the city core and mostly within existing City boundaries with limited in-fill opportunities, urban-level public facilities and services available.
- Tier 2 (Urbanizing): Areas that are either partially developed or are designated for urban development in the Land Use Element; includes both City and County Territory with urban level public services in certain locations.
- Tier 3 (Rural): Areas that are partially developed with rural residential uses but are largely undeveloped, mainly under the County jurisdiction and will continue to be limited to very low density rural, agriculture, open space and related uses.

The General Plan states that: "Although development in the Urbanized Tier 1 will not be restricted from a timing perspective by the Quality of Life Standards, they will be used as the basis for capital improvement programs, impact fees and other financing mechanisms established to provide facilities and services for Tier 1 and for Citywide needs." Most facility deficiencies occur in the area between the developed urban core (Tier 1) and the lower density, outlying areas (Tier 3) where urban service levels are not expected.

The timing of development in the Tier 2 and 3 areas is dependent upon the provision of facilities and services based upon Quality of Life Standards. It is stated in the General Plan that, "In general, development should not occur in Tier 2 areas if deficiencies exist pursuant to the Quality of Life Standards and Community Facilities Element except as authorized by the City Council." Once a critical infrastructure deficiency is identified, development must either wait until the issue is resolved or address it at the project level.

The General Plan encourages the use Development Agreements as a tool to ensure the timely provision of community facilities for new and existing development. Projects that are approved with Development Agreements are not subject to "nexus" requirements, meaning that improvements above and beyond the project's impacts (including correcting existing Quality of Life deficiencies) may be included in the project's conditions of approval. The City has entered into numerous Development Agreements that have benefited the community through the installation of infrastructure improvements ahead of schedule, or upgrading facilities to address Quality of Life deficiencies.

The California Environmental Quality Act "CEQA" requires the review of development proposals as a way to protect and enhance environmental quality and minimize environment impacts. CEQA serves as a form of growth management but it does not provide the authority to exceed a project's "nexus" standards, which means that a project can only be required to mitigate its own impacts, not for any existing deficiencies.

Impact fees are paid by the owners of newly developed properties for the "impact" that new development will have on the community. Fees are used to finance Quality of Life Standard improvements in areas of transportation, community facilities and services, utilities, schools, etc. Impact fees cannot be targeted to maintain existing facilities, but instead are available to create new facilities in proportion to the number of new developments in the area.

It should be noted that because facilities are often built in increments that do not match the rate of development all standards cannot be met at all times. For example, while funding is being collected to improve a park, construct a library, or widen a street etc., a deficiency may exist. When that park, library or street improvement is made there may be a surplus of capacity. The acceptable lag in the service standards is determined through the Capital Improvement Program process and discussed in the Quality of Life Status Report on Escondido's Citywide Facility Plan.

At some point facility deficiencies may affect development opportunity and a property owner's ability to obtain building permits. Enacting development moratoriums and establishing Critical Infrastructure Deficiency Areas for drainage, sewer, water and traffic have been used in the past as a mechanism to suspend development until necessary infrastructure improvements can be made that restore services to appropriate levels. In those instances efforts including re-prioritizing Capital Improvement Projects and negotiating Development Agreement improvements have enabled the city to work with developers to correct facility deficiencies.