

MEMO

Development Services Department



Date: April 23, 2014

To: Roger Millar, Smart Growth America

From: Janice Kluth, City of Chula Vista

Reference: 180-day Progress Report for Chula Vista, CA

OVERVIEW:

In early fall 2013, the City of Chula Vista (City) conducted a workshop to apply the LEED-ND rating system to two properties: 1) a 23-acre, previously-developed infill site (L Street) and 2) a mixed-use infill site (Planning Area 12). This hands-on workshop produced an informal sustainability "scorecard" for the L Street property and a high-level look at Planning Area 12, facilitated discussion of compliance with the prerequisites, and provided general siting, design and building suggestions to the developer to support the project's ND score.

The Development Services Department (DSD) gathered City staff, developers, property owners and community members with a range of technical expertise, for a 2-day workshop facilitated by nationally recognized LEED-ND expert Eliot Allen, Principal, Criterion Planners, Inc. The event was made possible by Smart Growth America (SGA) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The workshop participants were guided through the calculations and detail of a preliminary LEED-ND scorecard. The L Street project did well, meeting the minimum criteria with minor conditions. L Street benefited from its proximity to existing infrastructure, local development patterns, and the connectivity of its site design. In addition, the City's commitment to a range of sustainability-related initiatives, such as its Climate Action Plan and its Title 24 'Reach Code', contributed to the score. The preliminary LEED-ND rating shows that this area is suited for sustainable development, and builds consensus on the elements required to implement the City's vision for a Sustainable Community.

A summary of background, workshop discussion, recommendations and potential next steps is included below.

BACKGROUND:

SGA selected the City from a national pool of applicants to receive a free smart growth technical assistance workshop entitled "Using LEED-ND to Accelerate the Development of Sustainable Communities". The program is sponsored by SGA, in partnership with the US EPA's "Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities" program. It is intended to promote Smart Growth principles at the local level.

The LEED-ND rating system is a set of measures for judging and certifying the sustainability of a neighborhood, similar to LEED certification of a green building, but at the neighborhood-wide scale. LEED-ND provides a promising tool for implementing Smart Growth, New Urbanism and Green Construction through local planning efforts, in the city's greenfield master plan and existing/infill development areas.

The outcome of the workshop is not binding nor is it an official LEED-ND score. Rather, the workshop provided an opportunity to better understand the LEED-ND system, and to consider how it might support the planning efforts for the project, as well as other initiatives.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW:

The group determined that the L Street site met all of the LEED-ND Prerequisites. The project was found to be ND certifiable without major obstacles. The Planning Area 12 site was found to be largely ND eligible, except for NPDp2 Compact Development, where non-residential density compliance may be problematic. Generally, LEED-ND appears more suitable for western Chula Vista, where existing development follows traditional development patterns in terms of the grid street network, density and diversity. By contrast, eastern Chula Vista's topography/non-grid street system, use patterns, and remaining fabric of vacant lands make compliance with ND more challenging, although still plausible in certain more urban and diverse use areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In addition to encouraging the application of ND strategies at the two subject properties, City staff received a number of recommendations for promoting sustainability at the community-wide level:

1. Gauge Community Conditions
 - Review development policies and regulations to identify ND strengths, weaknesses, gaps and conflicts
 - Identify ND-eligible lands - estimate development potential and calculate infrastructure savings
2. Remove Code Barriers
 - Amend regulations as needed
3. Align Plans & Implementation Measures
 - Amend policies to incorporate ND strategies
 - Create an ND Zoning overlay
 - Work with USGBC to designate ND-ready areas
 - Explore credit banking potential
4. Establish Incentives
 - Create incentives for ND certification or compliance

5. Catalyze / Assist Projects
 - Technical training for staff and community stakeholders
 - Policy education for local officials
 - Include ND provisions in City RFPs
 - Create Public-Private partnerships to showcase ND projects
 - Provide support for projects seeking certification
 - Leverage ND project success
6. Require Consideration / Certification
 - Amend code to define 'covered' projects
 - Amend code to require ND certification

NEXT STEPS:

A month after the workshop event, staff proposed taking the following actions:

- Report out on results – Workshop Results and Recommendations posted to website and sent to workshop participants
- Identify a staff champion to move this issue forward
- Develop a multi-disciplinary team to broaden and sustain the effort
- Consider options for how to utilize LEED-ND

Six months later, the following steps are being taken:

- The Chula Vista Sustainability Center website is being enhanced and redesigned. Previous accomplishments and training events, such as the LEED ND workshop, will be highlighted.
- Ed Batchelder, Planning Manager for the City of Chula Vista, will spearhead the effort to move LEED ND and other sustainable community efforts forward.
- A team of Development Services staff (Building Plans Reviewers, Planners, Inspectors, and Counter Techs) are working together to heighten awareness among staff and with our development customers on the City's energy efficiency efforts and innovative opportunities for energy savings through better community design.
- Chula has developed, in conjunction with Criterion Planners and Global Green, a tool called Climate Neighbor, that is based on the parameters of LEED ND and quantifies the reduction of energy consumption and Green House Gases that could result from the selection of certain community design choices.
- The Millenia project (formerly the Eastern Urban Center) has applied for LEED ND certification, and we understand is near to successful completion.

Again, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the EPA, to Smart Growth America and to Eliot Allen of Criterion Planners for giving Chula Vista the opportunity to learn about LEED for Neighborhood Development. The City of Chula Vista is taking important steps toward its sustainability goals with its Climate Action Plan and other initiatives. The workshop helped City staff, developers and property

owners understand how well-designed neighborhood development can contribute to that vision. LEED-ND provides key strategies to achieve more sustainable and vibrant communities. Not only will it help guide the City of Chula Vista in its current development projects, but it will also provide a foundation for healthy planning and building efforts in the future.