



LUCE UPDATE AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Message from the Director:

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your commitment and contribution to the many LUCE workshops and the recent eighteen Planning Commission and City Council hearings. Your expectations for Santa Monica's future have provided the basis for a proactive and fully integrated Land Use and Circulation Element "Strategy Framework." I invite you to stay involved as we move forward with City Council's direction in this next stage of testing and evaluation.

As many of you are aware, during the past few months there has been extensive outreach and community involvement in the review of the LUCE "Strategy Framework," released in May 2008. The City's boards and commissions have brought forward ideas and recommendations. The Planning Commission guided the LUCE through nine public hearings, endorsing the Strategy Framework and preparing a broad range of recommendations for City Council's consideration. The Council held nine well-attended public hearings, incorporating public comments and providing policy direction to ensure that the LUCE is a "balanced and living" document that responds to the needs and expectations of Santa Monica's varied citizenry. Council direction on key principles is the following:

- **Preservation of Residential Neighborhoods:** As you know, the highest priority in the LUCE is protecting existing neighborhood character and scale. Council directed that the protection and preservation of Santa Monica's neighborhoods, comprising over 94% of the city, be aggressively and quickly implemented. Council requested staff to identify and test the tools necessary to retain character defining buildings, older smaller scale multi-family buildings and existing open space and greenery, including large tree canopy. Effective tools include Conservation Overlay Districts, Infill Development Standards and Maximum Building Envelopes established for individual neighborhoods, as well as Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) for historic preservation and adoptive reuse.
- **Lowering Maximum Heights to be Analyzed:** The maximum heights identified in the Strategy Framework for evaluation purposes were significantly below those in the current General Plan. Council directed that heights be further lowered so that $\pm 98.8\%$ of the heights that will be evaluated for traffic and other environmental impacts are within the City's current allowable zoning.
- **Committing to Public Process and Community Participation for Future Projects:** City Council as well as the Planning Commission were very clear that the community will play an active role in evaluating projects that request to build above the 32 feet "by right" base height. Throughout the many LUCE workshops and public hearings, all participants have stressed the importance of a transparent process. Council committed to a public process for development review that will ensure that future

projects are evaluated on their ability to meet the City's and community's identified objectives and expectations.

- Establishing a High Bar for Public Benefits: Council was very clear that future development should contribute to the livability of the City and its residents. In order for future projects to be considered as contributing they must exhibit extraordinary public benefits as well as compatibility in scale, setting and transitions to residential neighborhoods. City Council will establish a high standard of performance for future public benefits. Examples include:
 - Historic preservation and adaptive reuse;
 - Significant amounts of open space/community plazas;
 - Child care, community facilities and the arts; and
 - Affordable and workforce housing: City Council emphasized the need to maximize the amount of affordable housing in determining whether additional incentives for height or square footage would be warranted.
- Making a Proactive Traffic/Transportation Management Approach Happen: The most notable and innovative aspects of the Strategy Framework is the ability of the City Council, through the Circulation Element, to manage and reduce traffic. The City Council has whole heartedly endorsed the cutting edge approach where effective solutions are put into action to address the City's traffic issues. Specifically, the City Council recommended a "No Net New Trips" policy as a basis for traffic management and promoting sustainability. This policy will be used to monitor and evaluate the success of LUCE over the next five years.

Any project above the base height of 32 feet would be required to meet all of the transportation requirements, including:

- Location near transit;
 - Impact fees;
 - Strategies to significantly reduce auto trips, particularly for commercial projects;
 - Participation in transportation management districts, where resources can be pooled and coordinated with surrounding commuters, to provide for measures such as shuttles and vanpools.; and
 - Bicycle and pedestrian connections and facility improvements.
- Phasing Future Development: City Council was very clear that development should be phased over the life of this twenty-year plan, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation at least every five years to determine if:
 - Trip reduction measures are succeeding in shifting ridership to alternatives that reduce traffic;
 - Alternative forms of mobility, including transit, shuttles, bicycle facilities and pedestrian facilities are evolving in a coordinated and connected way, creating a system that is effective and easy to use; and
 - Necessary infrastructure and transit capacity is available at the few designated activity centers and at the Bergamot Station, Downtown and Memorial Park transit centers.

The planning for the transit centers will require a full public participation process. This will include, laying out Specific Plans as well as identifying locations for development, transit, pedestrian, auto and bicycle connections, and essential neighborhood retail and open space to create complete neighborhoods. As part of the initial environmental and economic analysis, Council asked that a range of housing and creative uses be evaluated for some of these transit areas.

Council's recommendations provide the parameters for evaluating environmental (CEQA), traffic impacts and economic/fiscal feasibility considerations as well as testing alternatives to achieve the greatest amount of public benefits with the minimum scale and height. Council will use the results of this analysis along with further input from the community, through a series of public hearings and workshops, to shape their recommendations for the final draft LUCE plan. This will be followed by public hearings for consideration and adoption of a final plan.

As you can see, there's a tremendous amount of evaluation and community involvement still needed. The final plan must reflect Santa Monica's community sentiment in order to achieve a successful roadmap that will guide and shape the community's future for years to come. We look forward to your continued participation.