

ATTACHMENT 2

GENERAL PLAN ISSUES COMMITTEE **DISCUSSION TOPIC #8:**

Existing Quality of Life Standards should be modified to ensure they address forecasted needs.

Background and History on the General Plan Quality of Life Standards

The Quality of Life Standards were originally adopted as a component of the 1990 General Plan Update's Goals and Objectives that included minimum thresholds of service levels for various public improvements and facilities. As part of the 1990 General Plan Update the city contracted Hughes, Heiss & Associates to analyze various service levels and the impact that growth has on the requirements for "core municipal services" of police, fire, public works maintenance, libraries, and parks & recreation.

The objectives of the analysis were:

1. To identify, for each of the core municipal services, the appropriate measures for defining service levels, and within which meaningful service level standards could be established.
2. To identify what constitutes a "B" or above average service level for each of the core service areas considering:
 - a. Current practice in cities of population levels equivalent to levels projected for Escondido at General Plan Buildout.
 - b. Appropriate industry and/or professional standards relevant to each of the core service areas, and their various service components.
3. To compare "B" service levels with existing service levels in the city and determine:
 - a. The extent to which existing services in Escondido are above, below, or equivalent to the "B" service level standards.
 - b. Costs to bring services up to the "B" level standard where deviations exist.
4. To project the future costs (staffing, facilities, major equipment) of delivering "B" service levels at General Plan buildout.

The consultants performed extensive analysis to develop the Quality of Life service threshold recommendations. The analysis included:

1. Reviewing literature, interviewing practitioners, and drawing upon professional experiences of the project team in each core service area to identify the most meaningful measures within which service level standards could be established.
2. Surveying 15-20 cities with populations ranging from 120,000 to 170,000 to document the service areas and service measures. Survey results were combined with the results of the consultant's review of professional literature and interviews to identify and quantify what constitutes a "B" level of service for each measure.

3. Interviewing department heads and appropriate members of city staff to document existing service levels in Escondido and to identify how existing services compare to “B” service levels. In those instances where gaps between existing and “B” service levels were identified, additional analyses were completed to address such areas as:
 - a. The nature and scope of current service delivery approaches including staffing and operating costs associated with current operations.
 - b. Specific staffing and operating costs required to close identified gaps between existing service levels and “B” service levels.
4. Projecting the operating costs of maintaining “B” service levels at General Plan buildout that included:
 - a. Establishing service-specific linkages to relate operations and services to community growth.
 - b. Employing these linkages to structure illustrative departmental operations (in terms of staffing levels, costs, facility expansion) necessary to deliver “B” service levels at buildout.
 - c. Basing projected operations at buildout on high and low population projections as developed by Morgan Woollett and Associates, the firm responsible for translating the City’s various density and development scenarios into both General Plan population and school enrollment projections as part of the General Plan development project.

The “core municipal services” of police, fire, public works maintenance, libraries, and parks & recreation became the foundation for Quality of Life Standards which were adopted in the 1990 General Plan that ultimately included standards for Air Quality, Traffic and Transportation, Schools, Sewers, Water, Open Space, and Economic Prosperity. Several Master Plans have been prepared that implement the Quality of Life Standards by determining the number and size of specific facilities needed to adequately serve the projected buildout population.

As trends and technology changes how cities provide municipal service to their citizens, Master Plans have been refined over the course of time necessitating amendments to the adopted Quality of Life Standards. In order to stay current, the City Council has amended the Standards since 1990. Although the Quality of Life Standards are a major component of the General Plan, they are not included in the many sections of the General Plan that cannot be amended or eliminated without voter approval in accordance with Proposition “S.” The Quality of Life amendments to date include:

1. Changing the Fire Service Standard twice to clarify response times, and to reflect updated “Standards of Coverage” approach for providing service.
2. Amending the Police Standard to reflect the city’s on-going Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) efforts that focuses on enforcement efforts, prevention programs and community involvement.
3. Basing the Parks and Open Space Standards on dwelling units rather than population to determine acreage needs as a result of fluctuating household size
4. Amending the School Standard to reflect “state-mandate” space and teacher/student ratios requirements rather than the “traditional” school-year calendar schedule.

5. Modifying the Sewer Standard to reflect provisions in the Sewer Master Plan regarding treatment, trunkline, pumping facility, outfall and secondary capacities.
6. Adding an Economic Prosperity Standard to provide direction and focus on increasing the community's median household income and per capita wage compared to the region.

Treatment of Standards in the Previous General Plan

Prior to the General Plan's adoption in 1990 the previous General Plan did not include quantitative levels for the various services provided by the City. Instead, Escondido's previous General Plan included broad policy language with generalized goals promoting "sufficient coverage," "effective protection" and "adequate service" that relied on the preparation and adoption of subsequent detailed Master Plans to meet the intent of the General Plan policy. For example, the Escondido's previous General Plan included the following Public Facility Policy Statements addressing Library Facilities, Fire Protection, Utilities (water, storm drains, sewer):

1. Provide sufficient space to facilitate inter- and intra-department coordination, while assuring the proper implementation of demand (for) governmental services.
2. Locate the facility so that it will be accessible to the greatest number of people and able to serve the public efficiently and effectively.
3. Locate administrative facilities so that they will be integrated with, not isolated from, other offices that use governmental services often.
4. Situate the facilities so that they will create a community image and enhance the symbolic importance of government as representative of the democratic process.

Staff evaluated General Plans throughout the region and found that only Chula Vista incorporates quantitative thresholds for municipal services that are tied to controlling development. General Plans from other cities include "quality of life" discussion in a general sense, but did not claim that a violation of any quality of life goals would result in a decrease in or halt to development within that City.

The Relationship of the Quality of Life Standards Budget Decisions

The General Plan Quality of Life Standards are the basis for developing and implementing capital improvement programs. The level of service specified in the Quality of Life Standards can have major fiscal impacts on the City; the higher the level of service, the greater the potential budget impact. Therefore, Quality of Life thresholds have a direct bearing on the nature and amount of Development Impact Fees, which are a major source of funding. Often, the Council is forced to balance a number of competing objectives during the Budget Process since it is not possible to fully satisfy all Quality of Life Standards at all times.

It should be noted that, as a general rule, new development can only be required to pay development impact fees that offset their own impacts. Therefore, new development cannot be charged for existing deficiencies. Amending the Quality of Life Standards to increase service levels or expand capital requirements could, in itself, create existing deficiencies if these levels do not currently exist. Deficiencies could also be created by development in other jurisdictions that impact Escondido (i.e. traffic generated by development outside the community), or by a lag in the construction of public facilities. Often capital improvements cannot be expanded in precise increments. Additionally, budget issues can affect service levels if the staffing cannot be provided to achieve the desired service standards. These issues are discussed on an ongoing basis through the budget process.

GENERAL PLAN ISSUES COMMITTEE

DISCUSSION TOPIC #6:

The General Plan's growth management system should ensure minimum service levels are maintained but provide for some level of development to proceed even to the extent that some, non-critical, infrastructure deficiencies exist.

Relationship between the 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.