

# CITY COUNCIL

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Reso No. \_\_\_\_\_ File No. \_\_\_\_\_

Ord No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Agenda Item No.:11**  
**Date: March 9, 2011**

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Barbara Redlitz, Director of Community Development

SUBJECT: General Plan Update Status and Climate Action Plan  
(Case No. PHG 09-0020, PHG 10-0016)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is requested that the City Council endorse the General Plan land use study areas that have been refined based on a preliminary evaluation and market feasibility analysis, and direct staff to proceed with preparation of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

**FISCAL ANALYSIS:**

Three contracts totaling \$899,302.00 were approved by the City Council on December 15, 2010, with the consulting firm PBS&J to conduct planning services technical studies, prepare a Climate Action Plan, and Screencheck EIR. Funding for the contracts is available to complete the planning services and Climate Action Plan. Staff anticipates an additional \$500,000.00 will be needed during the 2011-2012 FY Budget Process to complete the EIR, staff Project Manager salary, and related expenses in anticipation of a public vote in the November 2012 election.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Staff issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on July 26, 2010, informing agencies, organizations and individuals of the City's intent to prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan Update. The NOP allowed 30 days for the views of interested parties to be submitted regarding topics for the City to be evaluated in the EIR. A "Program EIR" to assess the General Plan Update is considered the most appropriate document for analysis as it will be able to comprehensively examine the series of actions characterized by the build-out of the General Plan.

**GENERAL PLAN ANALYSIS:**

State Law requires General Plans to be updated periodically. The State's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) monitors the status of General Plans and begins to encourage cities to update their plans after 8 years. The updated General Plan will meet current legal requirements, establish a framework for implementing the community's Vision for 2050, and address the City Council's Action Plan requirements.

The Housing Element has a separate, specific, update schedule. The next required update has been extended to January 2013 so it can be coordinated with other Regional Planning efforts. The required Housing Element Update will be coordinated with the remainder of the General Plan Update to ensure they are ultimately consistent.

The Climate Action Plan will provide appropriate measures for reducing GHG emissions improving the health and safety of the community, consistent with General Plan goals and policies. The primary GHG contributors are auto and vehicle emissions which have a direct bearing on the manner in which residents travel between land uses. To the extent land uses can be arranged to minimize vehicle trips, and General Plan policies can be implemented that promote alternative transportation modes, positive air quality impacts can be attained.

PREVIOUS ACTION:

Based on previous community input the City Council has directed staff to modernize several Quality of Life Standards, perform General Plan text edits to incorporate updated legal requirements and a refined community vision for accommodating anticipated population increases and creating and/or enhancing employment lands. Fifteen (15) Land Use Study Areas are focused in the urban core and along transportation corridors where opportunity exists to enhance employment and residential mixed-use opportunities (see Exhibit 1). These employment land use study areas involve:

- 1) Amending approximately 450 acres of existing residentially designated properties to employment land uses (Business Park, Office, and Commercial);
- 2) Establishing Specific Plans, Area Plans or other types of "Overlay Districts" on approximately 800 acres of existing employment lands with goals of attracting high-wage employers, intensifying land uses to raise employee densities;
- 3) Incentivizing educational institutions, vocational schools, and job training facilities along the East Valley Parkway corridor providing residents opportunities to enhance their personal or professional skills resulting in a higher trained, better educated local labor force; and,
- 4) Establishing compact, high intensity urban mixed-use residential nodes in close proximity to employment, transit, services, shopping, recreation, and entertainment in pedestrian-friendly environments designed to reduce vehicle trips.

DISCUSSION:

To enhance the General Plan's opportunity for successful build out, staff held a workshop on February 3, 2011, to discuss each study area with a land use consultant (P.B.S. & J.) and an economist (CIC Research, Inc) to develop a preliminary market feasibility analysis. Guiding themes of the workshop included previous input from the Citizen's Committee and direction from the City Council (outlined above) and also included that:

- a) The "preferred alternative" in most study areas represents the most intense land uses;
- b) Instead of basing the General Plan Update on a target population and/or employment projection, the update focuses on a buildout vision of the City and plan for achieving that vision (Master Plan approach);
- c) Development levels in the General Plan should be established (and analyzed in the EIR) because the General Plan will allow for more development than what can actually occur by the horizon year. Future projects will be able to tier from the EIR as long as the development is within those identified levels;
- d) The General Plan should allow maximum densities to attract developers; the city will need more than bonus densities to spur development;
- e) In determining which study areas to concentrate development the city should pursue "low-hanging fruit" first (areas that are easy to access, assemble land and extend infrastructure) – Future development can be facilitated when some development and infrastructure in an area has already been established; and,
- f) A comprehensive economic strategy is recommended to attract development.

The research serves as an important step in the General Plan update because the resulting land use refinements call for increasing intensities in several study areas, which will affect traffic, noise, air quality and other issues to be evaluated in the EIR.

To graphically portray the style and intensity of development anticipated in the study areas a matrix that illustrates land use densities is provided in Exhibit 2. The Preliminary Market feasibility Analysis (Exhibit 3) includes a general assessment of the community, Escondido's current market share of employment land, and the ability to accommodate anticipated growth. For each study area the analysis:

- a) determines the appropriateness of the proposed land uses;
- b) identifies strengths and weaknesses in terms of marketability; and,
- c) recommends potential strategies that would enhance development opportunities.

#### STUDY AREA REFINEMENTS:

For certain study areas the recommendation involves increasing the building intensity in order to enhance the opportunity for successful build out. Building intensity is typically measured by Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which represents the ratio between the total gross square floor area of all buildings on a lot and the total land area of that lot. For example a 20,000 square-foot building on a 40,000 square-foot lot yields a FAR of 0.50. A 0.50 describes a single-story building that covers half of the lot, or a two-story building that covers one-quarter of the lot, or a four-story building covering one-eighth of the lot. Following are Study Area recommendations for the City Council's consideration:

#### **1) EL-5 (Highway 78 at Nordahl)**

*Current Proposal:* office and medical uses adjacent to hospital, strengthen transit connection between Nordahl Transit Station and PPH facility along Auto Park Way

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Increase FAR land use intensities from 1.50 to 1.75 along Auto Park Way

#### **2) SG-7 (Westfield Shoppingtown)**

*Current Proposal:* incorporate 250 residential development at the site

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Eliminate residential uses to maximize the city's control of long-term development potential

#### **3) EL-7 (I-15 at Felicita Road)**

*Current Proposal:* Corporate Office Employment Development

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Include opportunity for "theme" development such as a restaurant row of upscale dining

#### **4) EL-1 (I-15 at El Norte Parkway)**

*Current Proposal:* Establish a campus-style business park

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- No Change

#### **5) EL-6 Harmony Grove Road / Citracado Parkway (missing link section)**

*Current Proposal:* Expand Escondido Research & Technology Center (ERTC) Specific Plan land uses to include this study area.

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- No Change

#### **6) EL-3 (Southeast I-15 and Highway 78)**

*Current Proposal:* Intensify employment opportunities; establish Ballpark District that spurs redevelopment around minor league ball field and integrates with downtown

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Increase FAR land use intensities from 1.25 to 1.50 around the transit station

**7) EL-4 (Westside Neighborhood)**

*Current Proposal:* Alternative live-work opportunities

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Increase FAR land use intensities from 1.0 to 1.50 around 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Quince Street
- Incorporate high density residential development near the Transit Station

**8) SG-6 (South Escondido Boulevard #3; southern entrance to Escondido)**

*Current Proposal:* Transit oriented mixed use development

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- No change

**9) EL-9 (I-15 at Valley Parkway and Auto Park Way)**

*Current Proposal:* Intensify employment and revenue generating opportunities

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Include visitor serving uses (hotels)
- Eliminate mixed use south of Ninth Avenue

**10) SG-1 (Downtown SPA)**

*Current Proposal:* Urban center with integrated high density residential and employment

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- No Change

**11) EL-2 (Highway 78 at Broadway Area)**

*Current Proposal:* Intensify employment densities throughout study area; establish gateway and connection to downtown.

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Focus on intensifying land uses at the freeway terminus and along Broadway
- Expand the number of auto sales-oriented establishments to complement existing auto businesses.

**12) SG-3 (East Valley Parkway Area)**

*Current Proposal:* Promote education-oriented establishments, create mixed use urban village around Valley parkway and Ash Street intersection; improve secondary access via Ash Street and Lincoln Parkway

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Increase mixed use intensities in the urban village area from 1.0 to 1.5 around Ash Street and Valley Parkway

**13) SG-4 (South Escondido Boulevard / Centre City Parkway between 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenues)**

*Current Proposal:* Mixed-use transit-oriented development along Escondido Boulevard, maintain 24 unit per acre density residential between the Boulevard and Centre City Parkway

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Increase residential densities from 24 to 30 units per acre to support commercial uses

**14) SG-5 South Escondido Boulevard / Centre City Parkway between 13<sup>th</sup> and Vermont Avenues**

*Current Proposal:* Intensity employment and residential densities in a mixed-use transit oriented development node.

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Consider office development as ancillary to serve residential, not as primary use
- Increase mixed use intensities from 1.25 to 1.50

### **15) Centre City Parkway at Nutmeg Street**

*Current Proposal:* Evaluate office development or a 50-unit residential development

*Updated Consultant and Staff Recommendation:*

- Eliminate consideration of office and only include residential development

### **STUDY AREA DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

The 15 study areas were also categorized into four priorities listed below. Priority #1 study areas are where development could occur almost immediately because there is the presence of a use that serves as an economic stimulus (e.g., hospital, transit station), good location (i.e., next to a freeway interchange), and/or there is market demand for this type of use. In general, Priority #1 study areas have much of the necessary infrastructure in place, or in close proximity, and have the capacity to accommodate additional development. These areas may be largely undeveloped and/or underdeveloped, and parcels are either large enough or would be easy to assemble with adjacent properties for development.

Priority #2 study areas are similar to the Priority #1 areas except that development would benefit from a master planning process to guide development (which requires additional planning and discretionary approval), or portions of the properties are located outside of the City limits and annexation would be required.

Priority #3 study areas could not be developed immediately. Development may be difficult in these areas due to a lack of an economic stimulus, limited market demand for the proposed uses, or difficulty in assembling properties.

Priority #4 study areas have the lowest priority for development. These areas may have the same development constraints as Priority #3, as well as parcels that are too small or may require assembly to make development work.

- Priority #1: EL-5 (Highway 78 at Nordahl)  
EL-3 (Southeast I-15/Highway 78)  
EL-4 (CCP Westside; northern portion only)  
SG-7 (Westfield Shoppingtown)  
EL-7 (I-15 at Felicita Road)  
SG-1 (Downtown SPA)
- Priority #2 EL-1 (Iris Lane/I-15/CCP)  
SG-6 (South Escondido Blvd. #3)  
EL-6 (Harmony Grove Road)
- Priority #3 EL-2 (Highway 78 at Broadway)  
SG-3 (East Valley Parkway)
- Priority #4 SG-4 (South Escondido Blvd. #1)  
SG-5 (South Escondido Blvd. #2)  
EL-9 (I-15/Auto Park Way)  
EL-10 (Nutmeg/CCP)  
EL-4 (southern portion only) (CCP Westside)

Staff is not seeking approval of establishing priorities for study areas at this time but as a factor to consider when formulating General Plan policies and adopting future Capital Improvement Budgets.

Traffic Circulation Study Areas:

The General Plan Update will also assess Escondido's Circulation Element in relation to the proposed land use study areas described above. The analysis will also include evaluating the downtown Valley Parkway / Second Avenue one-way couplet and the extension of light rail from the existing West Valley Parkway transit station to Westfield Shoppingtown pursuant to NCTD's master plan. The General Plan will also include policies that monitor and coordinate high speed rail efforts, as well as refine General Plan policies to identify appropriate land uses around the high speed rail station proposed in Escondido.

Climate Action Plan:

Assembly Bill 32 mandates that California cut its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. An initial step involves each jurisdiction preparing a local Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory identifying and documenting major sources of emissions affecting climate change within its boundaries. The inventory will be the foundation for establishing a plan to help Escondido achieve its GHG reductions goals.

The City has partnered with ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability and the San Diego Foundation who have prepared Escondido's Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory at no cost to the city with funds provided by a federal grant. ICLEI and the San Diego Foundation have prepared such inventories for every jurisdiction in San Diego County. The consultant will use information from the inventory to prepare the Climate Action Plan, which will contain policies appropriate for Escondido that promote sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Next Steps In The Process:

The City Council's confirmation regarding the land use refinements are necessary to proceed with EIR studies and stay on schedule for completing the General Plan in time for the November 2012 election. Variations in the General Plan build-out alternatives will be in building intensities, the variety of mixed use, and residential densities ranging from 3,350 to 5,825 net additional residential units to the General Plan's current build-out projection of 67,700 units associated with each alternative (including a "preferred alternative").

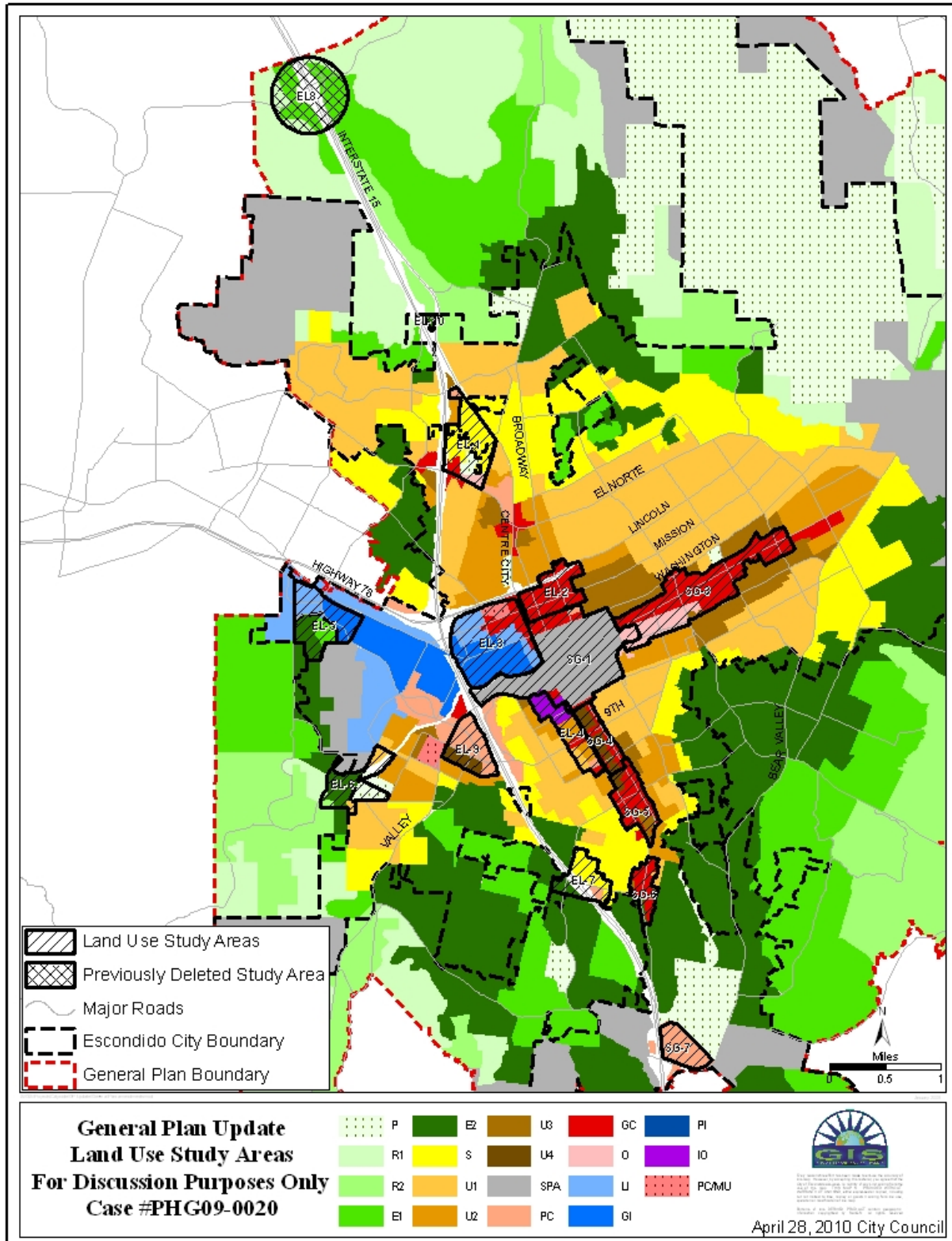
All alternative scenarios will accommodate Escondido's projected growth needs. The "Preferred Alternative" involving 5,825 new dwelling units to the General Plan is in concert with the anticipated build-out of the interim Downtown Specific Plan (SG-1) proposed for an additional 3,275 dwelling units (of which 1,643 exist or are approved). The alternatives also include mixed-use residential at East Valley Parkway and Ash (SG-3), Escondido Boulevard and Felicita Avenue (SG-5), Centre City Parkway and Citracado Parkway (SG-6), and around the proposed Ballpark District (EL-3).

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara Redlitz  
Director of Community Development

Jay Petrek  
Principal Planner

## EXHIBIT 1 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE STUDY AREAS





**EXHIBIT 2**  
**GENERAL PLAN LAND USE INTENSITIES**  
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STUDY AREAS WORKSHOP

**LAND USE DENSITIES/INTENSITIES**

FEBRUARY 3, 2011

REFERENCE	DENSITY/INTENSITY	CATEGORY
<b>SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED RESIDENTIAL UNITS</b>		
<b>1</b>	Low/Medium Density (3-6 du/ac)	
<b>2</b>	Small Lot Single Family (7-22 du/ac)	
<b>MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL UNITS</b>		
<b>3</b>	Medium Density (18-24 du/ac)	
<b>4</b>	Medium-High Density (24-60 du/ac)	
<b>5</b>	Multi-Family High Density (60+ du/ac)	
<b>COMMERCIAL</b>		
<b>1</b>	Low (FAR 0.2-0.4)	
<b>2</b>	High (FAR 0.5-1.0)	



**EXHIBIT 2**  
**GENERAL PLAN LAND USE INTENSITIES**  
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**ESCONDIDO**  
City of Choice

STUDY AREAS WORKSHOP

**LAND USE DENSITIES/INTENSITIES**

FEBRUARY 3, 2011

REFERENCE	DENSITY/INTENSITY	CATEGORY
<b>MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>1</b>	Low (FAR 1.5)	
<b>2</b>	Medium (FAR 2.0)	
<b>3</b>	High (FAR 3.0+)	
<b>OFFICE/RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT</b>		
<b>1</b>	Low (FAR 0.25-0.4)	
<b>2</b>	Medium (FAR 0.8-2.0)	
<b>3</b>	High (FAR 3.0+)	
<b>WORK-LIVE</b>		
<b>1</b>	Work-Live (FAR 1.0+)	