

MEMO

Development Services Department



Date: November 6, 2014

To: Roger Millar, Smart Growth America

From: Janice Kluth, City of Chula Vista

Reference: 12-Month Progress Report for Chula Vista, CA

The City of Chula Vista was selected in 2013 by Smart Growth America 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.

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 workshop provided an opportunity to better understand the LEED-ND system, and to consider how it might support the planning efforts for the projects, as well as other initiatives.

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).

L Street Property

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.

Planning Area 12 Property

The Planning Area 12 project was originally designed to be part of the adjacent regional mall. More recently, properties surrounding the site have begun to develop, spurring the property owner to consider a mixed-use layout, with housing, retail and hotel. Since attending last year's workshop, discussions with staff have led the project toward a more transit-oriented design. The City expects to see new plans submitted in the next 4-6 months.

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 less suitable for ND, although recent development in the vicinity has created more demand for a mixed use development model. Generally, LEED-ND appears more suitable in areas where existing development follows traditional development patterns in terms of the grid street network, density and diversity. But even in Chula Vista's areas with challenging topography, non-grid street systems, and suburban land use patterns, we have learned LEED-ND is 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

RESULTS:

In the twelve months since the workshop event, the following steps have been taken:

- The Chula Vista Sustainability Center website has been 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.
 - Six public workshops have been held, focusing on energy efficiency measures in the built environment
 - Nine staff trainings on energy efficiency have been conducted to raise awareness and ensure compliance
- Chula Vista has developed, 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 received a Special Recognition Award from Circulate San Diego for its innovative design and site plan and has applied for LEED ND certification. The first phase of construction is nearing completion.

CONCLUSION:

Once again, the City of Chula Vista 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.