

introduction and purpose

In the summer of 1875, Colonel Baker and Senator John P. Jones were well aware of the extraordinary opportunity they were presenting to the public when they offered the first lots in what was to become the City of Santa Monica.

The town that evolved along this golden coast attracted early visionary investors who created a famed resort with national visitor attractions including the beach, the piers, the Palisades and the Looff Hippodrome. They also created a vibrant downtown, which today is ringed by distinctive and diverse neighborhoods that are unmatched in the region.

“Today, we sell to the highest bidder, the Pacific Ocean...a bay filled with white-winged ships; a southern horizon rimmed with...purple mountains...and, languid air...odored with the breath of flowers.”¹

- TOM FITCH, 1875



¹ From *Looking at Santa Monica*, James W. Lunsford, 1983.

A CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Santa Monica, with its 88,700 residents, is remarkable within the region for its unique neighborhoods, each with its own character and featuring its own mix of housing, shopping, dining and entertainment options. This diversity provides for a wide range of housing choices, from single family homes on large lots, to small scale bungalows, courtyard apartments, condominiums and larger mixed-use apartments. Shopping opportunities vary from local neighborhood retail areas, such as those along Pico and Ocean Park, to the eclectic mix on Main Street and Montana Avenue.

The City combines a rich historic, cultural, and residential heritage with the vigor of a balanced economy. Professional, medical, scientific, technical, and creative arts services are leading sectors of the City's business base, along with major hotels, guest accommodations, food and retail, and a variety of small businesses. Santa Monica is known for its arts and entertainment professions and is home to the movie industry and over 120 museums and art galleries, including the arts complexes of Bergamot Station, Broadway Gallery Complex and the 18th Street Arts Complex.² Much of this diversity was envisioned in the General Plan developed in 1984.



A greener, more sustainable environment can be created if Santa Monicans work together, as they did for the opening of the Annenberg Community Beach Club, the first public beach club in the United States.

Santa Monicans tend to be socially progressive and have a national reputation for innovation and leadership. The City is committed to supporting social services, providing affordable housing and creating a lifelong learning community. The community is also acknowledged as one of the nation's leaders in the sustainability movement with a renowned green building program and a *Sustainable City Plan* which guides decision makers and ensures that Santa Monica's natural, economic and social attributes are preserved for future generations to enjoy.

² See *Creative Capital: A Plan for the Development of Santa Monica's Arts & Culture*, 2006.

Challenges and Opportunities

To some degree, Santa Monica is a victim of its own success. Given its regional location, natural beauty, inviting neighborhoods and progressive policies, the City has attracted workers and visitors from all over the region, not only in seasonal surges but on a daily basis for work, school, and shopping. Despite the City's extensive investment in transit, automobiles remain the primary mode of transportation and congestion is one of the community's major challenges.

The City's attractiveness as a place to live, work and play, combined with the increasing scarcity of land within its borders, has resulted in some of the highest housing prices in the nation. This challenges the community to use new methods to tackle the difficult issues of providing adequate affordable and workforce housing units and identifying ways to finance them.

The City will benefit from the planned Expo Light Rail line, anticipated to open in 2015. Significant investment interest in some of the large parcels in the City's industrial areas adjacent to the proposed Expo Light Rail stations, and along its major boulevards such as Wilshire and Colorado offers the City an exciting opportunity to promote new affordable and workforce housing where only regional commercial potential now exists. In facilitating transit-oriented development, the City benefits from integrating land use and transportation in a more efficient and sustainable way. This integrated approach decreases reliance on the automobile, which reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

PURPOSE AND STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of the Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) of the City's General Plan is to establish the community's vision for the future. Its goal is to provide a flexible framework for



Image courtesy of Metro© 2009.

The Expo Light Rail is a key component in the LUCE strategy, which encourages more use of transit, bicycling, and walking. The Light Rail enables the creation of new complete neighborhoods near stations that include new housing units and open spaces.

long-term decision making that will determine how the community will look and function as it evolves over time.

State of California law requires that every city and county within the state shall, "adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city,"⁴ and must be periodically updated. California code requires that a general plan be comprehensive, internally consistent and long-term. General plans must address certain key topics or elements which include: land use, circulation, housing, noise, open space, conservation and safety. Although required to address these specific issues, a general plan may be organized in a way that best suits the

jurisdiction and may also include any topics relevant to the specific local circumstances. The plan must also be clearly written, available to all those concerned with the community's development, and easy for the City to administer.⁵

The LUCE is the City of Santa Monica's fundamental land use and circulation policy document, and it provides the basic policy direction for the City's development and conservation for the next 20 years. The additional elements required by state law are already adopted and in force.

⁴ Government Code § 65300.

⁵ CA Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

EIGHT FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS FORM THE CORE OF LUCE SUSTAINABLE PLANNING

1. Neighborhood Conservation and Enhancement

Protect and conserve the character and scale of Santa Monica's neighborhoods.



2. Integrated Land Use and Transportation

Incentivize housing over regional-serving commercial growth at activity centers on existing and proposed transit corridors.



3. Proactive Congestion Management

Proactively address congestion and climate change through programs that will result in vehicle trip reduction.



4. Complete Neighborhoods with Increased Open Space

Create complete neighborhoods with jobs, housing, and retail linked by green connections and increased open space.



5. Require Community Benefits

Meet the community's values and expectations by defining how new projects contribute to Santa Monica.



6. Quality Urban Character and Form

Shape key elements of the public and private realm to be livable and green while contributing to the City's sense of place.



7. Preservation of Historic Resources

Promote a variety of financial incentives, adaptive reuse, and conservation programs to ensure the preservation of historic resources.



8. Managing Change and Measuring Our Success

Adaptive growth management through regular evaluation of trends, allowing the community to "put on the brakes."



Developed out of an extensive public outreach and participation process, the Framework Elements are a direct reflection of the community's hopes, desires and aspirations, and they ensure the City's commitment to think, act, and plan sustainably.

The current state-required General Plan Elements adopted in Santa Monica are: Housing Element, Open Space Element, Conservation Element, Noise Element, and Safety Element. Santa Monica has also adopted a Historic Preservation Element. In addition to the General Plan, the City has also adopted the *Sustainable City Plan*, *Creative Capital* (Santa Monica’s cultural arts master plan), the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, and the *Community Forest Management Plan*.

The Need to Update the 1984 General Plan

Santa Monica’s current General Plan was last updated in 1984, over a quarter of a century ago. This earlier plan reflected the state-of-the-art techniques and approaches of its time. It has served the City well over the years and meets legal requirements. However, the last 25 years have brought substantial change to the City and the region. During this time, fluctuating economic cycles, regional population growth, a tripling of Santa Monica’s office space and rising land values have brought benefits along with social and environmental challenges. Community needs, values and lifestyles have also evolved along with these changes. Such a rapidly changing world requires that the City review the land use and circulation policies and programs proposed in the 1980’s for their relevance to the major



In the past 25 years since the 1984 LUCE there has been increased employment opportunities in Santa Monica. Above, The Water Garden and Yahoo! Center are two major employment centers that are home to thousands of workers engaged in a wide range of professional industries.

challenges the City faces today. It is clear that planning in those years never anticipated the environmental issues that the City and state as a whole confront today. The LUCE responds to the state’s recent direction with respect to climate change—integrating land use and transportation to protect and conserve our future and reduce our impact on the environment.

Reshaping Traditional Planning Approaches

Since the completion of the General Plan in 1984, two directives have been adopted which have great importance for the future of Santa Monica and great impact on how it plans for that future. The first directive is found in the 1994 Santa Monica Sustainable City Plan, which encouraged the City to plan in a

new way, taking environmental impacts into account. The second directive is the State of California’s recent adoption of major climate change legislation aimed at reducing GHG emissions. The Governor’s Office Fact Sheet on the legislation states: “In order to reach California’s greenhouse gas goals, we must rethink how we design our communities.”

Sustainable City Plan (SCP): Since 1994, the City of Santa Monica, with the adoption of the *SCP*, has moved aggressively to help the community think, plan and act more sustainably, leaving the flawed practices of the past behind. The *SCP* specifically charges the City with meeting its guiding principles regarding transportation, transit, open space, land use, housing and human dignity. To accomplish this, the City endorsed two

important guiding principles: first, the City must begin to address root causes, rather than symptoms, of problems, and second, the City must provide criteria for evaluating the long-term, rather than the short-term, impacts of its decisions.

AB 32 and SB 375: The State of California, beginning in 2006, adopted two pieces of landmark climate change legislation (AB 32 and SB 375) that commit the state to reduce GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and to 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. To begin to achieve this goal, the California Attorney General's Office has taken the position that local governments must take emission reduction targets into consideration when updating their general plans, particularly with regard to land use and transportation policy. This approach ties state transportation funding decisions to land use policy and links transportation to housing in regional planning efforts.

THE LUCE PLANNING APPROACH: CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Responding to the two directives, the LUCE differs from the 1984 General Plan in several significant ways. It provides the platform for the community's most fundamental values to interact with the City's official land use and



The 2003 Sustainable City Plan established guiding principles that helped to inform the LUCE.

transportation policies in a sustainable and innovative manner. In doing so, the LUCE implements the policies of the SCP and responds directly to the state's climate change legislation for reduction of GHG emissions. Most importantly, the LUCE clearly identifies the tools the City requires to meet state GHG emission goals and the community's desire to preserve and enhance the City. It outlines specific measures to conserve residential neighborhoods. It also directs change to occur in selected areas along the transit-rich boulevards and in the districts, ensuring that new development improves the City for all who live here.

Addressing Climate Change

The LUCE provides long-term programs to reduce the City's carbon footprint and its overall impact on the environment.

Reshaping traditional planning approaches, the LUCE translates the community's desire for preserving the City's unique character and identity into programs which carefully limit and control growth, directing investment pressures away from the neighborhoods to the City's historic transit corridors. Its goal is to preserve neighborhoods, enhance historic preservation, reduce GHG emissions and create new housing opportunities along the City's boulevards and in carefully located districts. It unites the creation of new housing with accessibility to transit. It establishes aggressive vehicle trip reduction measures and enhances alternative forms of transportation, including shuttles, carpools, walking and bicycling. It creates new open space and supports enhancements to the City's urban forest. By doing all these things simultaneously, the LUCE fosters complete neighborhoods where Santa Monicans can meet their needs within walking distance of their homes.

The LUCE reorients the City's auto-dependent boulevards into inviting avenues with improved transit, distinctive architecture, landscaping, trees, planted medians and neighborhood friendly services, defining a new sense of place where local residents will be attracted to shop, work, live and play. The Plan provides direct support for the City's vigorous cultural and creative arts programs, and designs new



The LUCE includes innovative strategies to reduce the City's impact on the environment including stringent vehicle trip reduction and neighborhood conservation measures that will ensure sustainable living practices and the preservation of some of Santa Monica's unique resources for generations to come.

urban neighborhoods exemplifying sustainable living practices with green connections, transit, improved pedestrian and bike access and attractive public places.

This holistic planning approach unites environmental, land use, economic, transportation and social concerns into a single, flexible framework for decision making, providing the City its greatest opportunity for implementing long-term programs to reduce its carbon footprint, GHG emissions and its overall impact on the environment well into the future. In doing so, this Plan places Santa Monica at the forefront of sustainable planning practices in the nation.

Key Principles of Sustainable Planning

The key principles of the LUCE are provided below. A brief explanation of these principles can be found in the Executive Summary, and greater detail follows in subsequent chapters. The key principles are:

- Conserving and Enhancing Neighborhoods
- Integrating Land Use and Transportation by Transitioning Regional-Serving Commercial Growth into New Housing Opportunities on Transit Corridors
- Managing Transportation/Reducing Congestion
- Creating Complete Neighborhoods with Increased Open Space and an Expanded Urban Forest

WHAT DOES THE LEAF SYMBOL MEAN?



The leaf symbol denotes LUCE policies that support key sustainability strategies aimed at preserving and enhancing the City, and achieving GHG emission reduction. These policies and their associated actions target each of the *Sustainable City Plan's* eight goal areas.

- Providing Community Benefits
- Ensuring Quality Design and Urban Form
- Incentivizing Historic Resources
- Controlling and Monitoring Growth

The Community is the Steward of the Future

As the following pages demonstrate, the residents of Santa Monica today are the stewards of the future. The choices made now will create a legacy for generations to come. Through the LUCE, the community can take assertive steps to manage and reduce congestion and the City's per capita carbon footprint by better managing its streets. The community can now require that all new buildings are of high architectural quality and

contribute to the City's rich urban fabric. By establishing a by-right base height for new development, the City can incentivize new opportunities for affordable and workforce housing associated with transit, requiring stringent vehicle trip reduction, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, shared parking and transit improvements. New neighborhood protections are provided through a dual program of incentives and constraints designed to direct investment pressure away from existing neighborhoods and toward transit-rich corridors. These incentives and constraints will discourage inappropriate investment pressures through Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Districts, measures for retention of courtyard housing, demolition regulations, development standards, and neighborhood coordinated parking management programs.

Function of the LUCE

This Plan is a set of policies and actions for land use and circulation decisions that result in a blueprint for physical development throughout the community. The LUCE achieves the following:

- Defines a realistic long-term vision for Santa Monica through the year 2030.
- Expresses the desires of Santa Monica residents regarding the physical, social, economic, cultural and environmental character of the City.



The comprehensive nature of the LUCE serves as a guide for land use and urban design, circulation, economic development and other important components of the Santa Monica experience like open space, sustainability, and the preservation of the City's character.

- Serves as a comprehensive guide for making decisions about land use, urban design, economic development, circulation, and related topics such as public facilities and services, parks and open space, sustainability and the preservation of the quality of life in the community.
- Charts the course for coordinated development and conservation that will preserve the natural beauty, unique character, diversity and heritage of Santa Monica.
- Serves as the City's framework for land use and community development decisions, and the foundation for zoning, subdivisions, development plans and facilities plans. All plans and policies related to development, conservation and circulation should be consistent with the LUCE.

Structure and Content of the LUCE

The LUCE has been carefully structured to provide an easily accessible and thorough inventory of issues, analyses and recommendations. Detailed recommendations are provided where specific approaches are necessary to achieve public objectives, and more general recommendations are provided where multiple approaches should be considered. Each recommendation within the Plan should be weighed for its ability to accomplish the overall goals of the LUCE and whether it strengthens and reinforces the other recommendations.