



General Plan Advisory Committee
January 11, 2010 | 6:30 – 8:30 pm
Encinitas City Hall

MEETING #1 SUMMARY

I. Introduction

The Encinitas General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) held its first meeting on January 11, 2010. The role of the GPAC is to advise City of Encinitas staff and consultants over the course of the General Plan Update process. Daniel Iacofano of MIG, Inc. and Matt Raimi of Raimi + Associates facilitated the session.

Mr. Iacofano and Mr. Raimi welcomed GPAC members and invited a round of introductions. They then provided a brief overview of California general plan requirements and the existing Encinitas General Plan. The majority of the meeting was dedicated to group discussion of Encinitas' strengths and assets, issues and challenges, and opportunities and visions for the City's future. The meeting concluded with comments from the general public audience, summarized in the last section of this report.

II. Community Strengths and Assets

Natural Environment

Encinitas GPAC members described the City's natural environment and the recreational opportunities it affords as invaluable community assets. They noted their enjoyment of Encinitas' many beaches and expressed appreciation for its lagoons, trees and related resources and amenities. Hiking, horse-back riding and exploring the backcountry were described as favorite activities.

Community Character

GPAC members are proud of the City's history and appreciative of its unique culture. The city is diverse and the people are friendly. Family is embraced and pets are welcome. Encinitas boasts a viable economy that provides opportunity for its many residents.

Character of the Built Environment

Members of the GPAC expressed appreciation for the work that has been done to create and protect this truly unique environment in each of Encinitas' five communities. Adjectives used to describe the physical characteristics of the City include:

- Charming;
- Funky;
- Open-air;
- Walkable; and
- Not over-developed

Community Facilities and Events

Encinitas' public facilities and community events are important elements of the City's health and livability. Encinitas has a well-resourced hospital, schools, post office, and libraries. Annual events and popular amenities including the farmer's market and volleyball courts bring community members together in celebration, play and in support of local and regional commerce and agriculture.

III. Issues and Challenges

Housing, Population and Demographics

GPAC members identified a series of issues related to the region's changing demographics and aging population. Important steps to consider include improving housing affordability, increasing live/work opportunities and providing support for "aging in place." Understanding the City's growing population and its capacity at build-out will be important to preventing injury and loss and ensuring appropriate responses in the event of natural and human-made disasters.

Economic Sustainability

Planning for an environmentally and economically sustainable future was among the top challenges identified by GPAC members. Key strategies identified to support this broad effort include:

- Maximizing and leveraging the resources that visitors bring to the City;
- Implementing workable solutions in order to reverse trends in underperforming commercial areas; and
- Addressing the City's limited water supply.

Open Space and Natural Resources Management

Managing finite water resources in support of community health, the local economy and the natural ecosystem is a fundamental issue. GPAC members also expressed the importance of improving open space connectivity, strengthening urban forestry and landscaping, and expanding urban agriculture and community gardening.

Community Recreation

GPAC members addressed the need to ensure continued access to the ocean, in part through protecting undeveloped coastal lands and the health of marine resources. Improving recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages, and particularly the City's youth, is vital to community health. Potential actions include exploring the feasibility of joint use agreements and otherwise expanding City park land to achieve per capita park land standards.

Community Character and Aesthetics

The Encinitas GPAC expressed interest in preserving the history of the community, and protecting valued elements of its character such as accessibility, walkability and its family- and pet-friendly atmosphere. Improving the visual quality of the City by undergrounding utilities and developing property maintenance standards were possibilities noted during discussion. Future improvements in all areas should be determined by looking at "the big picture" or the City as a whole.

Transportation, Land Use and Infrastructure

The GPAC touched upon a number of issues related to strengthening land use planning and improving Encinitas' transportation and infrastructure networks. Strategies discussed included:

- Coordinating land use decisions with the regional transit authority;
- Responding appropriately to state laws related to land use density, in part through greater consideration for mixed-use development alternatives;
- Improving code enforcement and, more specifically, addressing non-conforming uses and ensuring that second units meet code; and
- Conducting an assessment of electrical utilities capacities and standards.

IV. Potential Overall Directions

In reflecting upon the strengths, assets and challenges noted over the course of the meeting, the GPAC articulated potential overall directions to help guide the General Plan Update process and frame related discourse. Moving forward, the GPAC recommended that the City give strong consideration to the following themes:

- Preserving community character and maintaining separate identity for the five communities;
- Diversifying the existing revenue base and creating jobs;
- Strengthening and promoting cultural and eco-tourism;
- Creating new, holistic strategies for youth, seniors and other target populations; and
- Promoting sustainable practices, and establishing sustainability as a prominent theme during the plan update process.

V. Public Comments

Members of the public provided some suggestions on ways to broaden participation in the General Plan Update process and facilitate community efforts in sustainability:

- Publicize General Plan meetings and distribute meeting notices;
- Post GPAC and plan update materials online;
- Use e-mail as a central mechanism for public outreach and information exchange;
- Encourage the creation and/or location of new businesses that facilitate community sustainability goals (e.g. green composting, renewable energy systems, etc.); and
- Identify sustainability tools and metrics to guide City and community action.