

General Plan Update
Interest Group Meeting
October 27, 2008

Interest Group Members:

George Courser	Back Country Coalition
Margaret Beauchamp	SD Regional Economic Development Corporation
Bruce Tabb	Environmental Development
Scott Thomas	American Institute of Architects
Al Stehly	Farm Bureau
Brooke Peterson	American Planning Association
Liz Higgins	San Diego Association of Realtors
Dave Shibley	Save our Land Values
Dan Silver	Endangered Habitat League
Jim Whalen	Alliance for Habitat Conservation
Karen Messer	Buena Vista Audubon Society
Greg Lambron	Helix Land Company
Phil Pryde	San Diego Audubon
Tracy Morgan Hollingworth	American Society of Landscape Architects

Public at Large:

Rikki Shroeder
Brice Bossler
Laura Houle
Bill Houle
Jon Rilling
Bob Smith
Charlene Ayers
David Ornelas
Chris Anderson
Carolyn Dorroh
Ron White

County Staff:

Devon Muto (DPLU)
Bob Citrano(DPLU)
Jimmy Wong (DPLU)
Eric Lardy (DPLU)
Christine Wang (DPLU)
Bob Goralka (DPW)
Claudia Anzures (County Counsel)

Agenda Item I: Introductions

Mr. Muto began the meeting with introductions of DPLU staff and Interest Group members. He then provided the following brief progress report on the General Plan update project to the group:

- Significant progress has been made on the GP elements for the upcoming public review period.
- The Environmental Impact Report for the GP update is going through initial preparation with PBS&J. Public review of the EIR is going to occur in the summer or fall of 2009.
- Community plans are in the process of being reviewed by staff and currently there are 12 submissions as of the Sept 30, 2008 due date.
- Staff continues to make progress on the conservation subdivisions program.
- Implementation of the Citygate Report (Service First Initiative) will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on October 29th and has very few effects on GP Update.
- Monthly email updates will be expanded to include updates on policy and ordinance developments and possibly other related DPLU activities.

Agenda Item II: **Action Item, Interest Group Meeting Minutes from 6/27/2008**

Mr. Muto asked for comments or edits on the minutes from the previous Interest Group meeting on 6/27/08.

Ms. Hollingworth stated that she was not listed in the meeting minutes.

Ms. Peterson motioned for approval, Mr. Shibley seconded the motion. The Interest Group voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes from 6/27/2008.

Agenda Item III: Review of Draft Public Road Standards

Mr. Goralka stated that the proposed revisions to Public Road Standards were performed with one purpose in mind, which was to incorporate the number of road classifications that were recommended by the General Plan Update.

Mr. Goralka explained that two other topics addressed in the road standards are the installation of guard rails and the design scenario recommended minimum sight distance.

Ms. Hollingworth asked if truck trails are referenced in the updated road standards or the possibility of them being utilized as fire access roads. Mr. Goralka answered that there are only a couple truck trails that are in existence now that are classified as circulation element roads. Mr. Goralka explained that the County does not currently have separate standards for fire access roads, because fire access roads are coordinated with the fire department. Furthermore Mr. Goralka stated that there was the addition of two non-circulation element road classifications (28 foot classifications) to help address fire access.

Mr. Courser asked if the road standards addressed fire evacuation in the back country. Mr. Goralka stated that the General Plan is keeping some local public roads for secondary fire access roads, but evacuation measures may be better addressed in the community plans.

Mr. Shibley asked how average daily trips are formulated. Mr. Goralka stated that the County primarily relies on SANDAG's trip generation rate which takes into account such factors as persons per household.

Mr. Silver asked if the document addressed the concerns of the development community with the over designing of rural roads. Mr. Goralka stated that this is being addressed in a few different ways such as the reduction in circulation element roadways and non-circulation element roadways. Mr. Goralka commented that rural communities desire dirt pathways rather than concrete sidewalks. Mr. Goralka further explained that the installation of a sidewalk will be now considered only if there is typically a high demand for pedestrians (i.e. school). Mr. Goralka also pointed out that some communities have their own right of way standards.

Mr. Whalen stated that while designing new subdivisions he is encountering conflicts between the road standards and County Ordinances, for example the design criteria section of the biological mitigation ordinance which encourages applicants to design environmentally sensitive subdivisions by amending the design of their streets from wide, flat and straight to steep narrow and curvy. Mr. Whalen asked where the Private Road Standards were located in the document, and Mr. Goralka stated that the Private Road Standards are a separate set of standards.

Mr. Whalen asked if the private road standards were being updated because everything left to develop is hilly and not flat anymore. Mr. Goralka stated that at this time there is no proposal to update the private road standards. Mr. Goralka further explained that the County will need to check with the fire department, fire marshals, and DPLU to see if there is a desire to update the private road standards, and if there is, when.

Mr. Whalen stated that there is a need to update the private road standards because the County cannot build out this General Plan without having relief from the conflict of road standards and Ordinances. Mr. Whalen asked if it is true that the fire department doesn't like a grade of more than 15% or more because they are concerned about their equipment falling off the trucks. Mr. Goralka answered that there are multiple reasons for this.

Mr. Whalen stated that one of the ways he has gotten around the road standards in the past is through road interim construction, for instance a four-lane to a two-lane. Mr. Whalen asked if there will there be a change to the Interim road standards. Mr. Goralka answered there will be no change.

Ms. Hollingworth stated that there should be discussion between the appropriate parties on projects if the applicant cannot make the allotted density to warrant the construction of the road. Mr. Goralka stated that this can be done and perhaps should be done by a

project to project basis in terms of determining what is really needed for the project. Mr. Goralka explained that the Public Road Standards and the General Plan uses are classifications based on the road to accommodate the build out of all the land uses and in many cases the ultimate classification is not needed until much of the development occurs.

Mr. Shibley asked if the proposed changes to the Public Road Standards were going to cause necessary changes to the Private Road Standards. Mr. Goralka stated that in terms of proposed changes to the Public Road Standards, there will be no need to update the Private Road Standards.

Mr. Tabb asked where sidewalks are addressed in the document such as meandering sidewalks, and also what changes to the provisions for the sidewalk standards have occurred. Mr. Goralka stated that there has been little change, and that mainly edits were made to the wording of the document to allow more flexibility.

Mr. Tabb asked if the County currently allows meandering sidewalks now. Mr. Goralka stated that the County does allow them, and has used them in some instances.

Mr. Whalen commented about county trails and how wildlife agencies are removing funding for land acquisitions. Mr. Whalen followed up by asking how the document helped the County address this problem. Mr. Goralka stated that in terms of Public Road Standards the trails master plan identifies trails along County roads within the County road right-of-way and the County will provide a pathway (10 feet).

Mr. Whalen stated that it appears to be the same, and he has always been working with 10 foot pathways. Mr. Goralka stated that it is similar except for the language is now consistent with the trails master plan which was adopted the last time the standards were updated.

Mr. Muto asked if Department of Parks of Recreation (DPR) was aware of this issue. Mr. Whalen answered yes.

Mr. Muto followed up by stating that DPR is looking at the trail master plan for possible updates, and it is good for staff to be aware the conflict. Mr. Muto stated that he can request that DPR present any updates to the group in the future.

Mr. Whalen stated that he sees that the County is in the integration process which will allow for regulatory documents to be pulled together so they are all read the same which is a critical point.

Mr. Goralka stated that he needs to know what the problems are that are causing issues related to trails along County Roads. Mr. Whalen asked how comments are to be submitted.

Mr. Muto stated that comments should be sent to Bob and he will make sure it is correctly routed internally.

Ms. Baker stated that the issues that Mr. Whalen is hearing about are not alongside roads but are in the right-of-way and are not in biological core areas that resource agencies are claiming. She stated that this is not really an issue for the road standards, but rather it is an issue for the other County trails program.

Mr. Goralka concluded the discussion by stating that comments on the Draft Public road Standards are due by Nov. 14th.

Agenda Item IV: Discussion of Conservation Subdivision

Mr. Muto introduced the next agenda item, and reminded everyone that the current version of the draft conservation subdivision program has not changed since June 20, 2008. Mr. Muto proceeded by going through the conservation subdivision examples.

Mr. Thomas asked if the plan was to involve the community groups in the program development process to obtain consensus. Mr. Muto stated yes, and explained that it is a priority to work with the individual communities in an attempt to gain overall consensus on the program.

Mr. Shibley stated that according to the Steering Committee minutes the communities have the ability to opt out of conservation subdivision design and he is interested to see how that will play out. Mr. Shibley followed up by asking staff to explain the differences between yield, (in regards to plan development), lot averaging and clustering, and which one of the three can better achieve the overall goal of the conservation subdivision program. Mr. Shibley also stated that in no where in the document is there mention of the word clustering.

Mr. Muto stated that in regards to the use of the term “clustering”, staff has moved away from using the term because the majority of stakeholders believe it carries a negative connotation. Mr. Muto explained that the term “clustering” is generally a broad and undefined term, and does not accurately reflect what the program is set to achieve. Mr. Muto stated that not every project that is going to receive the benefits of the program will always be clustered. He further explained that the program is intended to allow more flexibility with the County’s regulations to design development in a way that responds to the impacts to the land and surrounding community which may or may not end in a clustered design.

Mr. Muto stated that which tool you choose depends primarily on the specific site constraints. Mr. Muto brought up an example of maximum yield where there was a hypothetical property with a density of 10 dwelling units. Mr. Muto explained that neither tool will give you more than your allotted density, but one or the other should allow you to design and build the allowed 10 dwelling units while still responding to the site constraints, as opposed to the standard subdivision ordinance that may only allow you to build 8 dwelling units on the same site.

Mr. Muto responded to Mr. Shibley's question in regards to the community groups view on the program, by stating that some of the communities have requested the opt out of the program, and some of the communities have recognized that having flexibility in subdivision design could be beneficial. Mr. Muto stated that he plans to work with the different community groups to gain more input and to also see perhaps if the program is not appropriate in some areas.

Ms. Hollingworth asked who is responsible for the maintenance open space and if the program is going to be addressed in the housing element.

Mr. Muto stated that ownership of open space continues to be unresolved. He explained that the solution to the open space issue must not constrain the County from being able to implement the program. Mr. Muto stated that currently the County has a policy of when the county will take ownership of the open space but there are times when the County does not need to take possession of the land and the open space should remain in private ownership, however in the program it states that all open space will be placed under an easement to ensure future protection.

Mr. Muto went through the examples, and explained that the examples were all recently completed projects in the County.

Ms. Messer commented that she felt the examples were great and asked how wildly the document had been circulated. Mr. Muto stated that the graphic examples have been seen by the Steering Committee, and he also stated that the response from the committee was generally welcomed.

Ms. Messer followed up by asking what the Steering Committees reaction to reaction to the increased yield. Mr. Muto stated that he did not recall any specific negative reactions.

Mr. Muto stated for clarification that at the last Steering Committee, the committee voted on a motion to not agree with any conservation subdivision proposal that mandated a minimum lot size on them. Mr. Muto explained that he believed that was an indirect way of saying that the program was ok, because staff's program did not mandate minimum lot sizes.

Mr. Silver stated that he agreed with Ms. Messer in that the examples were excellent, and that the program is better planning from many perspectives and still maintains the character of the rural communities.

Ms. Baker noted in the Alpine example that drivers in the back lot would have to drive inefficiently through the cul-de-sacs unlike the conservation subdivision design. Ms. Baker stated that the back country needs extra attention in regards to fire protection, and property owners will need assistance in maintaining these open space areas. Mr. Muto clarified that the responsibility of maintenance such as fuel modification measures on open space would remain with the individual property owners.

Mr. Shibley asked if the program is going to be voluntary. Mr. Muto stated that the program is voluntary but the property owner will still be responsible for the preservation of natural resources on the property.

Mr. Shibley asked for clarification on section 4 of the conservation subdivision handout that states that a property owner maybe allowed to encroach onto steep slopes when projects sufficiently conserve sensitive land on site. Mr. Muto stated that staff is still developing specifics at this time on how that will be accomplished, but mentioned that staff will be looking at revising the Resource Protection Ordinance.

Mr. Shibley asked if North County MSCP would be adopted around the same time as the GP update. Mr. Muto explained that North County MSCP has an earlier target date for adoption, which will be sometime next year.

Mr. Whalen asked who will be reading all the documents to ensure they are all consistent. Mr. Muto explained that he and other internal DPLU staff including Tom Oberbauer will be reviewing the documents to ensure consistency.

Mr. Whalen asked County Counsel about the possibility of adding legislative intent to clear up any remaining inconsistencies. Ms. Anzures stated that with the County developing so many Ordinances, there is a possibility to include some legislative intent to ensure consistency between all County documents.

Ms. Messer commented that she believes the group is gaining consensus and is pleased to see that the plan is making progress again.

Agenda Item V: Discussion of Draft General Plan Review Timeline

Mr. Muto stated that staff has made significant progress with the General Plan and the compiled document will be distributed for public review on November 14th, 2008.

Mr. Shibley asked if the document will be available in an electronic format. Mr. Muto explained that it will be available for download on the GP Update website and also hard copies will be available for public purchase.

Mr. Muto stated that there will be a 60 day public review period for the General Plan which will end in the middle of January. Mr. Muto explained that staff will continue to accept comments past the deadline, but in order to make the next round of revisions staff will need comments submitted by mid January.

Agenda Item VI: Future Agenda Topics

Mr. Shibley requested that future discussions should include Equity Mechanisms, the SANDAG population forecast, and a presentation on SB375.

Mr. Courser suggested inviting the Attorney General to discuss SB375 to the group.

Mr. Silver stated that currently on the County website they are accepting comments on the County thresholds for significance guidelines on global climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Muto said that since these are issues that interest both advisory groups, staff may consider having a joint informational meeting.

Ms. Hollingworth added that she would like to see feedback from the County Assessor on property assessments, and perhaps a study showing what percentage of parcels would be potentially affected by the GP update.

Agenda Item VII: Public Comment

Public comment: Clustering in the backcountry is not appropriate due the danger of fire, and also the lack of groundwater.

Agenda Item VIII: Next Steps

Mr. Muto explained the options for potential meeting dates in January, and asked for any recommendations from members.

Ms. Higgins asked where the group should focus their review for the next few weeks. Mr. Muto stated that he would like their focus to be on reviewing the Draft General Plan.

Mr. Courser requested that hard copies should be available for free both to members and the public. Mr. Muto answered by stating that hard copies will be available free to members upon request and also will be available for the public to purchase.

Mr. Muto thanked the members and public for their participation in the process and concluded the meeting.