

From: **Community Planners Committee**

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Community Planners Committee Rejects "Complete Communities" Plan; needs more affordable housing, more park land

For Immediate Release

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CITY of SAN DIEGO -- The Community Planners Committee, known as the CPC, which consists of leaders of the City of San Diego Community Planning Groups, held a video-conference meeting on Tuesday, July 7.

The committee discussed a proposal by the City's Planning Department, known as "Complete Communities".

Concerns were expressed that the Department's proposal does not properly reflect the unique nature of the City's communities, including the 30-ft coastal height limit adopted by voters in 1972 to retain coastal communities' character.

The planners supported a recommendation presented by Andrea Schlageter, chair of the Ocean Beach Planning Board to reduce the allowable density in the Department's proposal. The CPC voted to recommend a Floor Area Ratio no more than 2.0. Anything greater than that would open up the possibility of building above 30ft in the Coastal zone and give developers incentive to pursue overturning proposition D.

Other changes applied to the whole City, including a recommendation to require more affordable housing units in each new housing project. And, if affordable units are not included in a project, they must be built within the same community's boundaries and not transferred to any other community.

Opposition to two parts of City Plan

This week's meeting followed a CPC video-conference meeting on June 30. At that meeting, community representatives voted to not recommend approval of the City's "Complete Communities" plan.

The community planners felt that the housing and parks proposals were poorly crafted and would be harmful to residents in all communities. They expressed support for underserved areas, which City staff have called "communities of concern".

The CPC noted that the housing and parks proposals would be unfair to “communities of concern”. Under these plans, Developers would get incentives to add dense housing, but little money would be provided to acquire needed parks. One participant described City staff’s plan this way: *"Need a park, get a swingset"*.

This plan is intended by Planning Department officials to improve housing, parks and transportation, but the planners see the plan as seriously flawed and a threat to existing residential communities. Three components of concern were discussed:

"Housing Solutions" is intended to spur more housing development near trolley and bus lines. However, the community planners were critical of the plan, objecting to downtown-type density in the neighborhoods, with no height limits and no parking. According to one expert opinion, the staff’s plan could result in "a nightmarish future ... with a wall of high and mid rises, with cars driving around in search of parking." _

"Parks Master Plan" is intended to provide "a world-class park and recreation system". The plan proposes a new scoring system for parks that rewards “amenities” inside parks, such as food service, and devalues actual park acreage. The new plan would lead to worsening park shortages, with 325,000 more residents projected by 2050.

The CPC noted that the Planning Department is ignoring the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic: that high-density housing appears to increase transmission of COVID-19 and people will need more outdoor space, not less.

The community planners were particularly concerned about sports fields for youths and adults. They feel that too few resources would be provided for recreational and organized sports users (soccer, softball, baseball, etc.). Planning Department officials refused to consult with Planning Groups, Recreation Advisory Groups or sports leaders on the new plan.

Though the CPC supports equitable park and recreation facilities for all communities, it feels that the proposed plan would not provide these results.

"Mobility" is the third component. The community planners did not object to a plan to channel resources into the central part of the city. The group voted to take no position on the transportation plan, with many stating the need for individual Community Planning Groups to review the plan. It was noted, however, that if the City wants to justify increased density, all it needs to do is run a bus down a street to create a “Transit Corridor”.

One common question in discussing the Department's plan is "why the rush?" It was noted that the City's Housing Element shows that more than 174,000 homes can be built under existing zoning. The CPC is not satisfied with answers from Mayor Faulconer's Planning Department -- about why a long-term plan should go forward in a rush, without taking time for a full public review.