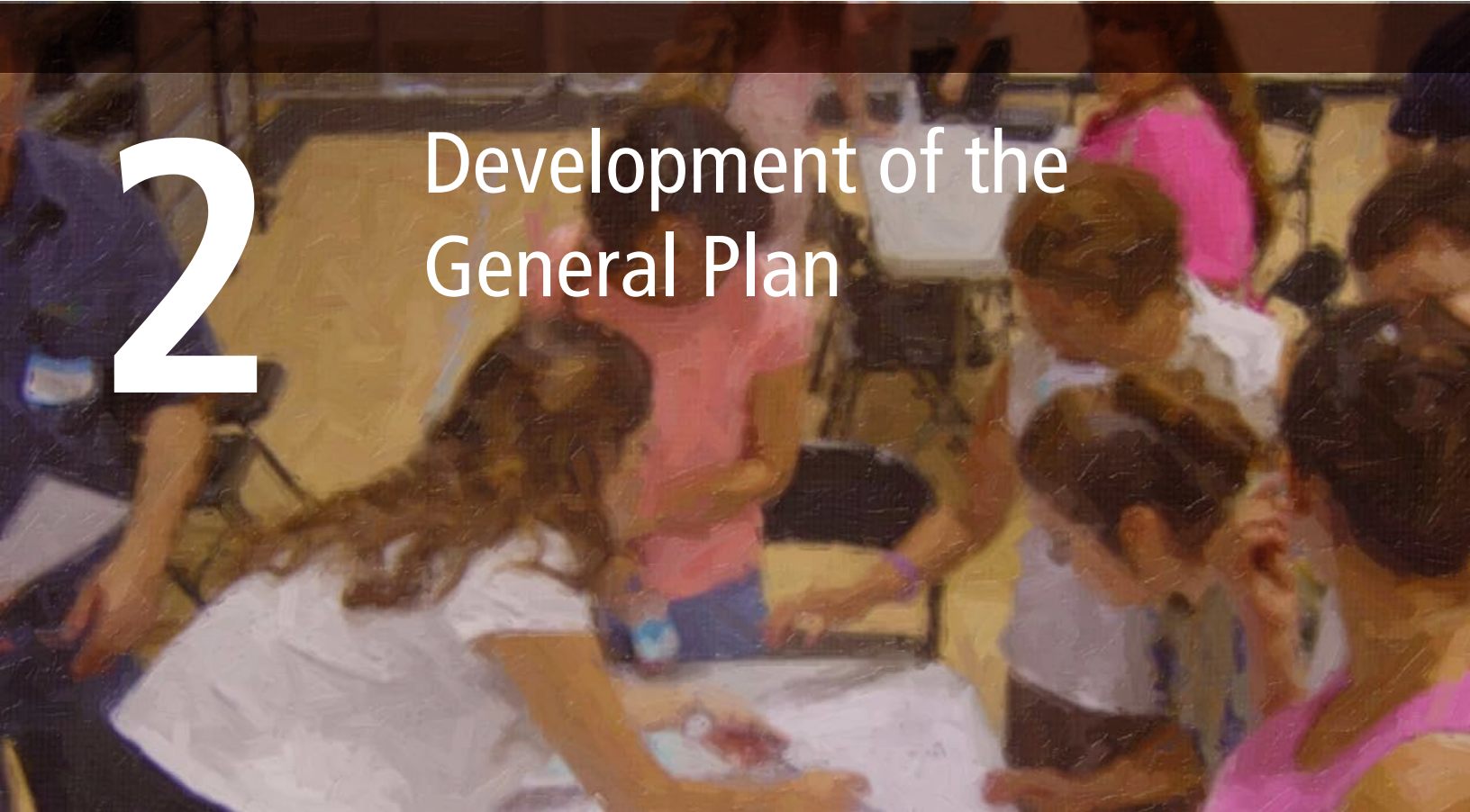


2

Development of the General Plan



INTRODUCTION

The City of South Gate believes that planning for the City's future should involve extensive citizen involvement, consultation with major stakeholders, and cutting edge planning approaches. The three-year process of developing the General Plan has involved all of these. The extensive public outreach that occurred around the General Plan suggested important concepts and visions to be included in the General Plan, many of which were not known to the City before the process began. Public outreach also created energy and support for the General Plan and the City's continuing efforts to enhance the City.

State Law requires planning agencies "to provide opportunities for the involvement of citizens, public agencies, public utility companies, and civic, education, and other community groups, through public hearings and any other means the City or county deems appropriate" (Gov't Code § 65353). From the start of the General Plan process in 2005, the City sought to aggressively implement this state requirement through a unique blend of grassroots community outreach, culturally sensitive engagement, and participatory planning techniques. This public outreach process engaged hundreds of diverse residents in developing a vision for the future of the City and received a Public Outreach Award from the Los Angeles Section of the American Planning Association in 2007.

The extensive public outreach that occurred around the General Plan suggested important concepts and visions to be included in the General Plan



A major community outreach effort was undertaken prior to each of the dozen community workshops.

The outreach program proactively engaged the City's predominantly Latino population, based on the City's awareness that many groups had been historically under-represented in the City's decision-making processes. All public General Plan events were heavily publicized to a diverse audience. Tactics included widely-distributed flyers, posters and banners in English and Spanish, announcements and word-of-mouth campaigns at schools, religious institutions, and citizen advisory committees, and postings at community events such as Family Day at the Park. Residents were also advised of events through local media coverage and the City's telephone reminder system.

Throughout the General Plan process, residents demonstrated an excitement about the future, a commitment to positive change, and a desire to maintain and support the South Gate community. Eleven public workshops, held on different topics throughout the development of the General Plan, were the lynchpin of the General Plan process and each saw an average of 75 -100 attendees. As envisioned, the extensive public outreach process served as a productive two-way dialogue between residents and the City and resulted in a shared vision for the future. Below is a detailed overview of this process and how it guided the General Plan update.



Throughout the General Plan update process, the City staff and the consultants attended community events, such as Family Day in the Park.

INITIAL OUTREACH AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Focused, preliminary outreach to key City stakeholders was the first stage of developing the General Plan. This involved establishing a citizen advisory committee and conducting stakeholder interviews. These tasks provided an initial understanding of the key issues confronting the City. It also provided a core of advisors that contributed to the process throughout.

GPAC

The 16-member General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) was appointed by the City Council. It was comprised of representatives of local agencies, non-profit organizations and clubs in order to encourage stakeholder participation, solicit their opinions, and have access to their expertise throughout the process. The GPAC met regularly over the course of the General Plan's development and provided advice and feedback on key issues and policy.

Stakeholder Interviews

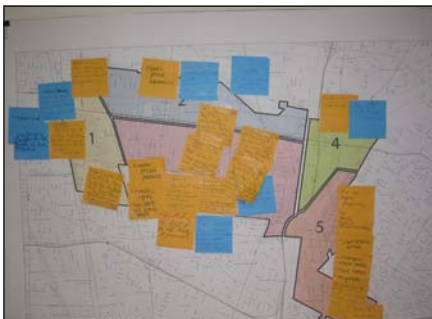
In addition to convening the GPAC, the General Plan team conducted interviews at the beginning of the General Plan process with the community's major stakeholders – such as city officials and local leaders in the fields of business, education, transportation, development, social services, and planning. The General Plan team also held focus group discussions and outreach sessions with a wide range of groups, including the South Gate Rotary Club, the Optimist Club, the Women's Club, Padres Unidos ('United Parents' group), the Commission for South Gate Youth, the Women's Multicultural Club, South Gate Middle School Leadership Club, LAUSD Adult Education learners, East Los Angeles College classes, the Chamber of Commerce, the Tweedy Mile Business Association, and others. The intent of these interviews was to solicit interest in the General Plan, to identify the major issues facing the City, and to engage the diverse formal and informal networks that exist in the City. These early stakeholder interviews accomplished this and provided direction for future workshops, technical reports, and development

of General Plan content.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



The community workshops included a variety of activities that encouraged interaction and conversation among residents.



Residents were provided with a variety of ways of expressing their ideas, such as this map of post-it notes with key issues.



Community workshops were attended by up to 200 residents. At each, residents provided ideas that formed the basis of this General Plan.

The next stage of the General Plan process was to identify the major issues and opportunities that should be addressed in the General Plan. Many of these had been suggested by the initial stakeholder interviews. They were then fleshed out by an issues and opportunities public workshop and from analysis and conclusions in a series of technical issues and opportunities reports.

Issues and Opportunities Workshop

The Issues and Opportunities Workshop was held on July 29, 2006 and involved about 85 residents from the community. The participants were asked to reflect on the City's most important strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Through facilitated small group discussions and interactive exercises, residents identified the City's key strengths to be its diverse neighborhoods, South Gate Park, Tweedy Mile, and the City's small town feel. They identified safety, parking, sufficient tax revenues, and traffic congestion as some of the City's major challenges. Residents also saw opportunities for increased walkability, preservation and strengthening of neighborhoods, and increased retail options within the City.

Issues and Opportunities Reports

Concurrent with the public outreach process, the General Plan team completed five technical issues and opportunities reports to inform the General Plan. These five technical reports covered the subjects of land use and urban design, economic development, housing, transportation, and community health.

VISIONING PROCESS

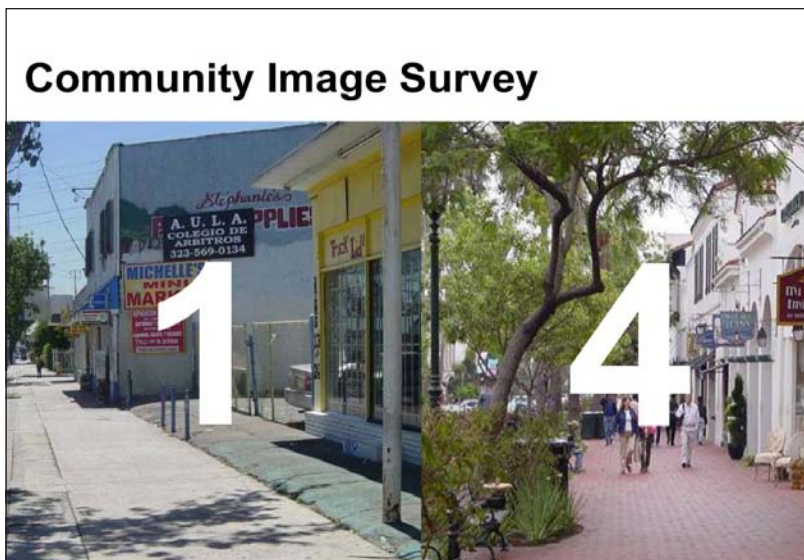
The visioning stage of the General Plan process involved exploring and crystallizing the community's goals into a unified vision statement. The focal point of this stage of work was the public visioning workshop, which resulted in a vision statement and set of guiding principles for the City's future. These were then reviewed and approved in a joint workshop with the City Council and Planning Commission.

Visioning Workshop

Approximately 180 residents, City officials and stakeholders attended the General Plan visioning workshop on September 30, 2006. Participants engaged in interactive exercises and small group activities such as a visual preference survey, where they identified preferences for community design, future development, and character of the City's districts and corridors. Residents also took part in a visioning exercise, where they prioritized goals for the City over the next 20 years. "Greening the City" and "enhancing Tweedy Mile" were the top two priorities identified by workshop participants. The need to create more affordable housing options was also mentioned frequently. These priorities were then articulated in the City's Vision Statement and Guiding Principles.



At the Vision Workshop, participants voted for their top 5 community-wide goals. This exercise formed the basis of the General Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles.



A Community Image Survey was prepared where residents expressed their preferences for future development character in the City.

LAND USE PLANNING PROCESS

A land use plan provides one of the most critical functions of a General Plan, and is often one of its most contentious components. Because of this, the land use planning stage of the process involved three intensive public workshops and a large amount of work by the General Plan team. The Vision and Guiding Principles generated in the previous stage provided a framework for this task. These two land use workshops and the extensive technical work by the General Plan team resulted in an initial set of land use objectives and policies for different areas of the City. Most of these fed directly into the General Plan. The progression of the land use planning process is described below.

Identification of Change Areas

The City and General Plan team first identified areas in the City that were likely to change significantly over the time horizon of the General Plan. These major potential change areas included Tweedy Mile, several of the City's commercial and industrial districts, and several major corridors such as Firestone Boulevard, Long Beach Boulevard, and Atlantic Avenue. The General Plan team also identified areas that were unlikely to change dramatically, including most of the City's neighborhoods. The focus for these areas of stability would be to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods, while the focus in major change areas would be to create a positive vision for how they should transform over time.

City-Wide Land Use Workshop

The focus of this workshop was to develop big-picture land use alternatives for the City of South Gate as a whole. More than 100 residents, City officials and stakeholders attended the workshop on December 9, 2006. The workshop format included a town hall-style discussion and an opportunity for feedback on the vision, direction, and land use possibilities for the City. It included an interactive "citizen planning" mapping exercise that involved placing game pieces representing different types of development in parts of the City where residents wanted to see change. In terms of major land use preferences, residents expressed a desire for the City to encourage a healthy mix of uses, including retail

and housing; redevelop key districts as well as corridors; increase economic development opportunities; attract more retail; preserve and enhance single family neighborhoods; and create varied housing options such as town homes, condominiums, and multi-family housing units. The community also wanted to have stores and services within walking distance of neighborhoods, particularly grocery stores that sell healthy and high-quality foods. These community preferences guided development of the land use plan for the City.

Focus Area Land Use Workshop

The goal of the second public land use workshop on January 20, 2007 was to understand in greater detail residents' vision for specific change areas in the City. The 100-plus participants participated in an interactive mapping exercise that allowed them to develop detailed land use visions for the change areas of the City. There was significant discussion about Tweedy Mile, Long Beach Boulevard, Firestone Boulevard, the area around the community college, and the area around the Atlantic/Firestone intersection. The information generated at this workshop was far more fine-grained than at the previous workshop and allowed the General Plan team to identify specific "Place Types" (or land uses) for individual parcels in the City.



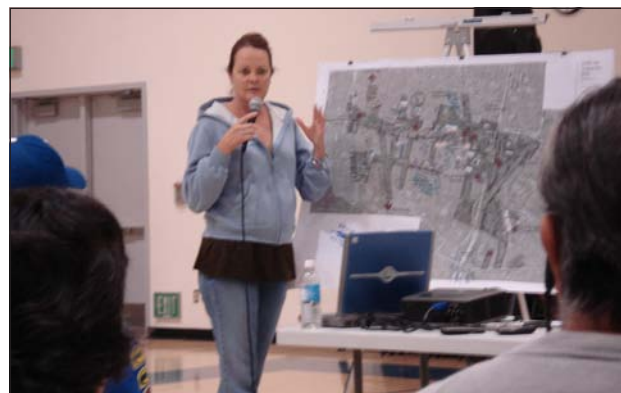
Participants placed game pieces representing "place types" in different areas of the City.

Strategy Framework Workshop

After the focus area land use workshop, the General Plan team developed the big picture strategy framework for the City. This included identifying major corridors for redevelopment, the creation of new mixed use activity centers (such as the community college area, the civic center area and the gateway area near the intersection of Firestone and Atlantic Boulevards), a network of liner green spaces and a series of small-scaled walkable main streets. The strategy framework was presented at a public workshop on January 27, 2007 and the nearly 100 community members in attendance were strongly in support of the overall strategy presented.



The result of the workshop was a land use vision for various districts and corridors within the City.



At all workshops, participants reported back a summary of the results of small group discussions.

TOPIC-SPECIFIC WORKSHOPS

In parallel with the series of community congress General Plan workshops described above, the City held a number of topic-specific public workshops. These addressed the topics of transportation, economic development, and healthy communities (addressed in a series of three “healthy community” workshops), all three of which are addressed in dedicated elements of the General Plan Elements. The results and content of each of these workshops are described below.

Transportation Workshop

This public workshop focused on the City’s major transportation challenges and opportunities, and solicited resident input on them. Workshop participants emphasized the general need for expanded public transit and a safer and more inviting pedestrian network. In coordination with the General Plan team’s transportation consultants, residents also provided invaluable “on-the-ground” knowledge of specific problem areas and circulation patterns in the City. In many cases, discussions of these areas and patterns resulted in a consensus about how the General Plan should approach them. This included proposed solutions for specific intersections, locations of future bicycle and pedestrian facilities, concepts for specific streets like Tweedy Boulevard, Firestone Boulevard, and Atlantic Avenue, and locations of public transportation improvements, among other things. The data generated during this working session fed directly into the Mobility Element of the General Plan.



Residents of all ages participated in the process of creating the future of South Gate.

Economic Development Workshop

The economic development public workshop included a brainstorm about what types of retail and industrial activity residents wanted in the City, and a discussion of how these types of economic activity would help the City achieve its long-term vision and guiding principles. The overall economic development priorities identified by residents included preserving Tweedy Mile's small town feel, enhancing economic prosperity by adding favorable shops and commercial activities, and making a continued investment in education. In terms of retail activity, residents expressed a desire to support existing businesses on Tweedy and in other locations, attract both nationally recognized retail stores and small businesses tailored to the needs of residents, encourage higher-quality products in the stores that do exist, and provide positive entertainment and activities for youth. Residents also expressed a desire that industrial activity generate jobs and pay higher wages by focusing on specialized technologies, be separated from residential areas, and be environmentally friendly. The data generated during this working session fed directly into the Economic Element of the General Plan.

Healthy Community Workshops

One of the most innovative components of the South Gate General Plan is the Healthy Community Element, one of the first of its kind in California. Development of the Healthy Community Element involved three public workshops. The first addressed the link between the built environment and health, the second addressed access to nutritious foods, and the third was an interactive walking audit of South Gate's streets. These workshops and their role in developing the Healthy Community Element are discussed below.

Healthy Community Workshop #1: Designing a Healthy Active Community

The first Healthy Community workshop, attended by about 40 residents and City officials and held on February 16, 2008, provided an overview of how public health is impacted by land use and transportation patterns, driving rates, pedestrian-friendly environments, and parks and recreation. It also informed residents about how to be involved in the planning process and advocate for healthy communities and active lifestyles. Residents discussed their health concerns and developed a list of priorities, which included increasing access to healthy foods; improving the cleanliness, aesthetics, and safety of streets; ensuring closer proximity to local services; providing more recreational activities; creating less traffic; and developing community gardens. All of these priority issues became specific policies or policy sections in the Healthy Community Element.

Healthy Community Workshop #2: Healthy Foods 101

At the second healthy community workshop held on March 27, 2008, stakeholders used maps and local knowledge to assess the availability of good and bad food choices in different neighborhoods of the City. Over 100 residents participated, identifying their city-wide nutrition priorities as creation of farmers markets; support for local markets and grocery stores to provide more healthy food options; and limits on drive-through restaurants and liquor stores, especially around schools. The workshop offered strategies for changing land use policy and working alongside city staff and elected officials to address issues of healthy food access.

Healthy Community Workshop #3: South Gate Walks

The final Healthy Community workshop, held on May 3, 2008, was a guided walk audit of the City's streets conducted by 30 residents. The audit evaluated the safety and aesthetics of four different street sections in the City – a residential neighborhood, the Long Beach corridor, an area around an elementary school, and a stretch of Tweedy Mile. Overall, residents expressed a strong desire for clean and safe streets that encourage walking and public gathering. Specific recommendations resulting from the walk audit, included: more highly visible crosswalks, more street lighting, more street trees that provide shade, pedestrian-scale store fronts, higher activity in commercial areas, and improving the maintenance of sidewalks and streets. This data informed both the Healthy Community Element and other portions of the General Plan related to the pedestrian network.



Residents participated in a “walk audit” to identify the areas of the pedestrian environment where improvements are needed.

COMMUNITY UPDATES

In addition to public workshops designed to generate early resident feedback, vision frameworks, and policy content, the General Plan process also involved two workshops that apprised the community of the plan's progress as it took form.

Community Update 2007

The 2007 Community Update involved presentations by the Community Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Police Departments, and the Tweedy Mile Association. The subject of the Community Update was both the status of the General Plan and, more generally, upcoming and completed projects throughout the City. The Community Update also included presentations by most City departments on their recent activities. The public information event was attended by around 150 residents and stakeholders. After the presentations, residents provided city officials with feedback and ideas about the City's various activities, including the General Plan. The meeting concluded with an information resource fair. Twenty-four City departments, county and regional agencies and non-profit organizations had tables around the auditorium where staff members provided information on their programs and services and received further public comment.



The key strategies in the General Plan were presented at numerous community meetings, such as the Community Update in 2007.

DRAFTING AND COMPLETION OF THE GENERAL PLAN

The workshops described above provided an orienting structure for the development of the General Plan. They generated public ownership, an overall vision, and direction and invaluable ideas for the creation of policies and implementation actions in the General Plan. Over the course of the project, the technical experts involved in the process supplemented and verified the issues identified by the community and presented alternatives for accomplishing city goals.

Once this process had defined the direction and policy framework for the General Plan, the General Plan consultant team worked with City staff to draft the General Plan. In this way, the content of the General Plan directly reflects the aspirations of the community, understood through a variety of strategies and from a number of different perspectives. This public input has formulated a policy and regulatory structure, informed by the most up-to-date best practices in the planning profession, to implement community goals.



3

Community Design Element

INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the General Plan provides goals, objectives, policies and implementation actions on community design, which includes land use, urban design, and the characteristics that give South Gate its unique image and identity. The Community Design chapter is one of the central components of the General Plan because it provide policy guidance on the characteristics of the built environment – the location and design of our homes, stores, parks, offices and other spaces – and the way that we move between these various places to fulfill our daily needs to work, shop and play.

The chapter includes a brief overview of the existing conditions in South Gate as of 2007 and a summation of the existing issues that this General Plan was developed to cover. Looking to the future, the chapter includes a summary of how these existing challenges might be addressed, and proceeds to outline the big picture planning concepts that influence the community design of the City. This is followed by regulations for future land uses in the City.

Unlike other general plans, which provide an allowable future land use for each parcel, the South Gate General Plan uses “Place Types” – designations that move beyond land use to also include form and character requirements. The Place Types are then applied to unique regulatory geographies of the City – Neighborhoods, Districts, and Corridors. Following Place Types, is a section on citywide policy, providing guidance for a number of topics including regional coordination, the preservation of the identity of the community, the preservation of existing neighborhood character, and community participation and involvement in the planning process. At the end of the chapter are vision statements and policies for each District and Corridor in the City. The final section of the chapter contains the implementation actions for the Community Design Element.

The chapter includes a brief overview of the existing conditions in South Gate as of 2007 and a summation of the existing issues that this General Plan was developed to address.