

ATTACHMENT 1
General Plan Issues Committee
Meeting Summary (Amended and Approved)

May 27, 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, Alfredo Velasco, Joyce Wells

Committee Members Absent: Linda Bailey, Elmer Cameron, Thora Guthrie

Committee Members Resigned: Lucas Ross

Staff Present: Barbara Redlitz, Director of Community Development; Jay Petrek, Principal Planner, Pete Montgomery; Fire Chief

1. Opening Comments

Chairman Ferguson provided introductory comments and procedures. Barbara Redlitz announced the recent retirement of Jon Brindle and resulting staff changes in the Department.

2. Review of Meeting Summary from January 21, 2010

Member Paul requested clarification on page 4 regarding the Committee's decision on whether General Plan policies should be included that regulate the issuance of building permits during times of water shortage. It was noted that the motion failed (Vote, 5:6); consequently, the recommendation was that the General Plan should not include policies regulating the issuance of building permits during times of water shortage. Member Wells noted that her vote was not recorded in the minutes, which would change the tally to 5:7. Staff responded that amendments to the January 21st Summary would be made and reposted on the General Plan Website.

3. Discussion on Matters Pertaining to Potential Conflicts of Interest

Chairman Ferguson discussed the City Attorney's memorandum (Agenda Attachment 5) concluding that the Committee is not subject to the conflict of interest laws because the members are not comprised of "public officials" as defined by the Government Code, and that the Committee is an advisory body and is not granted decisionmaking authority. The Committee expressed concern regarding a footnote in the City Attorney memorandum stating, "Please be aware that an individual Citizen Committee member has no attorney/client relationship with the City Attorney and would be unable to rely on advice from this office to provide immunity from FPPC enforcement or prosecution arising out of their conduct in this matter." After discussion, the Committee concurred that members who have business or property interests in or near particular amendment areas should disclose such information for the record, but members should not feel compelled to withhold expressing their comments regarding land use changes.

Member Prazeau expressed her concern with the amount of material that was delivered to the Committee immediately prior to the meeting and the difficulty in researching the information with limited preparation time. She also felt that the membership of the Committee was not a true representation of the community. She expressed a desire to conduct more public outreach as part of the Committee's process.

Chairman Ferguson expressed his understanding that the City Council selected the Committee membership based on their knowledge and insight of the community and that concerns regarding membership should be directed to the City Council.

Barbara Redlitz further clarified that the Committee members were appointed by the City Council to identify issues to be studied in the General Plan Update and were not representatives of any particular interest group.

Member Stahl expressed her concern that the City's budget and election schedule appeared to be dictating the update process and not enough resources were devoted to the General Plan. She reiterated her goal that the General Plan Quality of Life Standards must be preserved and improved for existing residents. She felt that citizens were not being included in the General Plan Update process and more notification to the community needed to be provided, particularly property owners within potential amendment areas, preferably through the U.S. Postal Service, not simply electronic notifications.

Jay Petrek acknowledged that staff has relied heavily on electronic notification and use of the City's website to distribute information to the Committee immediately prior to this meeting and commented that agenda items could be revisited by the Committee for additional discussion if more time is needed to reach consensus. He noted that when the Committee's recommendations on the General Plan Amendment Areas are concluded, staff would prepare alternative Land Use plans for discussion at community outreach meetings. The format for notifying the public of those meetings is currently being discussed.

4. General Plan Update Efforts to Date

Jay Petrek summarized the City Council direction received at public meetings, Draft General Plan information, and community workshops that have been conducted. He noted that draft chapters of the General Plan are available on the City's Website. The Draft EIR Notice of Preparation and consultant Request for Qualifications are anticipated to be released in June 2010.

5. General Plan Draft Alternative Study Areas

a. Residential Buildout Scenarios

Jay Petrek discussed the potential residential buildout scenarios noting that there was sufficient land within Smart Growth Areas to accommodate projected growth anticipated of 3,000 – 4,500 additional units above the current General Plan Buildout through the year 2050 without needing to increase densities in established single family neighborhoods. He noted that the criteria for establishing the alternatives involved enhancing and upgrading older areas, focusing growth Downtown, providing opportunities for unique and exciting land uses, and establishing consistency with Smart Growth principles at densities that support transit.

Jay discussed the General Plan buildout considerations and noted that the EIR will evaluate impacts associated with new buildout (traffic, noise, community character, etc.), that municipal facilities would be phased and upgraded to accommodate new buildout totals, and that growth management policies would guide the timing of development in concert with QOL standards.

Six alternative residential scenarios were presented that would increase the General Plan densities from 3,000 units to 4,500 units above the current Plan's projected buildout. The scenarios dispersed those units in various quantities throughout Downtown, East Valley Parkway, South Escondido Boulevard / Felicita Avenue, Citracado Parkway / Centre City Parkway, Westfields Shopping Town, and Nutmeg Street / I-15.

Jay Petrek explained that the General Plan EIR would be analyzing a variety of land use scenarios including a "No Project" alternative (comprising the currently adopted General Plan without additional density increases) and other alternatives that would include a range of low, medium and high density increases dispersed in the Smart Growth Areas. Jay mentioned that rather than the committee selecting a specific alternative, input on the density ranges and dispersal of units should be provided to guide staff in establishing the alternative scenarios for the EIR's analysis.

Member Stahl asked questions regarding the General Plan household size. She also asked what effect annexations had on the General Plan buildout. Staff responded that the current General Plan assumed 2.44 persons per household, which was accurate at the time of adoption. Escondido currently exceeds 3 persons per household (PPH), and is anticipated to remain above 3 PPH through the year 2050. It was noted that annexations would occur within the existing General Plan boundaries and have been factored into the Plan, in most instances at densities that are consistent with the County's land use designations.

Member Masson asked why numbers of new additional units were shown as targets when previously the Committee had discussed establishing a vision and simply building according to the vision. Staff responded that parameters needed to be established in order to ascertain traffic, noise, water, sewer and other municipal facility service rates and impacts associated with the anticipated growth.

Member Paul asked why residential units were included at Westfield Shopping Town and at Nutmeg / I-15. Staff responded that the City Council had directed staff to include these two areas due to the anticipated transit opportunities at the Westfield site and the need to evaluate a range of alternatives for the Nutmeg Street site given its exposure to I-15. Staff noted that the Nutmeg Street site was not intended as a Smart Growth area.

Chairman Ferguson suggested looking at the anticipated vision for each Smart Growth area and to use that as a basis for establishing the number of anticipated units. He cited the previously prepared Interim Downtown Specific Planning Area that contained a vision for buildout with densities and height limits that was determined to generate 3,275 dwelling units.

Member Prazeau expressed a concern with the ability to accommodate the infrastructure needs with increases to the population and recommended that 1,350 units be considered a maximum buildout for Downtown.

Member Masson felt that a majority of growth should be focused Downtown.

Committee discussion ensued.

After deliberation the Committee's consensus was to include EIR alternative scenarios for study that incorporate the 1,350 units and 3,275 units in the Downtown area (in addition to the "no project alternative).

Discussion commenced on the East Valley Parkway Smart Growth Area.

Member Jackson commented that East Valley Parkway is not served well by transit compared with the South Escondido Boulevard area. He felt that the General Plan should focus densities and intensities along Escondido Boulevard to achieve a "critical mass" that supports transit and advocated not directing additional residential development in the East Valley Parkway Area in order to concentrate development along South Escondido Boulevard.

Member Hudson agreed and commented that this area would be closer to employment areas.

Staff discussed the rationale for establishing a stronger residential and mixed use component in the East Valley Parkway and Ash Street area as a way to address the declining medical office needs east of Downtown's Palomar Hospital that is foreseen with the construction of the new hospital. Staff mentioned inquiries that have been received to allow transitioning medical offices uses in closer proximity to the new Palomar Hospital that may further reduce the need for medical offices near Downtown. It was noted that the established gridiron streets, development pattern and infrastructure improvements in this area south of East Valley Parkway would create a sound foundation for implementing Smart Growth principles with mixed office/residential land uses close to employment and retail uses that did not impact existing single family neighborhoods.

The Committee's Consensus was to study alternative land use scenarios involving 0, 200 and 500 additional units in the East Valley Parkway / Ash Street area.

The Committee recessed for 15-minutes.

The Committee discussed residential and mixed use densities and intensities that achieve a desired vision for supporting transit and services. Staff presented examples of project and densities that had been previously approved, some of which were under construction or completed, ranging from 12 – 70+ units per acre.

Member Jackson commented that increases to the General Plan buildout should be focused in Downtown, with Felicita Avenue / Escondido Boulevard and Citracado Parkway / Centre City Parkway established as additional target areas. Development should be 4-5 stories in height with densities ranging from 45-70 units per acre closest to transit facilities to establish an "urban style" that will be attracted to transit.

Member Prazeau suggested a maximum increase of 3,000 units for the updated General Plan.

Member Masson supported establishing minimum density provisions to ensure projects reflect the vision established for the Smart Growth areas.

Discussion ensued regarding the appropriateness of including the Nutmeg / I-15 site as a location for higher density or employment uses. Members Prazeau and Stahl felt that the existing Estate II designation should be retained; the remaining Committee members recommended studying Urban II (up to 12 du/acre) as well as employment opportunities.

The Committee discussed establishing residential uses at Westfield Shopping Town. Member Kildoo mentioned that including a residential component would be consistent with other regional shopping centers in the area. The Committee felt that at least 250 units should be included in the EIR analysis of this site. ***Member Stahl opposed including residential units at Westfield's.**

The Committee decided to continue the agenda and calendared the next meeting for 6:00 p.m. June 10, 2010. (Note: The June 10, 2010 meeting was subsequently rescheduled to June 24, 2010).

Public Comments

Barbara Benedict: She inquired about the owner of the Nutmeg / I-15 property being considered for land use amendment.

Barbara Saad: She recommended that the General Plan needs a broader vision. Residential areas should be looked at after considering where commercial and jobs should be located. The Committee should also consider the impacts of rental units versus ownership units. She commented that mixed use development (residential developed above commercial) is not attractive for young families to locate; residential flats should be considered in order to accommodate seniors, rather than walk-up units with stairs. Parking for two vehicles per unit should be provided. Residential development needs to occur near transit so people can use it to access shopping. She cited Little Italy in San Diego as a good example.

Michael Ann Merrick: She commented that adequate public notice needs to be provided for all proposed land use changes and that notification through the U.S. Postal Service should be included as part of the process. She had suggestions for including summaries in each section of the minutes to help those reading the material quickly decipher the information being sought. She asked if there were laws that exist requiring that projects provide a certain amount of open space.

Andrea Seavey: She expressed concern that citizens are not aware of the General Plan Update effort and questioned why the press was not following the item more closely.

Mid Hoppenwrath: She identified herself as a Member at large of the Elfin Forest Harmony Grove (EFHG) Town Council and wanted to be included as part of the process. She expressed concern regarding the Draft General Plan Land Use Study Areas E5 and E6 being considered for employment uses that are located in the EFHG Planning Area and conflicted with their Planning Area's land use designations. She indicated she would forward a copy of the adopted EFHG Community Plan to staff for the Committee's review in advance of discussing these areas of proposed study.

The meeting concluded at 9:22 p.m.

* *Summary amended at June 24, 2010 meeting.*