

ATTACHMENT 1
General Plan Issues Committee
Meeting Summary
June 24, 2010
City Hall Mitchell Room
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: David Ferguson; Chairman, Maria Bowman, Jon Hudson, Terry Jackson, Steve Kildoo, John Masson, Rick Paul, Lisa Prazeau, Pam Stahl

Committee Members Absent: Linda Bailey, Elmer Cameron, Thora Guthrie, Alfredo Velasco, Joyce Wells

Committee Members Resigned: Lucas Ross

Staff Present: Barbara Redlitz, Director of Community Development; Jay Petrek, Principal Planner; Edward Domingue, Director of Engineering Services; Lori Vereker, Director of Utilities

1. Opening Comments

Chairman Ferguson provided introductory comments and procedures.

2. Review of Meeting Summary from May 27, 2010

Member Stahl noted the committee's consensus to analyze Westfield Shopping with 250 dwelling units and that she wanted to state for the record that she opposed considering any units at Westfields. Staff responded that amendments to the May 27th Summary would be made and reposted on the General Plan Website.

3. Discussion on Matters Pertaining to Potential Conflicts of Interest

Staff brought to the Committee's attention the e-mail prepared by the City Attorney's office delineating the attorney/client relationship with the City Attorney which does not include Committee Members, nor does it include any other elected or appointed officials. Member Stahl reminded the Committee Members to disclose any particular involvement they may have regarding the proposed land use amendment areas. Chairman Ferguson commented that such disclosure reflects the committee consensus that was established at the last meeting.

4. General Plan Draft Alternative Study Areas

Jay Petrek discussed the buildout considerations associated with the alternative study areas and that the EIR would evaluate impacts associated with new buildout (traffic, noise, community character, etc.), municipal facilities to be phased and upgraded to accommodate the new buildout, and Growth Management policies in the General Plan that would guide timing of development to be in concert with QOL standards.

Jay summarized the 16 proposed amendment areas and noted that they are located primarily in the City's urban areas, or transitional neighborhoods close to urban services. He noted that, as much as possible, established single family neighborhoods were not being proposed for significant land use changes in order to preserve or enhance their character. Specifically, the criteria for considering areas for land use change included: a) addressing the vision of economic prosperity, b) minimizing impact to residential areas, c) proximity to transit and/or transportation corridors, and d) accommodating anticipated future needs.

Jay mentioned that issues the updated General Plan will need to address included non-conforming uses involving residential development in employment areas as well as existing employment uses that might not meet the updated vision proposed for certain areas. It was discussed that replacement sites for certain non-conforming uses would also be a consideration in the update General Plan if areas are proposed for transitioning to other uses. Additionally, the updated General Plan will need to include policies calling for either new or amended Specific Planning Areas and/or Area Plans to provide more detailed development standards and land uses descriptions for certain areas, and that buffering those uses from adjacent residential development will be a primary consideration.

Jay Petrek discussed that state law requires that cities analyze development intensity and that concept of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as being a universally accepted tool for addressing intensities in a consistent manner. FAR expresses the relationship between the amount of useable floor area permitted in a building (or buildings) and the area of the lot on which the building stands. It is obtained by dividing the gross floor area of a building by the total area of the lot.

Member Prazeau asked whether the Floor Area Ratio conflicts with other policies in the General Plan or Zoning that deal with lot coverage. Staff responded that it did not.

Member Stahl inquired how staff derived the proposed Floor Area Ratios for each study area. Staff responded that they took into account development intensities of similar developments existing in other communities, and also gauged intensities with the buildout vision received from workshops held early in the General Plan Update process.

Chairman Ferguson asked specifically what staff is seeking from the Committee regarding the study areas. Staff responded that a recommendation has been provided for each of the 16 study areas regarding the land use(s), design consideration(s), and FAR to consider. The Committee's task would be to discuss the study areas and either concur with staff recommendation, or suggest an alternative course of action / recommendation.

Study Area EL1

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 1 with a recommended Specific Planning Area designation and land uses of office, technology, bio-medical, research & development, corporate headquarters, professional services, etc. with a FAR of 0.5 – 1.0. The Specific Plan goals included comprehensively planned architecture, building materials, circulation, landscaping, signage, trail system, etc. to attract high-wage employers and high employee densities. The Specific Plan would also need to address phasing out incompatible uses.

Committee Discussion:

Members Prazeau and Stahl commented that residents and property owners in the affected areas need to be notified as part of the General Plan update process. Member Stahl further stated her opposition to the City's use of eminent domain in association with any study areas that are recommended for further study.

Barbara Redlitz commented that resident and property owner notification is integral to the General Plan Update process and that a variety of outreach mediums would be employed to ensure that the public is informed.

Chairman Ferguson questioned whether the proposed study area should be so broad as to include residential areas the City has no intention of changing so as not to overly concern residents. Members Masson and Bowman commented that they prefer a broader approach, and that boundaries could always be contracted after initial analysis is conducted. Barbara Redlitz commented that properties within the study area that are ultimately not included for employment uses may be appropriate to evaluate regarding appropriate buffering standards to ensure compatibility with existing residential uses. Chairman Ferguson commented that if an area has entrenched residential it should not be included simply to establish a convenient boundary line.

ACTION

Chairman Ferguson asked for a show of hands supporting the staff recommendation and the Committee unanimously endorsed EL1 for further analysis as a Specific Plan Employment Area.

Study Area EL2

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 2 with a recommended Area Plan overlay designation and land uses of retail, commercial office, professional / personal services and a FAR of 0.25 – 1.0. The Area Plan goals included high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly features with access to transit and urban trails to attract high-wage employers and high employee densities.

Committee Discussion:

Member Jackson commented that this is an older area and that the FAR should be used an incentive to increase employment intensity, and an opportunity to recycle/redevelop older buildings and encourage new investment.

Chairman Ferguson expressed concern that mandating a specific landscape and design theme would discourage investment. Staff responded that there was no intent to require a specific “design theme” for the area, rather to encourage a threshold of architectural quality that attracts and maintains high-wage employers with quality jobs. Staff further explained that the areas plan would emphasize this area as an important gateway to the City.

Member Kildoo suggested considering a higher FAR.

Member Prazeau expressed concern regarding the quality of infrastructure in the area and the need for potential upgrades.

Member Masson discussed the comparison between EL2 and the San Diego Gaslamp District as an example of how increased intensities spurred investment.

Committee discussion ensued on design standards, opportunities for incentivizing investment and transitioning the area to a more employee-intensive area.

ACTION

Motion by Member Prazeau, second by Member Stahl to support staff recommendation. Under discussion a motion was made by Member Hudson and seconded by Member Kildoo to amend Member Prazeau's original motion to include a broader range of uses and a higher FAR; Vote: 7-2, Prazeau, Stahl; no. (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent).

Study Area EL3

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 3 with a recommended Area Plan overlay designation and land uses of commercial office, research & development, professional services, regional attraction with ancillary uses with a FAR of 0.75 – 1.75. The Area Plan goals included high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly features with transit focus, and linkages to downtown. The Area Plan would also need to address phasing out incompatible uses.

Committee Discussion:

Chairman Ferguson and Member Jackson disclosed separate roles with applicants who owned property within this study area for land uses involving regional attraction and biotech industries.

Committee discussion ensued regarding potentially incompatible land uses (asphalt batch plants, concrete manufacturing, etc). It was discussed that these land uses not only created visual blight that discouraged upscale biotech industries from locating to the area, the incompatible uses also generated air quality concerns for industries requiring a clean air requirement.

Chairman Ferguson mentioned that if the area transitioned to a regional attraction, such as a stadium, it should be anticipated that ancillary uses such as hotels, condominiums, and retail uses would be involved to help finance the facility.

ACTION

Motion by Member Masson, second by Member Hudson to support staff recommendation; Vote: Unanimous.

Study Area EL4

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 4 with a recommended Area Plan overlay designation and land uses of commercial office, research & development, professional services, with a FAR of 0.75 – 1.75. The Area Plan goals included high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly features to attract high wage employers, high employee densities and rebuilding / upgrading existing infrastructure. The small residential lot sizes in the study area are consistent with small lots occupied by businesses in the study area's northern portion and along Ninth Avenue. This area has potential for addressing "start-up" and "incubator" business needs that are typically established on smaller properties. Given the proximity to the future North County Transit District rail extension along Centre City Parkway from the transit station to Westfield Mall, the plan would also have a transit focus, including linkages to downtown. The Area Plan would also need to address phasing out incompatible uses.

Committee Discussion:

Member Masson commented that he would have preferred a larger study area. Member Hudson asked questions regarding the FAR. Member Paul asked if this area had been previously studied for employment uses and if so, what was the outcome and what has changed this time. Staff responded that this area was included as part of the City's previous evaluation of employment lands and that the area was identified as lacking in critical infrastructure. Since that time some infrastructure improvements have been made.

Committee discussion ensued regarding the small lot sizes in this area. Chairman Ferguson commented that the FAR should be lower in order to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential development and that mixed use residential should be allowed along with more flexibility given that there are currently many mixed product-types in the area (single family, multi-family, etc.) Members Prazeau and Stahl concurred and also felt that Urban I and Urban II uses should be permitted to avoid dealing with non-conforming uses and respect residents who desire to remain in the area. Member Jackson commented that the proximity to the Sprinter rail extension provided a great opportunity for mixed use.

Member Bowman commented that there were several properties in the study area that had issues with soil contamination. Staff responded that the City has records of these properties that are maintained by the County Health Department and would be included in the EIR analysis.

ACTION

Motion my Member Masson, second by Member Hudson to extend the study area boundary one block to the west; Vote: 2-7, Bowman, Ferguson, Jackson, Kildoo, Paul, Prazeau, Stahl; no (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent) *Motion failed.*

ACTION

Motion my Member Masson, second by Member Hudson to approve staff recommendation and include residential mixed-use at Urban I and Urban II densities and a reduced FAR to ensure land use compatibility; Vote: Unanimous.

Study Area EL5

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 5 with a recommended Area Plan overlay designation and land uses of commercial and medical office, research & development, professional services, with a FAR of 0.25 – 1.0. The Area Plan goals included high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly features with access to transit and the new Palomar Pomerado Hospital. The Area Plan would target high-wage employers and high employee densities and also need to address phasing out incompatible uses.

Committee Discussion:

Member Jackson supported staff recommendation but noted that topography may be a factor in developing the area. Member Stahl expressed concern regarding compatibility issues with existing residents in the area. Member Paul expressed concern regarding the study area boundary's inclusion of County area.

Member Prazeau suggested that the boundary should extend north to Highway 78 and reduce the study area within the County. Member Hudson asked why staff didn't consider extending the study area further east of Citracado Parkway along Auto Park Way.

Jay Petrek responded that the boundary's focus to include the portion of Auto Park Way between Mission Avenue and Citracado Parkway would be to serve as a gateway into the City as well as the Escondido Research Technology Center (ERTC). Extending the boundary further east along Auto Park Way would not achieve that purpose. Additionally, there was a concern that including a larger study area that accommodated medical office could create compatibility impacts with existing industrial uses.

Jay also discussed the Harmony Grove / Eden Valley / Elfin Forest (HGEVEF) Community Plans that adopted an equestrian-focused, sustainable farming, rural lifestyle. It was discussed that the City's General Plan Update is proposed to include policies to memorialize those HGEVEF planning efforts for areas outside Study Areas EL 5 and EL 6.

ACTION

Motion my Member Paul, second by Member Prazeau to remove the unincorporated county areas from Study Area EL 5; Vote: 4-5, Ferguson, Hudson, Masson, Jackson, Kildoo; no, (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent) *Motion failed.*

ACTION

Motion by Member Prazeau, second by Member Stahl to expand the study area north to include the south side of Highway 78; Vote: 2-7, Bowman, Ferguson, Hudson, Jackson, Kildoo, Masson, Paul, no; (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent) *Motion failed.*

ACTION

Motion by Member Kildoo, second by Member Jackson to approve staff recommendation; Vote: 6-3, Paul, Prazeau, Stahl, no.

Study Area EL6

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 6 with a recommended Specific Planning Area designation with land uses consistent with ERTC Planning Area #8 that include office, technology, bio-medical, research & development, corporate headquarters, professional services, etc. and a FAR of 0.5 – 1.0. The Specific Plan goals include comprehensively planned architecture, building materials, wall treatments, circulation, signage, trail system to attract high-wage employers and high employee densities.

Committee Discussion:

Chairman Ferguson disclosed his role with applicants who own property within this study area for land uses involving employment uses.

Discussion ensued and questions were asked about the FAR; specifically whether it should be higher to provide incentives for development. Staff responded that the area has been identified as containing environmental and cultural constraints which would further restrict a site's potential footprint. A higher FAR in this area could significantly increase the building height which would impact community character.

Member Prazeau expressed concern with the sites proximity to the creek and felt that commercial and professional offices would be better land uses than biotech and research and development.

Member Stahl advocated for substantial buffers if the area was to be studied, but commented that because the proposed land uses conflicted with the HGEVEF planning efforts she opposed the recommendation

Members Bowman, Kildoo and Ferguson concurred that ensuring compatibility with surrounding residential areas should be prioritized.

ACTION

Motion by Member Jackson, second by Member Bowman to support staff recommendation; Vote: 7-2, Prazeau, Stahl; no. (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent).

Study Area EL7

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 7 with a recommended General Plan designation of Office "O" and correlating Commercial Professional (CP) zone which would permit commercial and medical office, research & development, professional services, etc. with a FAR of 0.75 – 1.75. High quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly features and provisions to ensure compatibility with surrounding residential would be implemented through the standard design review process. There were existing single family residences in the area that would need to be eventually phased out.

Members Jackson, Kildoo and Bowman expressed support for staff recommendation. Chairman Ferguson suggested that the adjacent existing medical office development be incorporated into the study area. Staff concurred with this suggestion.

Member Hudson inquired whether churches are compatible in the Commercial Professional zone. Staff responded that churches in the CP zone require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and would not be considered incompatible.

ACTION

Motion by Member Hudson, second by Member Bowman to approve staff recommendation, Vote: 7-2, Prazeau, Stahl; no. (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent).

Member Prazeau commented that residences along the west side of Miller Avenue located immediately south of Brotherton Road should be excluded from the study area. Chairman Ferguson concurred. Staff responded that the recommendation to establish Miller Avenue as a boundary in this area was because most homes on the east side of Miller Avenue did not orient towards the west.

ACTION

Motion by Member Prazeau, second by Chairman Ferguson to modify the study area boundary by excluding nine residences south west of the Brotherton Avenue / Miller Road intersection. Vote: 5-4, Hudson Jackson, Kildoo, Paul; no. (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent).

Study Area EL9

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek presented Study Area EL 9 with a recommended mixed-use designation involving retail, multi-family & commercial office, professional services and opportunities for expanding the Auto Park. The goals would focus on high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly features, access to transit and urban trails, and compatibility with surrounding residential with a FAR of 0.25 - 1.5.

Member Stahl commented that she owned property on the south side of 11th Avenue and wanted property owners in this area to be notified of the proposal.

Chairman Ferguson disclosed his role with applicants who own property within this study area for land uses involving smart-growth mixed-use employment opportunities.

Member Jackson commented that this area's proximity to I-15 and current land use pattern including the Middle School and suburban shopping center of calls for greater intensity when considering the General Plan's long term vision.

Member Prazeau commented that the apartments on the south side of 9th Avenue should be considered for affordable housing opportunities and did not support incorporating mixed-use office development in the residential area. Member Stahl commented that she opposed any increases to residential densities in the area.

ACTION

Motion by Member Masson, second by Member Hudson to approve staff recommendation, Vote: 6-3, Paul, Prazeau, Stahl; no. (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent).

Study Area EL 10

Staff Recommendation:

Jay Petrek and Barbara Redlitz presented Study Area EL 10 and commented that the City Council has given direction to study the area analyzing two options involving commercial office (no medical) or Urban II Residential; up to 12 du / acre. The site is not considered a "smart growth" area, but its low density residential designation (Estate II, up to half-acre single family lots), proximity to Centre City Parkway and Interstate 15 warranted considering an alternative land use. High quality architecture and landscaping with a FAR of 0.25 – 1.0 would be implemented through the standard design review process.

Committee Discussion:

Members Prazeau commented that the area appeared too remote for the proposed land uses.

ACTION

Motion by Member Masson, second by Member Hudson to approve staff recommendation, Vote: 6-3, Jackson, Prazeau, Stahl; no. (Bailey, Cameron, Guthrie, Velasco, Wells; absent).

5. Staff Comments

Staff commented that the Committee should be able to provide their recommendations on the remaining land use study areas at the next meeting. Unless otherwise directed by the City Council, their service would be completed. Following the Committee's efforts, the public and owners/residents of land within the study areas would be notified of community workshops where additional information on the General Plan update and study areas would be offered and an opportunity for additional public comment would be provided.

7. Next Meeting

Chairman Ferguson requested that this item be taken out of order to allow staff to conduct Agenda Item #6 (Public Comments). The next Committee meeting will be held in the City Hall Mitchell Room on Thursday, July 8, 2010, from 6:00 p.m.– 9:00 p.m..

6. Public Comments

Jim Taylor: He commented that he represented property owners of Jet Ridge located in Study Area EL 5, adjacent to the new Palomar Hospital and supported efforts to study the property for congregate care uses, as well as medical, research and development. He expressed a desire to annex to the City.

Janean Huston: She commented that as a resident in the Eden Valley / Harmony Grove area she is concerned with property owners adjacent to Escondido simply annexing to the City to increase their development opportunities. She mentioned that she and many other property owners in her area own horses and are concerned about residents and businesses encroaching into their area and complaining about their equestrian lifestyles.

Barbara Saad: She expressed appreciation for the committee's "visionary efforts" to evaluate land use amendment areas that address the future needs of the community.

Mid Hoppenwrath: She commented on high-tech uses benefiting from their proximity to the rural areas of Harmony Grove and Eden Valley by offering an opportunity for future executives who prefer a more agrarian environment and access to equestrian opportunities. She advocated for the City's General Plan to formally recognize the Eden Valley / Harmony Grove / Elfin Forest community plan that has been a collaborative effort involving the area's residents.

The meeting concluded at 9:07 p.m.