

Greenbelt Alliance Compact Development Guidelines

Guidelines for Reviewing Neighborhood-Scale Infill Plans and Projects

Adopted Fall 2005, Amended Fall 2006

Neighborhood-scale infill plans and projects are a compelling opportunity to accommodate a community's needs for homes, jobs, services and parks. These projects and plans also serve as a tool for protecting the Bay Area's greenbelt. By directing significant growth to appropriate existing urban areas, they reduce the pressure to develop natural areas and working farms. At the same time, neighborhood-scale infill can change the character of neighborhoods and set precedents for infill in a community or even for the Bay Area as a whole. Therefore, these developments warrant special attention to ensure they proceed in ways that best utilize our region's limited infill sites and create the greatest benefit for existing and future residents and business owners.

Neighborhood-scale infill plans and projects include specific plans, neighborhood plans, master plans, and other plans and projects that occupy multiple city blocks and may have a considerable impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Actual housing unit count, square footage or acreage of these plans and projects may vary from city to city depending on city size and surrounding areas.

The following are guidelines for evaluating neighborhood-scale infill projects and plans. Each evaluation will consider the context of the project or plan (location, demographics, public funding, publicly owned land, planning and legal context, etc.). The guidelines may be applied and weighted differently depending on the context. The guidelines will be used as a lens through which reviewers will look at proposals, rather than as a checklist of criteria for projects and plans to meet. Final endorsement is at the discretion of Greenbelt Alliance.

Location: The project or plan must be within an existing urban area, and not in the regional greenbelt or any other important natural resource area. The project or plan must be within 1/2 mile from major transit service or a downtown. Major transit service is defined as a rail stop (existing or planned with significant funding established), ferry stop, or a bus stop served by 6 or more buses per hour during the peak period. Projects that do not meet this location requirement, but are within 1/2 mile of a major job center or commercial district, will be considered.

Minimum Density: The project or plan should have an overall density of at least 20 units per net acre. Projects or plans of lower density may be eligible for endorsement if they are significantly higher than the average local density. Significant infill opportunity sites should have a correspondingly high level of density. Density is defined as the number of dwelling units divided by the total land area devoted to residential uses, including associated parking and private driveways, private yards, ancillary buildings, and non-public parks and play structures associated with the residential uses.

Mixed Uses: The plan or project should incorporate a mix of uses beyond housing, including but not limited to retail, office, light industrial, services, public parks and other recreational spaces. The plan or project's design should mix these uses throughout the area as appropriate, rather than creating segregated uses.

Retail: Retail uses within the plan or project should be neighborhood-serving and support a pedestrian environment and transit activity.

Community Services: The plan or project should incorporate facilities and services to meet needs of local residents relative to the plan or project's expected impact on the community and the amount of public funding for the plan or project. These may include childcare facilities, health clinics, schools, jobs

for local residents, or grocery stores and other neighborhood-serving retail. The developer and local jurisdiction are encouraged to conduct community participation processes so that relevant stakeholders (developer, jurisdiction, residents, business owners, etc.) jointly identify the needed community services to be included in the project or plan.

Affordability: The plan or project must meet the local inclusionary housing requirement, at a minimum. In communities that do not have an inclusionary housing requirement, or have an insufficient inclusionary housing requirement, the plan or project should provide adequate affordable housing. This includes, but is not limited to, making a fixed percentage of the units affordable to moderate-, low-, and very low-income households or dedicating land or other resources to affordable housing within the plan or project area. The amount of affordable housing expected will vary, depending on the context. Higher percentages, lower income targets, and long-term affordability are encouraged. Affordable units should include some 3-bedroom or larger units to accommodate families. The following are suggested minimums of below-market-rate units (based on Area Median Income, or AMI) that a project or plan should provide:

- 10% for Moderate Income and 10% for Low Income, or
- 10% for Low Income and 5% for Very Low Income, or
- 10% for Very Low Income

(Moderate income = affordable to households earning 81-120% of AMI. Low Income = affordable to households earning 51-80% of AMI. Very Low Income = affordable to households earning less than 51% of AMI.)

Mitigating Displacement: The developer should provide replacement units at an equivalent level of affordability for all housing units lost as a direct result of the development, or shall address displacement by some other equally effective means, including but not limited to in lieu provisions or providing permanent relocation benefits. Inclusionary units may not count as replacement units. The developer and jurisdiction should take steps to provide stability for residents during relocation and to maintain some level of stability for residents in the surrounding neighborhood.

Transportation Options: The plan or project should promote alternative transportation options, including bicycling, walking, car sharing, casual carpooling and public transit. The plan or project should ensure the majority of people using the project have easy access to transit and encourage transit use, through bulk passes and shuttles to stations when necessary.

Pedestrian-Oriented Design: The plan or project's design should integrate with existing street patterns, walkways, and bicycle paths, preferably in a grid pattern, and provide easy connection to services and public transportation. The plan or project should be pedestrian-oriented rather than auto-oriented and should include elements such as bike paths and facilities, pedestrian amenities, street furniture, buildings fronted to the sidewalks with little or no setbacks, and pedestrian mitigations for large, busy roads.

Parking: The developer and/or jurisdiction should seek ways to minimize the site area devoted to parking, such as tandem, shared or stacked parking. Where surface parking occurs, it should be behind buildings. For projects under existing zoning codes, the number of parking spaces should not exceed minimums set by the jurisdiction's zoning code. For new specific plans, we encourage establishing policies that reduce the number of parking spaces in the area, including replacing minimum parking ratios with maximum parking ratios and "unbundling" parking costs. Parking requirements for new specific plans should be based on parking demand studies that consider the expected occupants, transportation options and parking reduction strategies to be used in the project.

Parks and Open Space: The plan or project should include parks and open space and recreation facilities and amenities to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the affected area. To the extent possible, these facilities and amenities should be planned and located to overcome existing deficiencies in the project area and the community as a whole. Public open space should be designed for convenient access from the surrounding area. The plan or project should also ensure the preservation of important natural habitats and important recreational land, and incorporate these areas into the open space network of the plan or project.

Cultural and Historic Preservation: The plan or project should preserve significant cultural and historic resources as appropriate, particularly those designated by a public landmarks body.

Community Input: The developer or jurisdiction should involve local stakeholders in the planning and design process, through creative approaches, including direct outreach to residents and business owners. The developer or jurisdiction should make efforts to address neighborhood concerns about the plan or project. Municipalities and developers should consider holding specific public meetings in the community, during evening or weekend hours and providing childcare and translation as necessary.

Existing Uses and Plans: Proposed plans and projects will be compared to existing uses and existing plans, zoning and regulations governing the planning or project area. Proposed plans and projects should enhance the existing neighborhood and should, in general, either comply with existing plans, zoning and regulations or be denser, more mixed use, more transit-oriented, and provide more public open space and services than the existing neighborhood, plans, or zoning.

Bayside Land: Projects and plans that redevelop bayside land should balance the need for housing and jobs with public open space access to the Bay and protection of environmentally sensitive lands around the waterfront. Developments on these lands should be careful not to negatively impact the Bay and should integrate existing and new uses, through design, transit and walkability, extending or complementing the Bay Trail whenever possible.