

Create Economic Prosperity

Provide for Equitable Development

# CITY OF VILLAGES

Provide Public Facilities

Protect the Natural Environment

Increase Mobility



A Commitment to

Increase Housing Affordability

Enhance Our Neighborhoods

# Public Involvement

Enhance Our Neighborhoods

Provide for Equitable Development



Increase Housing Affordability

Protect the Natural Environment

Increase Mobility

CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**GENERAL PLAN**  
STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ELEMENT

Provide Public Facilities

Create Economic Prosperity

*A Commitment  
to  
Public Involvement*

City of San Diego Planning Department  
202 C Street, MS 5A  
San Diego, CA 92101

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# Introduction

San Diego belongs to all of us - the people who live, work, and play in our many diverse neighborhoods. Our communities are important and citizens have been very clear that enhancing our quality of life is a priority.

The Planning Department has a long history of public involvement and will continue to be committed to reaching out to residents, stakeholders, and partners as we face the challenges ahead and meet the ever-changing needs of our communities. We can make a difference for current and future generations of residents that will call San Diego home.

*“Creating neighborhoods we can be proud of while preserving what makes our city great is one of my 10 goals. We have involved public input every step of the way. I encourage citizens to learn more about this proposal and voice their concerns.”* Mayor Dick Murphy

This document provides a summary of the extensive public involvement process used to shape the Strategic Framework Element, the City of Villages strategy for future growth and development, and the Five-Year Action Plan. The established system, which has existed for many years, and the system developed specifically for this effort will be described. Both have been used to facilitate a public dialogue where citizens can bring in new perspectives, express their views and debate the issues. Together, we will decide how to best plan for the future.



# *A Public Involvement Effort*

*“The City of Villages is a strategy to preserve the best of San Diego while addressing challenges for the future. This strategy comprises the first chapter of a new General Plan for San Diego, the proposed Strategic Framework Element. The ideas expressed within the document may look familiar. The policies, goals, and recommended actions were drawn from a rich legacy of citizen-based planning efforts and intensive public outreach.”*

S. Gail Goldberg, AICP, Planning Department Director

State law requires all cities to maintain a current General Plan that lays out how citizens’ needs for housing, transportation, and public facilities will be provided over a twenty-year period. The last General Plan update in the City of San Diego occurred in 1979. It is projected that San Diego will grow by half a million people over the next twenty years. The process of updating the plan must focus on addressing the many changes and related issues that will occur as a result of this growth.

The Strategic Framework Element is a new chapter of the City’s Progress Guide and General Plan, replacing the current Guidelines for Future Development. The Strategic Framework Element provides a new approach, the Citizen Committee’s preferred strategy for the City’s future growth and development – the City of Villages.



*“As third generation San Diegans, we’re not leaving.”*  
Resident, Coastal Communities Public Meeting, June 1999

# An Overview

All of those involved early in the process of developing a strategy to create the twenty-year plan were aware of the importance of their mission. Laying the foundation for such an effort could not be accomplished without including a wide range of people and perspectives. From the beginning, the City Planning Department decided to embark upon an unprecedented public outreach and involvement process.

*“Take the energy from the direction the city is going now and enhance it, build on it.”* Citizen Committee Member, June 2000

The Strategic Framework Element and City of Villages strategy are based on a vision and core values identified by San Diegans. They reflect the challenges and trends of planning efforts past and present, and chart a new course for the future. The Five-Year Action Plan is the proposed implementation program for updating the General Plan.

The public involvement strategy was created to provide opportunities to share information and keep citizens from all walks of life engaged in the evolution of the Strategic Framework. Citizens who represent our increasingly diverse population have participated in the dialogue that has ultimately created the plan. This strategy was designed to take advantage of existing outreach mechanisms and to integrate new structures.

*“We need to stop saying ‘them.’ It’s ‘our children’ and all of us.”*  
Resident, North City Public Meeting, August 1999

This report will briefly discuss the established public input structure of political decision-making. However, the extensive system of special committees, workshops, meetings, and communication tools developed for this specific process is the focus of this document. Figure 1 provides an overview of the entire system which is discussed in detail.

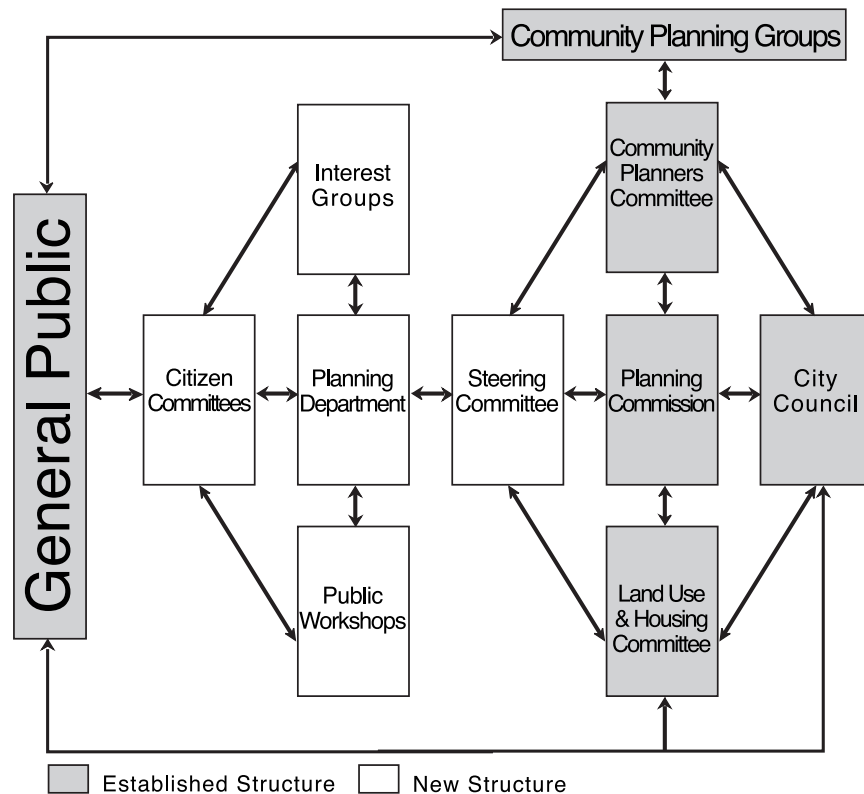


## A. The Established Structure

Citizen involvement has been a long-standing practice in the City of San Diego. The City Council adopted policies in the 1960's and 1970's that established and recognized the community planning groups as formal mechanisms for community input in decision-making processes. Community planning groups provide citizens a forum for advising Planning staff, the City Council, the Planning Commission, and other decision makers on development projects, community plan amendments, rezonings, and public facilities. This structure was used throughout the creation of the Strategic Framework Element. A brief description follows to show how the process works.

The existing structure for public involvement serves as the formal process for adopting planning and other policy documents. This process includes several steps, beginning with a public hearing before the City Planning Commission to initiate work on a policy document and concluding with a public hearing before City Council for final action and/or adoption. Figure 1 depicts the formal established structure.

**Figure 1: Public Involvement and Decision Making Process**





The City Planning Commission members are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Their responsibility is to make recommendations to the City Council to approve as is, approve with changes, or deny approval of a draft policy document. The City Council is San Diego's governing legislative body, responsible for adopting policy documents to be implemented by the City.

Once the Planning Commission initiates a plan, City Planning Department staff can then begin working with the local community planning group or Community Planners Committee to gather input on the draft policy document.



Policy documents with citywide significance generally have more emphasis placed on input from the Community Planners Committee. This committee is made up of one representative (typically the chair) from each of the more than 39 community planning groups in the City. Documents that affect a single community typically receive most input and review from that area's community planning group. This involves several meetings over several months to prepare the necessary draft policy documents.

*"Our community has unique character. We need to build on that."*  
Resident, San Ysidro, Phase IV Public Meeting, February 2001

Once the draft policy document is complete, the community planning group or Community Planners Committee provides a recommendation to the Planning Commission whether to approve as is, approve with changes or deny approval of a document. Their recommendation is included in a staff report presented to the Planning Commission at a public hearing. The Planning Commission considers the information provided in the staff report and testimony at the public hearing in order to formulate a recommendation to the City Council.

A public hearing or workshop with the City Council's Land Use and Housing Committee is held prior to the City Council meeting for policy documents that impact more than one community and have citywide significance. The Land Use and Housing Committee includes five City Council members. It is the role of this committee to consider information provided in the staff report, Planning Commission recommendations, and testimony at the public hearing in order to provide direction or a recommendation to the City Council.

After the Land Use and Housing Committee makes their recommendation, a public hearing is held before the City Council for final action on the draft policy document. If the policy is adopted by City Council, it becomes official policy of the City of San Diego and can only be challenged in a court of law.



Meetings of the community planning groups, the Community Planners Committee, the Planning Commission, the Land Use and Housing Committee, and the City Council all provide time for public comment. This system is formal yet it provides a structure and serves the people of San Diego with many opportunities for input at each stage of policy recommendation and adoption. In addition to this process, a system of fostering increased dialogue with the community was created for the development of the Strategic Framework Element.

## *B. A New Structure For Public Involvement*

*"We need to plan responsibly."*

Resident, Coastal Communities Public Meeting, June 1999

The public outreach and involvement effort has three primary goals:

- To educate the public about planning issues in the City of San Diego over the next twenty years,
- To reach out to as many people as possible within time and resource constraints, and
- To engage people in a dialogue and to incorporate their input during every step of the process.

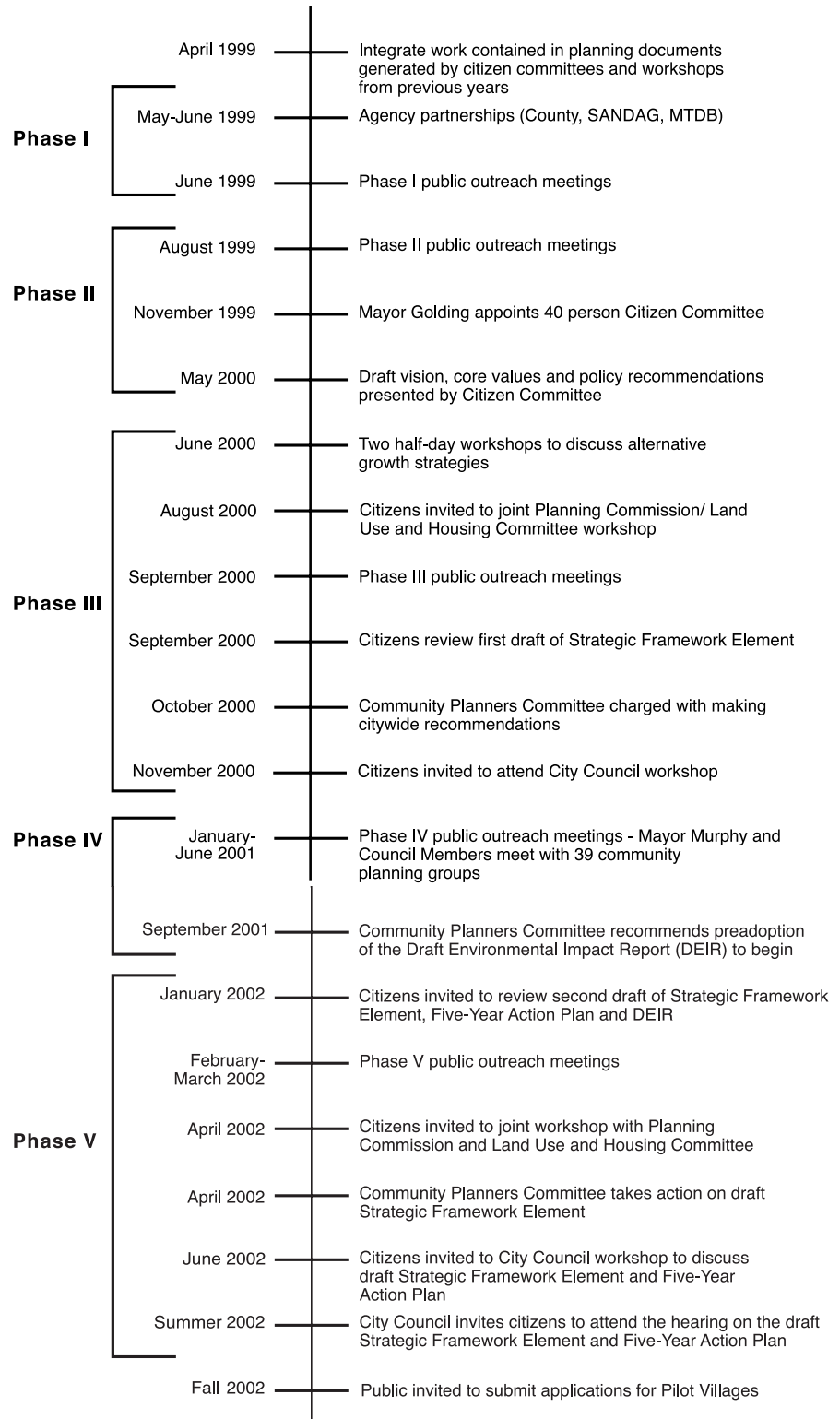
To accomplish these goals, structures for communication and involvement were created. This included forming new committees, conducting workshops and meetings, and providing communications on a broad scale. A total of five phases of outreach and involvement took place over a three-year period.



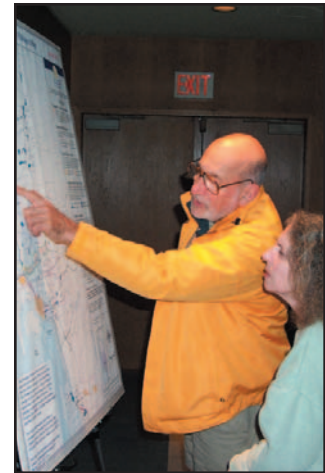
### *1. Five Phases*

The five phases of public outreach and involvement are summarized in Figure 2. Phase I (summer 1999) focused on developing key partnerships with the County, SANDAG and MTDB. Public discussion centered on growth projections. During Phase II (fall 1999-spring 2000) the public discussed issues of growth and how they are all related. A Citizen Committee was assembled which developed a vision, core values and policy recommendations. A joint Planning Commission/Land Use and Housing Committee workshop and a special City Council Workshop were held to discuss the Citizen Committee's work and input gathered from public meetings.

*Figure 2: A Timeline of Significant Public Involvement Milestones*

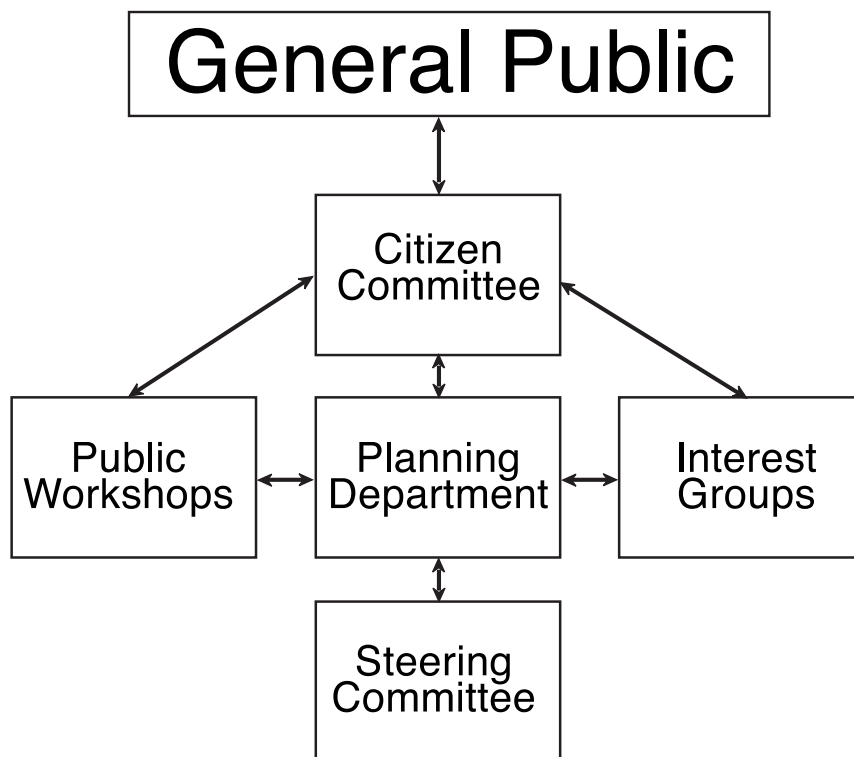


Phase III (summer 2000-fall 2000) concentrated public discussion on alternative strategies from which the Citizen Committee selected a preferred strategy. Workshops with the Planning Commission and the Land Use and Housing Committee were held to discuss the preferred strategy. Draft documents were prepared and workshops with all the City's community planning groups were held during Phase IV (winter 2001 – fall 2001). Many presentations were made to other stakeholder groups during this time as well. The draft documents were refined in Phase V (winter 2002 – summer 2002). Public workshops in the community focused on describing the concepts in the draft documents and hearing feedback from attendees. Workshops and adoption hearings with the Planning Commission, the Land Use and Housing Committee, and the City Council have been scheduled.



The summary above gives an overview of the five phases. During this time many new mechanisms and approaches were created to involve the public. Figure 3 shows the overall structure. Additional information about the various committees that were formed and the stakeholders and partners that were identified is also provided.

*Figure 3: A New Structure for Public Involvement*





## 2. The Steering Committee

In order to enhance the effectiveness of the established system for planning policy adoption, a new entity, the Strategic Framework Steering Committee, was formed in August 1999. It is the on-going role of this committee to provide oversight and to guide the Strategic Framework process. Members of this committee include the current and the most recent past chairs of the City Council's Land Use and Housing Committee, the chair of the Planning Commission, and the City Manager. After the Strategic Framework Citizen Committee was formed, each of the subcommittee chairs was added to the Steering Committee. In January 2001, the chair of the City Council's Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee was added. The Planning Department continues to staff the committee



## 3. Key Stakeholders

The Planning Department recognizes that there are many ways to define “the public” and that the definition has implications for the approach to outreach and involvement. The impact of the Strategic Framework Element will affect San Diegans for many years to come. It was critical to hear as many voices as possible as the framework was being shaped. Figure 4 depicts some of the key stakeholders in San Diego's future. The general public includes a vast diversity of residents from all of our communities. Special interest groups also have a stake in the twenty-year plan. Some of these groups include the building industry, the business and financial communities, environmental and historic preservation groups, the arts and culture community, unions, and other government agencies. All of these perspectives needed to be heard. Through meaningful dialogue, these groups and others have become our partners in enhancing the quality of life in San Diego. A discussion of the mechanisms created to foster the dialogue follows.

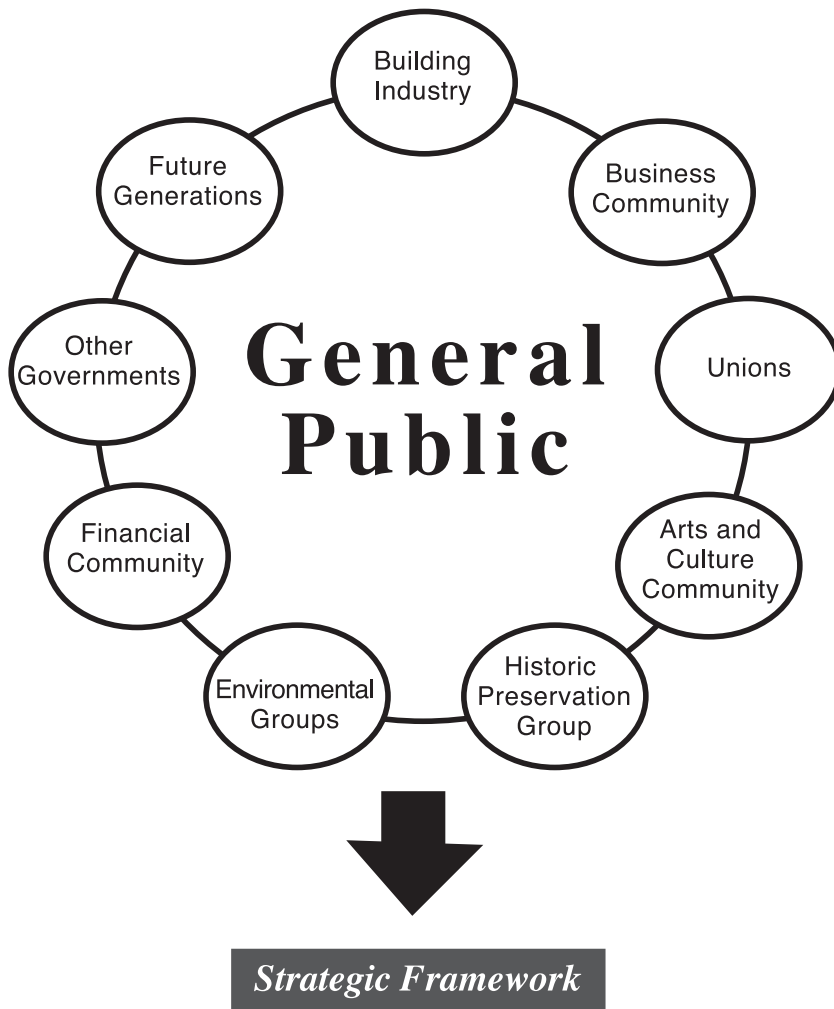
## 4. The Citizen Committee and Subcommittees

A forty-person Strategic Framework Citizen Committee was appointed in the fall of 1999.

*“This diverse group of volunteers represents the best of San Diego. Their commitment to our community extends beyond the call of duty. Their expertise in banking, health care, research, urban design, high tech and community affairs will undoubtedly benefit all of us.”*

Mayor Susan Golding, December 1999

*Figure 4: Some Key Stakeholders in San Diego's Future*



Determining the criteria for the Citizen Committee was an important task. It was decided that the committee needed to represent the diverse people and interests of the San Diego population; to reflect previous planning efforts (e.g., the Renaissance Commission, the Urban Economics Task Force, the Urban Form Workshop, etc.); to represent the City's community planning groups; and to include other City boards and commissions.

Initially, the full committee met once a month for a year. Four subcommittees were formed to address key issue areas identified by the public: neighborhood quality, urban form and environment, economic prosperity, and infrastructure and public facilities.



### **The Neighborhood Quality Subcommittee**

The focus of this subcommittee was to ensure the Strategic Framework Element emphasized the importance of creating diverse neighborhoods with strong participation by residents while recognizing the citywide need for affordable housing and decentralized access to all City facilities.



### **The Urban Form and Environment Subcommittee**

This subcommittee focused on the issues related to having a functional and beautiful city while preserving our unique topography, maintaining our diverse neighborhoods, encouraging compact development, capitalizing on our natural assets and climate, and establishing clear growth guidelines and regulations.

*“Our canyons are unique to San Diego and should be preserved at all cost.”* Resident, Combined Citizen Committee Meeting, June 2000

### **The Economic Prosperity Subcommittee**

Establishing the guiding policies for preparation of the new Economic Prosperity Element of the General Plan was the focus of this subcommittee. Policy recommendations included the need for a diversified economy, public-private partnerships, environmental preservation and a leading role for education.

### **The Public Facilities and Infrastructure Subcommittee**

The purpose of this subcommittee was to produce an overall growth and development strategy that provides for adequate services, promotes equitable development, phases growth appropriately and ensures that new development pay its own way.

*“We need to provide the assurance of facilities with development.”*

Resident, North Park Public Meeting, June 1999

In 2001 the citizen subcommittees were re-formed into five new ones focusing on the Strategic Framework Element, the Five-Year Action Plan, a financing strategy, pilot villages, and public outreach. Figure 5 shows the evolution of the subcommittees.

#### **The Element Subcommittee**

This subcommittee shaped the overall direction and preparation of the Strategic Framework Element document and the City of Villages strategy.

*“You need to show the opportunities that diversity can bring to older communities.”* Resident, North City Public Meeting, August 1999

#### **The Action Plan Subcommittee**

The mission of the Action Plan Subcommittee was to identify and develop immediate strategies and actions to implement the City of Villages strategy in a Five-Year Action Plan.

#### **The Finance Subcommittee**

The Finance Subcommittee worked toward development of the Public Facilities Financing Strategy by examining potential financing mechanisms and strategies to address the City’s existing shortfall and to help finance new services and facilities.

#### **The Pilot Village Subcommittee**

The mission of the Pilot Village subcommittee was to establish a fair and public selection process to identify pilot village sites. The subcommittee developed location and project criteria and recommendations for an incentive package.

#### **The Public Outreach Subcommittee**

The Public Outreach Subcommittee helped to ensure that residents, communities, key stakeholders, and partners were involved in shaping the Strategic Framework Element at every step in its development.



*Figure 5: Citizen Committee Structure  
1999 - 2002*



**1999 - 2000**



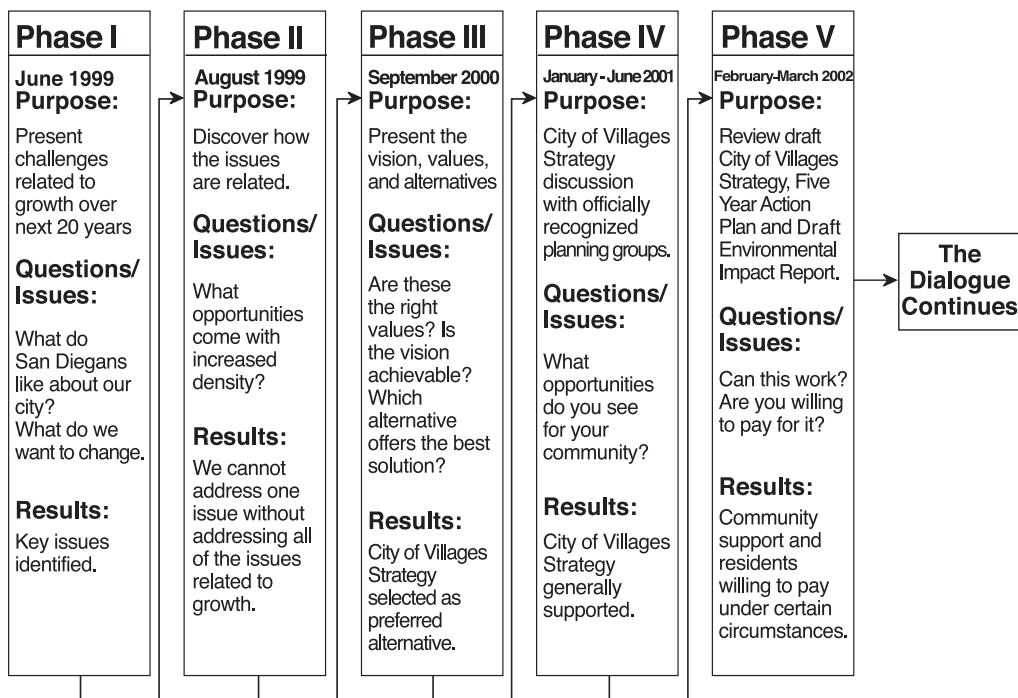
**2001 - 2002**

## 5. Five Phases of Public Meetings

Public outreach has been an integral part of the process to update the City's General Plan and has led to the creation of the City of Villages strategy. To date, over two hundred public meetings and workshops have included the public since Phase I outreach began in June 1999. Each phase built on the dialogue that took place during the previous phase. Figure 6 shows how input from one series of meetings helped to shape the purpose of the next series. Except for Phase IV, outreach was conducted in five different locations citywide. Each meeting location was chosen to represent a larger geographical area of the City. These areas included: North City, Coastal Communities, Northern Urbanized, Central Urbanized and South Bay. Phase IV meetings were held in seventeen locations citywide.



**Figure 6: Summary of Public Meetings**



### Phase I Public Meetings – June 1999

San Diegans were invited to provide input on our City's future beginning with the Strategy 2020 project kick-off in June 1999. The purpose of this phase was to present the most recent San Diego Association of Government (SANDAG) growth projections to communities citywide, and to help City staff gain an understanding of community concerns related to growth.

Each meeting featured a presentation on SANDAG population projections and San Diego County's efforts to address growth in the unincorporated areas of the county. The City Planning Department provided background information on the General Plan and the proposed Strategic Framework Element. Participants watched a video titled "Visions from Yesterday and Today" and participated in a facilitated discussion focused on what they like about San Diego and what they would like to change. Workshop attendees indicated what they like most about San Diego is the climate, beaches and coastline, the rural areas of the county, the City's proximity to Mexico and the variety of activities available in the City and region. The key issues residents would like to see addressed were quality of life, affordable housing, neighborhood open space, infrastructure, and traffic. The participants' comments centered around the need to manage and balance growth while controlling density.



### **Phase II Public Meetings – August 1999**

Phase II outreach efforts built upon the information presented during Phase I. The public was invited to meet in August 1999 to present their concerns and identify issues the City should consider in preparing the Strategic Framework Element. Specialists from government and the private sector began to create a picture of how all the issues (environmental protection, traffic, public services and infrastructure, jobs creation, housing affordability and neighborhood quality) are related. The complexity of seeing the relationships among all of the challenging issues and the related opportunities began to emerge.

### **Phase III Public Meetings – August 2000**

Phase III outreach meetings provided an opportunity for the public to give input on the work of the Citizen Committee, including a vision, core values and alternatives for future development. Presenters also discussed



other planning efforts in the region, including SANDAG's Region 2020 growth strategy and "Transitworks," the Metropolitan Transit Development Board's (MTDB) strategy for future mobility. Participants voiced acceptance of the vision and values and demonstrated support for one alternative – the City of Villages.

#### **Phase IV Public Meetings – January-June 2001**

Phase IV outreach activities achieved Mayor Murphy's goal of presenting the City of Villages strategy to each of the City's 39 officially recognized planning groups. Seventeen workshops were held at which Planning Department staff presented an overview of the preferred strategy and discussed how it could apply to individual communities. Mayor Murphy and members of the City Council attended each meeting to have a meaningful dialogue with all the planning groups and meeting attendees.

The format at each meeting consisted of a brief staff presentation and video followed by a group breakout session to discuss how the strategy could be applied to a particular community plan area. The planning groups were asked the following questions: What do you think about the concept of a City of Villages?; What are some of the unique characteristics of your community?; Where do you see opportunities to enhance your community?; and What are the special needs of your community? Each community addressed the questions and discussed ideas for their individual communities. General topics of agreement included adding or improving transit, housing and public facilities.





### **Phase V Public Meetings – February-March 2002**

The Phase V community meetings summarized how the City of Villages strategy had evolved and offered the public an opportunity to comment on draft versions of the Strategic Framework Element, Five-Year Action Plan, City of Villages Map, and Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). Each of the five public meetings had a program overview by Planning Department staff, including issues related to possible financing mechanisms, key decision points, and likely implementation steps including the pilot village program.

Participants from each geographic area had questions and suggestions specific to their communities. When queried, attendees showed strong support for the City of Villages strategy in concept and they indicated by a show of hands that, under certain circumstances, they were willing to pay an increase in fees and/or taxes to finance the necessary infrastructure.

Over two hundred meetings, workshops and presentations with stakeholders and partners were conducted over the three-year period. Figure 7 summarizes the number of workshops, meetings and presentations held.

### *Figure 7: Engaging the Public in Dialogue*

#### **Did you know that public outreach from 1999-2002 included...**

- 20 town hall style public meetings with over 1000 participants
- 225 Strategic Framework Citizen Committee and Subcommittee meetings
- 20 public workshops that were taped and televised with the Planning Commission, the Land Use and Housing Committee and the City Council
- 10 meetings/workshops with the Community Planners Committee
- 17 public workshops with planning groups
- Over 100 meetings and presentations with stakeholder groups and partners
- 8 informational programs



## *6. The Technical Working Group*

Implementing the City of Villages will require coordination and partnership from almost every City department. Leveraging the resources devoted to hundreds of projects undertaken by City staff will be essential. Focusing and aligning our efforts will be key in creating villages. The Technical Working Group was formed in August 2000 with representatives from each City department. This group provided input on the draft Strategic Framework Element and was instrumental in getting the word out to all City employees about the planning effort. It will continue to coordinate long range planning across departments.

## *7. The Mayor's Smart Growth Implementation Committee*

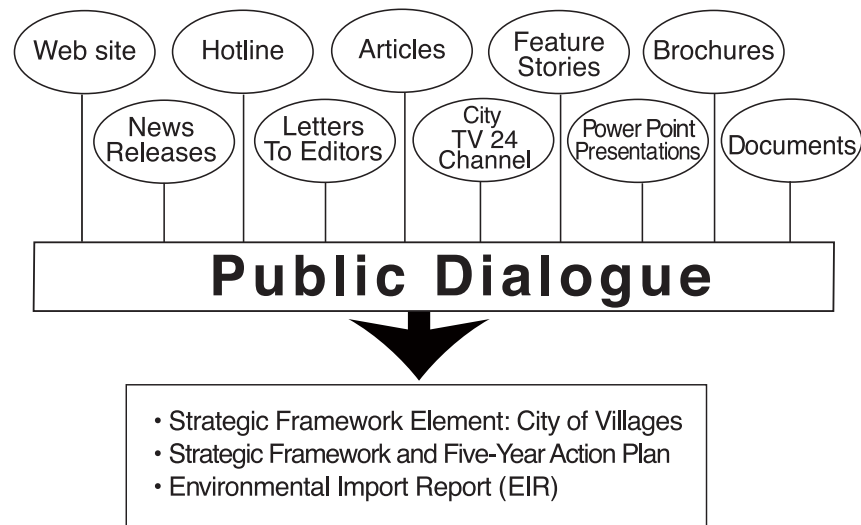
In June 2001, the Mayor's Smart Growth Implementation Committee was formed. It is co-chaired by Mayor Dick Murphy and Councilmember Toni Atkins, chair of the City Council's Public Services and Neighborhood Safety Committee. The role of this committee is to remove existing obstacles to fostering "smart growth" development in San Diego and to assist in the implementation of the Strategic Framework Element and City of Villages strategy.



## C. A System of Education and Communication

A variety of mechanisms have been put in place to facilitate outreach citywide, provide citizens and the media with timely information and ensure opportunities for receiving feedback. Figure 8 summarizes the overall approach used to stimulate interest and dialogue with the public. The Public Outreach Subcommittee has been actively involved in helping shape these activities and providing useful feedback.

*Figure 8: System of Education and Communication*



The **website**, located at [www.sandiego.gov/cityofvillages](http://www.sandiego.gov/cityofvillages) was launched in spring 1999 and updated in early 2001 with information about the Strategic Framework Element and City of Villages strategy. The website includes a program overview and background; information about community participation; upcoming public and committee meetings, workshops and hearings; committee participation and structure; copies of the most recent draft planning documents; useful links to other websites and more.

The **General Plan Hotline** at (619) 235-5226 is a dedicated number for citizens to ask questions and request information about the program, meetings, committee schedules, and ways to get involved. The hotline is checked daily during regular business hours. Staff has answered many questions for people interested in learning more about the Strategic Framework.

The department uses **mailing lists** to send post cards, flyers, letters and other means of communication to announce upcoming public meetings, workshops, hearings, and the release of program related documents for public review. These informational mailings are sent to our Strategic Framework general mailing list, which includes over 500 names.

Individuals who want to be added to this mailing list can do so by either calling the General Plan Hotline or signing-up at the program website.

**Media Relations** activities have helped to establish and maintain media contacts while providing citizens with useful information about key milestones, meetings and events in a timely manner.

**News releases** are regularly distributed to several local publications, including all the major newspapers, most of the neighborhood newspapers and several ethnic newspapers. Recent news releases have announced all five phases of public outreach meetings. Future releases will announce program milestones, upcoming public workshops, and hearings.



A number of **news articles and opinion pieces** have appeared in several local publications including the *San Diego Union Tribune*, *San Diego Daily Transcript*, *San Diego Metropolitan*, and local community papers.

**Feature stories** have recently been published in the *San Diego Union Tribune* and *San Diego Home and Garden*. Plans are underway for additional feature stories in the *San Diego Daily Transcript* and other publications whenever possible.

Recent coverage on **radio shows** has included several discussions aired on KPBS' *These Days* with Gloria Penner and Tom Fudge. Future opportunities for additional coverage are being explored.

**City TV 24** – Seven *Inside San Diego* shows related to the City of Villages have been produced and aired on City TV 24. The first included an *Overview of the Strategic Framework Element*, the second was about the *Metropolitan Transit Development Board's (MTDB) TransitFirst* program, and then four shows which focused on issues areas: *Paying For Public Facilities and Infrastructure*, *Economic Prosperity*, *Neighborhood Quality*, and *Urban Form and Environment*. Each included members of the Strategic Framework Citizen Committee and ran regularly for a period of time on City TV 24. A series of future stories are planned with the first airing in May 2002. Two public meetings were videotaped and aired. One of these meetings was translated into Spanish. It was aired on a local Spanish television station.



A number of **program documents** including maps and reports to City Council and the Planning Commission have been produced and distributed. Each of these documents are distributed to all local branch libraries and community service centers. Spanish translation of some materials have been provided at meetings as requested.

Over fifty **PowerPoint presentations** have been produced and given to community groups, organizations, non-profits, businesses, planning groups and other key stakeholders in the community. The department will continue to schedule these presentations as requested throughout the process.



**Brochures** that have been produced for the program include an overview of the program and accompanying pieces on density and a number of additional topics. An updated version of the program overview brochure has been recently published.



# *Moving Forward*

During the past three years, the Planning Department has been engaged in a public dialogue about enhancing the quality of life in San Diego over the next twenty years and beyond. Controversial issues have been debated. A wide range of new perspectives have been heard. New partnerships have been formed. Together, we have shaped the Strategic Framework City of Villages strategy and Five-Year Action Plan.

Much work still lies ahead. We will all need to continue to challenge old ways of thinking so that new ideas can emerge. It is essential that we continue the dialogue among all of San Diego's richly diverse residents. Our partnerships will continue to expand and deepen as we move into implementation of the plan for San Diego's future. The Planning Department's commitment to public involvement remains firm as we build trust between the people in San Diego's communities and the people who serve them.

