

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO

Minutes of the Town Council meeting of November 1, 1988

Mayor Sharp convened the special meeting at 7:05 p.m, with Councilmembers Chignell, Colteaux, Walsh and Zaharoff present.

2. PRESENTATION ON PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE LAND USE, CIRCULATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENTS OF THE SAN ANSELMO GENERAL PLAN.

Planning Consultant Roberto reported that the Planning Commission had conducted six special meetings over a three month period, and had done a detailed job of considering all of the factors included in the proposed revisions to the General Plan. The overall goal of the plan is to maintain the present residential and commercial character of the town, and to support efforts to protect its natural resources, notably the hills and ridges. There are few changes to the current intensity and distribution of existing land uses in the community. The major policy additions to the plan establish a procedure for reviewing new construction proposals in the hillsides to provide a higher level of protection of the environment, and call for new programs such as parking to improve conditions in the established commercial areas.

The proposed revised land use map is based on the following four principles:

1. Keep the current intensity and distribution of land use, as reflected in the current zoning map.
2. Where current zoning of developed parcels is inconsistent with land use in the surrounding area, the existing development will be considered legal non-conforming.
3. Maintain the current mixture of residential zoning in the residential area west of San Anselmo Avenue.
4. Do not change the density on parcels in the R1-H zone, but place all other land located above the 150 foot mean sea level elevation into a conservation zone and establish review of development because of their potential visibility and natural setting.

Under the revised plan, housing opportunity areas are proposed where residential density may go up to 28 units per acre, the current density of the R-3 zoning, in order to provide for affordable housing. These areas have not yet been designated. Commercial development policies would remain essentially unchanged, although a Limited Commercial area on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard is proposed.

The proposed open space map identifies parcels the Open Space committee has set as top priority to obtain. If they cannot be obtained, then they are to be developed sensitively at the density set forth in the General Plan. The Committee has set out the San Francisco Theological Seminary and Sunny Hills properties as being unique and needing special consideration.

The Circulation Element does not call for any new arterial or major collector streets except for those minor streets needed to serve new residential development. The plan prohibits the construction of any new connector road between San Anselmo and San Rafael.

3. PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN REVISIONS:
LAND USE ELEMENT, CIRCULATION ELEMENT AND OPEN SPACE
ELEMENT.

Chignell questioned and objected to the language on p. 19 of the draft element which states that "...zoning land to allow for higher densities...has not resulted in rental or sales prices that meet the needs of the community's low and moderate income households." Roberto reported that the Town has had to obtain agreements in order to make units available to low and moderate income residents because high density in and of itself does not create low income units.

Chignell asked that goal #1 of the 1976 land use element regarding accommodating the housing needs of a socially and economically diverse population, and the language regarding infill development that was in the 1976 element and the June 1988 draft element be reinstated. Roberto noted that the Commission did not endorse infill development in the higher density area near the downtown.

In response to a question from Zaharoff regarding traffic level on Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Roberto said that the Planning Commission had felt that the Town should not widen its roads to accommodate development outside San Anselmo.

Zaharoff suggested creation of a policy that would limit future development to the capacity of the roadway(s) leading to the development. Roberto said that while there are streets with problems resulting from their width, condition and circuitous nature, it would be difficult to establish criteria by which to test proposed development to determine specifically how much development the roadway could handle. He felt the Town's existing development review mechanisms, which allow the Town to review development on a case by case basis and which are included in the revised General Plan, are adequate to meet the intent of such a policy.

Planning Commission Chairman Hayes noted that circulation element policy 4.3 and the local streets operational characteristics on page 31 speak to the issues of substandard roads.

Colteaux expressed concern about future use of surplus school and church property, and wanted to see the Town prezone these properties now, rather than waiting until after they are sold.

Hayes said the Commission's intent was to maintain public ownership of public school property.

Regarding the height limit of commercial buildings, Colteaux suggested it be expressed in feet, such as 30 feet, rather than number of stories. He further recommended that floor area ratios be expressed as ranges. Colteaux felt the wording limiting the ground floor of the commercial district to commercial could be softened.

Walsh supported policy 4.6 regarding disallowing commercial proposals which would compound parking problem until the Town resolves current parking problems in commercial areas. She supported the deletion of policy 4.7, expressing concern that it does not allow for any consideration of ground floor parking or residential use. She said her other concern was the proposed two-story limit.

Planning Commissioner Julin explained that the purpose of limiting the use of the ground floor of commercial buildings to commercial use, specifically retail use, was to strengthen and protect the downtown. She said that one of the features of a good retail district is that the storefronts are all retail, where shoppers can go from store to store without any interruptions, even for parking.

Regarding the commercial height limit, Hayes noted that a 30 foot building may appear too looming if it is adjacent to a 20 foot building, and suggested requiring the height of a building to be integrated with the height of adjacent buildings.

Chignell stated his support for stronger language on surplus school sites, and for deleting or rewording land use policy 4.7 regarding ground floor commercial use. Regarding bikeways, Chignell noted there was conflicting language on this issue, and asked that on p. 32, the comment about the 1976 plan under "Bicycle and Pedestrian Systems" be deleted and a statement be added that "this plan encourages the use of pedestrians and bikeways." Policy 5.1 on page 35 should read "...to maximize" instead of "to minimize." Referring to policy 4.1 on page 35 regarding one-way traffic, Chignell said he did not want to see one-way traffic unless there is an emergency or a crucial situation.

Sharp expressed concern about tightening up the allowed use of surplus school property. Regarding the section on housing opportunity areas beginning on page 18, specifically the statement that "there is adequate land (within the town and its sphere of influence) available to meet the total new construction housing need established by ABAG", Sharp commented that the ABAG figures are outrageous and there is no way the Town can accommodate them. He said he did not see that increased density has brought affordable housing, and that it is unrealistic to say it will happen.

Chignell commented that given the appropriate conditions and mechanisms, affordable housing can happen. He supported including provisions for low and moderate income housing in the General Plan. Sharp disagreed, saying that if there is going to be language for affordable housing, the devices to implement a low and moderate income housing program should already be in place. Without the mechanisms in place, high density housing programs in targeted areas can negatively impact a neighborhood, he added.

Hayes said that the intent of the housing opportunity section was to dovetail with the housing element, which identifies locations in town for low and moderate income housing.

Chignell acknowledged the work of the Open Space Committee on bringing forward the open space plan. Hayes said that the Town owed a debt to the Open Space Committee, noting that the members provided much of the data for the revised element.

Gay Kagy, Redwood Road, said she also had given thought to whether housing opportunity areas could provide affordable housing. She suggested there may be a way to put a deed restriction on the rental of low and moderate units with a lease purchase option to guarantee they remain affordable. The developer would then be in a position of providing the units at cost or with little profit. She said it was not logical to have low income purchases because once they are out on the open market after their initial purchase, the affordability is lost.

Planning Commissioner Julin spoke in favor of maintaining the policy of ground floor commercial use to preserve the retail nature of the downtown.

It was the general feeling of the Councilmembers that they did not want to prohibit a creative use of the ground floor in the commercial area, but would agree to a rewording of policy 4.7. that balanced the need for flexibility with the need for a healthy retail district.

Sharp closed the public hearing.

Chignell expressed concern about the limit on what can be done on arterials in the roadway improvements listed, since there might be some additional projects needed. Roberto said the wording originally proposed allowed for more improvements. However, the Planning Commission was concerned about stating that the Town would make improvements, particularly if the pressure for improvements is due to development in adjacent towns. Chignell said he did not want to see additional traffic lanes, but wanted to see more flexibility in the language on this subject in the general plan, specifically in policies 8.1 through 8.4 in objective 8 of the land use goals. He objected to the language regarding minimum improvements to the Town's roads in circulation goal 3 on page 33.

Hayes explained that there was strong sentiment for not designing a fast lane highway to accommodate development in other communities.

Roberto reviewed each item raised by the Councilmembers to ascertain whether there was consensus for revision in the draft plan. There was consensus for the following changes:

1. On page 4, add the land use goal: "accommodate the housing needs of a socially and economically diverse population."
2. On page 32, delete the negative statements about what the Town has not done and replace with positive language.
3. Add language that addresses limitations in land development capability where access roadways are substandard.
4. Designate alternative use of public and private school sites and church property, in the event they are surplus or sold.
5. Express height limit on commercial buildings in feet rather than stories. Obtain advice from Public Works Director on appropriate height.
6. "Soften" the language in land use policy 4.7 in the land use goals regarding limiting the ground floor in the commercial district to commercial use to allow some flexibility.
7. On page 35, circulation policy 4.1, replace "one-way traffic" with "traffic direction."
8. On pages 18-19, delete the first paragraph of 1.g. and the first sentence of the second paragraph of 1.g.
9. On page 35, circulation policy 5.1, replace "minimize" with "maximize."

Roberto was directed to bring the revisions as agreed upon by the Council to the regular meeting of November 22, and prepare for Council adoption of the revised plan at that meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Beth Pollard