

ATTACHMENT 3
General Plan Issues Committee
Meeting Summary

October 22, 2009
City Hall Mitchell Room
6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: David Ferguson, Chairman, Linda Bailey, Maria Bowman, Elmer Cameron, Thora Guthrie, Jon Hudson, Terry Jackson, John Masson, Rick Paul, Lisa Prazeau, Lucas Ross, Pam Stahl, Alfredo Velasco, Joyce Wells

Committee Members Absent: Steve Kildoo

Staff Present: Charlie Grimm, Assistant City Manager, Jonathan Brindle, Director of Community Development, Barbara Redlitz, Assistant Planning Director, Jay Petrek, Principal Planner.

Charlie Grimm welcomed the committee and provided overall City Council direction.

Dave Ferguson outlined the purpose of the committee and identified issues important to the City for successfully completing the General Plan Update.

The Committee and Staff introduced themselves.

I. Discussion on Population Buildout / Smart Growth Areas

Jon Brindle and Jay Petrek presented a PowerPoint presentation on the topic of growth and population and described the 70,000 dwelling unit shortfall anticipated by SANDAG by the year 2050. If Escondido were to accept its proportionate share, based on the city's overall percentage of regional housing, an additional approximately 2,500 units would be added to the current build-out of 63,100 units slated for the General Plan.

A question was raised regarding Proposition S (the voter-approved initiative that mandates city-wide elections for General Plan Amendments that increase residential density or change land uses from residential to commercial or industrial). The question centered on how the current update will be factored into a future public vote, or if the Update would eliminate Proposition S.

Staff responded that it is likely a public vote will be required to ratify the Update, which is why drafting the document is timed for the 2012 election. There has not been direction to staff that Proposition S would be eliminated and the Committee would be discussing the merits of the Proposition at one of their future meetings.

A question was raised whether the General Plan should include policies regarding City gateways. Staff responded that such policies can be included in the General Plan.

A comment was made that the population should be closely tied to the overall quality of life of the community. If Escondido grew too much the community's quality of life would be compromised.

Questions were asked whether the Quality of Life standards were measured in terms of population or dwelling units. Staff responded that dwelling units were used as the unit of measure for determining quality of life performance because population per household varied significantly.

The Committee adjourned for a 15-minute break

After the break the committee continued their discussion:

A question was asked regarding population per household (PPH) growth over time and whether Escondido's PPH varied from other jurisdictions and/or the region. Staff responded that Escondido's PPH did vary from both the region and other jurisdictions, but that the PPH over time throughout the region was climbing.

Discussion ensued regarding the previous effort to attain a General Plan buildout population of 155,000-165,000 by re-designating areas zoned for multifamily units that were previously developed with an expectation that those units would recycle at a lower density. Lower densities have not been achieved in those areas and are now considered "non-conforming" because their built-out density is higher than the underlying General Plan designation. However, similar reductions in overall General Plan build-out units have occurred in other areas of the community such as Daley Ranch, Montreux, Bernardo Mountain, etc, by designating these areas to open space, resulting in over 4,000 fewer units than anticipated in the 1990 General Plan adoption.

Staff clarified that residential clustering policies do not result in developments with higher densities than are accounted for in the underlying General Plan land use designation.

Discussion ensued regarding the City's "holding capacity" and what would be an appropriate buildout. Committee members expressed opinions ranging from 1) retaining the original 165,000 buildout policy to 2) allowing additional growth and ensuring infrastructure is there to serve the increased population. The committee discussed the ramification of allowing no growth beyond existing General Plan policies, the impacts of "unplanned growth," and the ability to meet Quality of Life standards.

Discussions ensued regarding the City's relationship with SANDAG and implications of not accepting any of the projected shortfall of units anticipated in the 2050 forecast. Staff responded that there are no mandates that require Escondido to plan for additional growth anticipated in the 2050 forecast. Several committee members commented that not planning for growth would not be a guarantee that no growth would occur.

There appeared recognition that the overall PPH was a factor beyond the City's control and that the trend for larger household would increase Escondido's population beyond adopted General Plan buildout policies. The discussion turned to appropriate areas in the community to designate additional growth so that adequate facilities and services could be provided. The consensus of the committee was that Smart Growth areas around Downtown and the urban core, adjacent to transit and with adequate infrastructure would be the most appropriate for incorporating additional growth.

ACTION:

Dave Ferguson summarized the points of view pertaining to additional population growth and asked the committee to indicate their preference by raising their hands to show support for their point of view. The following points of view were described as non-exclusive and members could vote multiple times if desired:

- 1) The City should accept a "Fair Share" of the anticipated 70,000 unit-shortfall (approximately 2,500 units for Escondido) -0- votes

- 2) The City should accept no units; Escondido is already too crowded and as a result no density increases should occur -3- votes
- 3) The City should determine what densities are needed to meet community goals and determine what densities are appropriate to meet those goals –unanimous-

The consensus was that Smart Growth also includes jobs, not just residential densities. There was no interest in increasing densities in established neighborhoods. The City should evaluate redevelopment opportunities in deteriorated areas and revisit Quality of Life standards for possible refinement in areas where increased density is proposed.

II. Discussion on General Plan Boundaries and Land Use

The Committee discussed the mix of land use involving residential, industrial, retail and office areas and questioned how Escondido compares with other communities. There was discussion on the appropriateness of considering small retail areas in close proximity to outlying residential areas to provide more convenience and reduce travel times and distances for residents. Staff noted that the existing “Neighborhood Commercial” zone allows for small convenience markets in areas designated in the General Plan for residential use.

Committee members commented that there may be sufficient territory in the general plan devoted for retail uses but additional employment-oriented industrial and office land should be considered.

Committee member Jackson mentioned that when referring to “commercial” land uses there needs to be a distinction between “retail” and “office”. Employment land typically includes office and industrial uses, and excludes retail.

The committee discussed the future high-speed rail connection with Escondido and the importance of ensuring the alignment and station location are in proximity to planned employment uses. There may be a need to redevelop certain industrial areas that are under-utilized around transit corridors and station stops.

There was consensus that consideration should be given to determining what goal the city wanted to accomplish in terms of providing employment land when evaluating ownership patterns, numbers of owners, existing improvements, redevelopment overlays, lot consolidation, financial feasibility, compatibility with surrounding areas, etc., all of which would have a bearing on how quickly the area could be developed for employment uses.

Chairman Ferguson recommended that committee members think about where employment lands should be considered for inclusion in the update and bring these for discussion at the next meeting. He also recommended that Proposition “S” be included as a discussion topic for the November 5, 2009 meeting.

III. Public Comments

Dave Shibley: Mr. Shibley recommended the Committee review SANDAG’s website. He mentioned that growth was inevitable and the city could not control the amount of births or family size so there is a potential for overcrowding if there are no plans for accommodating growth. He advocated that the Smart Growth areas need to be flexible to allow developers the

ability to adjust their projects to specific market demands that might not be evident now. He recommended Felicity/Citracado/I-15 as an additional Smart Growth area and that Proposition “S” should be eliminated.

Barbara Benedict: Ms. Benedict had questions regarding the stadium and high speed rail alignment. She commented that the culture of the community needs to be considered; there is no need to eliminate Proposition “S,” simply prepare a good plan.

IV. Next Meeting Scheduled

The next Committee Meeting is scheduled for November 5, 2009 in the City Hall Mitchell Room at 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.