



Torrey Pines Community Planning Board
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BOARD MEMBERS: Dennis E. Ridz, Chair, dennisridz@hotmail.com ; Dee Rich, Co-Chair; Noel Spaid, Vice Chair; Patti Ashton, Treasurer; Jake Mumma, Secretary; Richard Caterina; Barbara Cerny; Cathy Kenton; Nancy Moon; Norman Ratner; Bob Shopes; Pat Whitt

Dear Councilmember Sherri Lightner

May 8, 2014

Subject: Torrey Pines Planning Board request for **Community Plan Focused Update**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Current Plan was developed in the early 1990's, and the data is no longer relevant.
- Our 2005 Public Facilities Financing Plan contains NO funding for Park & Recreation Projects
- Environmental Impact Reports clearly indicate detrimental neighborhood changes will soon occur within the Torrey Pines I-5 Corridor.
- The supporting data for a **Focused Update** is readily accessible.
- **Timely and quick action** can support and enhance the **Livability** and Quality of Life within the Torrey Pines Community.

○ **Transportation**

Caltrans I-5 NCC expansion and the I-5/SR-56 Connector projects propose no sound abatement measures. No transit options exist to link the community to other train or bus routes, or to local amenities and schools used intensively by Torrey Pines residents.

○ **Residential**

The City's exemption from the Coastal Act application to development where 50% of the original studs are retained makes a mockery of the Act's intention to prevent increase in bulk and scale. Community character has been eroded by substantial Process 1 development not subject to the Coastal Act and thus to Community Plan standards. This makes it even more difficult to enforce vague references in the existing Plan even for development subject to Process 2 permits.

To further the interests of a **Balanced Community**, density zoning, and height limits need to be examined. Mixed use, multiple family housing, and facilities for seniors and for neighborhood meetings need to be considered.

○ **Commercial**

A permanent solution is needed to keep Los Penasquitos lagoon mouth open. Land use alongside Los Penasquitos Creek needs to be studied.

- **Community Facilities**

The Torrey Pines Community has **no neighborhood parks**, in spite of the City’s standard, which prescribes the need for 20 acres for our current population.

Detailed Analysis in Support of a Focused Update

The Plan Vision of our current community plan was to provide, the highest possible quality of life for residents and businesses while preserving the community’s unique natural environment. The current community plan provided goals, policies, and action plans designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of both its residents and the natural environment. The scaffolding around which the plan was developed includes the data from the 1990 Census, traffic projections from early 1990’s traffic and transit studies, city development policies, and environmental guidelines from an earlier era.

Within the last 6 years, the Torrey Pines Community Planning Board (TPCPB) has responded to 5 Draft Environmental Impact Reports (DEIR) as follows: Caltrans I-5 North Coast Corridor (I-5 NCC), Caltrans I-5/SR-56 Connectors, SANDAG 2050 Regional Transportation Plan, Del Mar Fairgrounds Master Plan, and Kilroy One Paseo project. The State of California passed Assembly Bill 32 –Global Warming Solution and in 2008, **Senate Bill 375**, Sustainable Community Strategies and Climate Protection were passed. The City of San Diego has implemented the ‘City of Villages’ concept to improve the quality of life of its residents via more transit solutions.

The TPCPB is focusing on 4 areas within the Community Plan that are in need of a **Focused Update** to address the current and future impacts of both regional, state and city environmental impact reports and new policies. The four Plan Elements are **Transportation/Transit**, Community Facilities – **usable park property**, Residential – **Density**, Commercial – **flood plain and Tsunami** within Sorrento Valley industrial region.

Transportation Element

The current Community Plan Transportation Element (CP) was based upon a 1990-1992 Transportation Study that indicated that Del Mar Heights Road was a major barrier dividing the community in two. Furthermore, the Torrey Pines Community “faces the challenge of planning and developing a transportation system that accommodates future traffic volumes, **emphasizing mass transit**, without disrupting the community’s unique environment and lifestyle of its residents.” Goal 7. “Provide a transportation system **that encourages** the use of **mass transit, rather than building and/or widening roads and freeways.**” The CP assumes that a “**40 percent drive alone rate**” will have been achieved and all planned circulation improvements are completed. Caltrans data for I-5 Corridor indicates that HOV rate during weekdays is 10-12%.

The Torrey Pines Community is located along the **narrowest portion** of the I-5 corridor and is the northwestern gateway into San Diego. As such, the Caltrans I-5 NCC expansion and the I-5/SR-56 Connector projects need to be incorporated into a CP **Focused Update** as a **Land Use** issue along with a Transportation element.

Starting in 2017, Caltrans plans to remove the vegetative hillsides on both side of I-5 from Via de La Valle to Carmel Valley Road as part of the I-5 NCC project. The hillsides will be replaced with retaining walls of various heights and secured by anchors drilled under homes especially along Portofino

Drive. The Caltrans DEIR reviewed numerous Sound Walls along this portion of I-5, but concluded that under state law the **expense of most all of the sound walls cannot be justified**. A line item for Sound Walls should be added to the Torrey Pines Public Facility Financing Plan. The ‘clean-up’ of the current CP should include an extensive discussion of sound abatement along the I-5 Corridor. Under SB 375, Caltrans is to rebuild both automobile and rail bridges along the I-5 Corridor. The alternative options for placement of new rail lines include routing under Crest Canyon or along I-5.

The Caltrans I-5/SR-56 Connector has several alternative options with Caltrans Preferred Alternative being a 70-90 foot high ‘flyover’ connector starting at Del Mar Heights Bridge. The Del Mar Heights Bridge will be removed and a new traffic configuration and bridge created including no direct access to I-5 at the Del Mar Heights intersection. The Torrey Pines Board has responded to both Caltrans DEIR’s pointing out risks to public health, etc. TP documents can be provided as background input to the ‘clean-up’ process.

A cursory review of the current CP clearly shows that the document is out-of-date as it concerns Mass Transit, Average Daily Trips (ADT), and Level of Service (LOS) both on local streets and major arterial links to I-5. The current CP does not address the issue of harmful decibel (DdB) levels in residential areas including apartments and homes along the I-5 corridor within Torrey Pines. The Caltrans I-5 NCC document indicates the Caltrans will use all of its right-of-way to add several more managed lanes.

This known increase in DdB must be taken into consideration when addressing the ‘**Livability**’ of residential and apartment property especially along Portofino Drive and Portofino Circle. The I-5/SR-56 Connector projects presents a different Noise issue as the raised highway will project noise to a greater uphill region around the Point Del Mar community.

The new CP needs to address the ‘Livability’ issue and whether eminent domain should be considered. Caltrans will give the residents along Portofino Drive the option of ‘allowing’ Caltrans to drill under their home to secure anchors attached to the retaining walls or forcing a sale of the property. The CP **Focused Update** should address **the need for Transit to support our Aging population**.

Commercial and Industrial Development in Floodplain Areas

The current CP talks about the 100-year floodplain along the San Dieguito River but fails to address the Carroll Canyon Creek Corridor or Los Penasquitos River or lagoon mouth. The CP ‘Clean-up’ should address a permanent solution to keeping the **Los Penaquitos lagoon mouth open**. Both the Sorrento Valley train station and industrial and commercial business on Roselle Street are often flooded and the entry into the business park is often closed due to flood or heavy rains. The CP **Focused Update** needs to reexamine land use in Sorrento Valley alongside Los Penaquitos Creek, a known region within the 100-year floodplain and tsunami quake zone.

Community Facilities Element – Park and Recreation

This is a far more complex issue than just requesting a Community Plan Focused Update of issues surrounding the lack of recreational park space. The 1995 update of the CP mischaracterizes Crest Canyon as a neighborhood park and list park space that is not within Torrey Pines borders. Furthermore, the 2005 Torrey Pines **Public Facilities Financing Plan** must be considered as part of the ‘clean –up’ process.

On page 15 of the Public Facilities Financing Plan (PFFP), the estimated cost for acquisition, design, and construction of parkland and recreational projects is \$19,672,000 with **zero identified funding**. On page 11 of the PFFP, Development Impact Fee Schedule indicates that \$6,889 **Impact fees** come from Residential Property to support Park and Recreation. The ‘clean-up’ process needs to explain why there are no funds within the PFFP for Park and Recreation and ensure that future impact fees are allocated to the Torrey Pines Park and Recreation Projects.

The two local schools, Del Mar Hills Academy and Del Mar Heights Elementary School, were briefly discussed in 1995 CP and the PFFP as part of a joint use program with the Del Mar Union School District. This proposed joint use program never materialized and should be so stated in the ‘clean-up’ process. In addition, the ‘clean-up’ needs to address the fact that these two school properties have been **fenced in** and are only available during after school hours and on weekends. The fields are never available because they are in continual use by sports teams, which require fees to play.

The City of San Diego General Plan (2008) established new standards for the development of population-based parks and recreational facilities. Population Based parks set a standard of 2.8 acres per 1,000 as a community standard. Neighborhood Parks serve a population of 5,000 and should be within approximately one mile. Neighborhood Parks are 3 to 13 acres, accessible by bicycling or walking, and may include picnic areas, children’s play areas, multi-purpose courts, multi-purpose turf areas, comfort stations, walkways, and landscaping.

The Torrey Pines area has passed the build out population of 7,000 and is now 7,150. The build out population requires approximately 20 acres to satisfy city standards. The Torrey Pines area has **No Neighborhood Park or area set aside for a park**. The City credits 1.5 acres set aside for passive use within Crest Canyon. Attempts to get the City to allow a simple park bench in the 1.5 acres have proved futile. Crest Canyon is inaccurately identified as a Neighborhood Park instead of its appropriate designation as an Open Space Natural Preserve. Crest Canyon is not suitable for a park as the canyon walls are not stable and in the 1980,’s a child was buried and died when the canyon wall collapsed.

The reasons for an update of the Park Element of the Plan include:

Our children are playing in the streets while freeway travelers rush to avoid gridlock areas by speeding through our neighborhoods. The age of homes in the Torrey Pines first Pardee development exceeds 45 years. Two generations of children have yet to see an active park.

The Torrey Pines plan calls for the purchase of the Del Mar Hills Academy or Del Mar Heights Elementary school sites if the District were to close the schools. Where is the money in the City budget to buy this site or any other land that might become available? As major projects affect the Torrey Pines area, it is time to put park fees into the proper fund for a Neighborhood Park. Our current residents and their children have nowhere to play, except in the busy streets. The CP Focused Update clearly needs to firmly establish plans and funding for a Neighborhood Park.

At the very least, the Torrey Pines Community Plan and the Torrey Pines Facilities Planning Document should be accurate and correctly identify funds and acreage. It is time to update the Torrey Pines Community Plan and provide active park space to the community and a system to fund park development.

Residential Element – Density & Development Guidelines

The 1995 Community Plan forecasted that the Torrey Pines community, at build-out to contain a population of approximately 7,000 residents, 3,087 total housing units of which 78% would be single-family and 22% multifamily. The statistical data from **2nd Quarter, 2014** was derived from the Neuster Information Services demographic report, and indicates a population of 7,150 residents, 3,180 housing units of which 79.4% are single housing units. The Torrey Pines community has about 20 vacant lots for future development. The 1995 CP indicated that the vast majority of residential development would be in the Low Density (5-9 dwelling units/acre) or about 70% of housing units. According to Development Services, Torrey Pines density is 5.5 du/acre. By any development standard, Torrey Pines has fulfilled both its population and housing expectations. The Residential Development Density data/table within the CP should be more reflective of the **actual housing** development.

The Development Service Guidelines have excluded Process 1 (Ministerial) applications from public comment and review by the Torrey Pines Planning Board. The 50% rule is used by developers and homeowner/applicants to avoid the requirement of a Coastal permit or having to go before the Torrey Pines Board. Within the last two years, several applicants tried to get around this 50% rule but were caught moving or replacing walls during construction.

The Process 1 ‘gaming’ by developers has led to the building of ‘McMansions’ that create an **abrupt transition in scale**. When the TP Board has appealed projects to the City Planning Commission on the grounds of ‘Bulk and Scale’ not fitting the surrounding neighborhood, DSD has pointed out some homes that were very large. These homes were processed under the Process 1 rule and never came to the Board for consideration. This issue needs to be addressed within the ‘new guidelines’ of a ‘clean-up’ process.

The Focused Update needs to tackle the concept of providing a **Balanced Community**. This may require **rezoning** the Commercial area around Sorrento Valley in close proximity to the train station. This rezoning would follow the ‘City of Villages’ pattern of increasing residential density along transit lines. Another Commercial area for rezoning would be the Del Mar Heights –Beachside Center. The introduction of 2nd story apartments for seniors above the shopping center should be explored.

Another clear deficiency in the 1995 CP, relates to the **aging of the residents** and no facilities for seniors. The data for 2nd quarter, 2014 shows that 32% of the TP population is 60 years of age or older compared to 17.9 % within San Diego. Not only does Torrey Pines lack recreational parkland but also has no Community Center for meetings or social gathering space for its citizens. This issue needs to be addressed as part of ‘clean-up’ process and Public Facilities Financing Plan.

Our ‘Community Character’ needs to reflect the local Torrey Pines Environment. As part of the Focused Update, we need to see more details regarding native plant use, low level lighting, indigenous architectural elements, appropriate scale and building mass, and colors and material reflecting the local Torrey Pines environment.

Summary

The Torrey Pines Community Planning Board believes that a ‘**Focused Update**’ of our outdated Community Plan along with a revised Public Facilities Financing Plan is not only justified but will establish new standard for addressing ‘Quality of Life Issues’ within District One. Encroachment of highways, lack of parkland, and how to assist our aging population are not unique to Torrey Pines.

Dennis Ridz, Chair Torrey Pines Community Planning Board

