



Land Use & Community Design – Nine Case Stories

These case stories were compiled in May 2009 in partnership with the California Air Resources Board. Additional climate change information is available at www.ca-ilg.org/climatechange.

1) Community: City of Chula Vista (San Diego County)

Population: 232,000

Summary

Chula Vista adopted measures aimed, in part, at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in new development. The measures emphasize building-specific energy measures for new communities, as well as comprehensive project design criteria to boost community wide reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Program Highlights

- Community wide greenhouse emission reduction measures focus on key strategies, including new development site design for carbon reduction, onsite energy generation, and compact development.
- Emphasis is on measurable actions for tracking carbon reduction over time on a project basis.
- Builders must use appropriate software to calculate energy efficiency of new developments.

Lessons Learned

- To really make a difference in a carbon reduction program, it's essential to have performance metrics with active reporting to ensure programs are regularly monitored and the metrics are met.
- Consider focusing on areas where your agency can implement programs over which you have direct control, and thus, have potential impact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate Action Connection

Well-planned communities with a balance of housing, jobs, shopping, schools, and recreation give people the option of walking, biking or using transit rather than driving. This results in lower greenhouse gas emissions and also promotes physical activity and more vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities.

In anticipation of considerable new housing growth, Chula Vista established a suite of greenhouse gas reduction measures to achieve its community wide emission reduction goal of 20 percent below 1990 levels by 2010 and 80 percent below by 2050.

Resources to Learn More

- [Chula Vista Conservation & Environmental Services](#)
- [Climate Change Working Group Implementations Plans Summary](#)
- [Climate Change Working Group Implementation Plans](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Chula Vista was one of the first California communities to conduct a community wide greenhouse gas inventory. Completed in 1996, the inventory analyzed 1990 base year emissions. In 2005, the city conducted a second greenhouse gas inventory, only to learn that despite its best intentions to reduce emissions during the interim period, community wide emissions increased overall by 35 percent. This largely was a result of 35,000 new homes built in the intervening years.

However, the more recent inventory indicated that per capita carbon emissions decreased by 17 percent, due largely to greener energy sources. The city still plans to reduce future overall emissions. To evaluate the best path for doing so, the city established the Climate Change Working Group, comprised of local stakeholders. In July 2008, the working group recommended and the Chula Vista City Council adopted seven key measures to reduce carbon emissions that build upon the city's existing carbon reduction action plan.

Carbon Reductions in New Development

Central to the seven adopted measures are two that focus on land use. One encourages smart growth around three trolley stations along the I-5 corridor. The second focuses on community scale or project specific site design. Because the Chula Vista General Plan envisions at least 30,000 new homes before the city is built-out, the focus for future reductions will be on large scale developments and specific plans.

In addition to requiring that new developments demonstrate energy efficiency in individual homes and buildings, the city will require that development be analyzed for air quality impacts, using industry-accepted software, such as INDEX. The goal is to minimize emissions. It will also consider using additional software tools, such as the California Energy Commission's PLACE3's software, to further evaluate site design. Overall, the city will encourage new development that works toward carbon neutrality, similar to the goals of LEED-ND (Neighborhood Development). Some of the measures that can be incorporated include site orientation for passive and active solar energy, onsite distributed energy generation (i.e., renewable, co-generation, or fuel cells), efficient landscaping and enhanced water conservation strategies.

Read the Chula Vista climate leadership case story on [Commercial Recycling](#).

2) Community: City of Fremont (Alameda County)

Population: 215,000

Summary

While Fremont is a largely built-out suburban community, it has targeted remaining undeveloped and under-utilized sites for high density, mixed use, and transit-oriented development.

Program Highlights

- Future development targeted for sites near existing or future Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations.
- Transit oriented development (TOD) policies encourage densities up to 75 units per acre.
- General plan update incorporates climate protection policies based on a community wide greenhouse gas inventory.

Lessons Learned

- Addressing climate change issues is a multi-disciplinary task; having a single staff person to coordinate across disciplines is essential.

Climate Action Connection

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Transit oriented development helps reduce vehicle miles traveled and will help Fremont achieve its greenhouse gas reduction goal of 25 percent by 2020.

Resources to Learn More

- [City of Fremont Community Planning Division](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Fremont is a medium sized suburban city in the San Francisco Bay Area. It plans to incorporate high density, transit oriented development around its transit hubs by taking advantage of existing and planned BART stations in the city.

A BART station in central Fremont is currently the southern terminus for one BART line. In the summer of 2009, construction will begin on a BART extension to the southern portion of Fremont, including a second BART station. In addition, the city's

redevelopment agency is considering constructing a third BART station in between these two stations. The three stations - along with the Centerville Train Station in central Fremont - offer a variety of TOD opportunities in the city.

Transit Oriented Development Overlay Zones

Fremont has identified the areas around these transit hubs as areas for focused development, where higher densities will make these sections of Fremont more urban and less suburban. The area surrounding two of the BART stations will accommodate a large percentage of the city's projected growth through 2030. Another area undergoing more specific planning is projected as a high-intensity employment center. These three transit hubs will provide mixed use opportunities with easy walkability.

In addition, Fremont recently approved a project in its city center near an existing BART station. Although the area now is primarily office and commercial use, the new project will include four-story buildings, seventy-five residential units to the acre, parking structures, and easy proximity to public transportation and nearby retail.

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals

Fremont has conducted a community wide greenhouse gas inventory with a baseline year of 2005. Based on the recommendations of its Green Task Force made up of Fremont residents, the city adopted a 25 percent greenhouse gas reduction goal for 2020 over its 2005 baseline.

The Fremont General Plan 2030 Update, planned to be in draft form by late 2009, will include a sustainability element, incorporating climate protection goals and policies. The city's general plan update process is being conducted with a close eye to the spirit and intent of SB375, which calls for more compact development to reduce vehicle miles traveled. The city's focused development areas are expected to help meet the SB375 goals.

Read Fremont climate leadership case stories on [Green Building](#) and [Civic Engagement](#).

3) Community: City of Livermore (Alameda County)

Population: 85,000

Summary

A comprehensive update of the Livermore zoning code will better incorporate “smart code” practices, such as enhanced pedestrian and bicycle mobility, transit-oriented development, mixed-use and infill.

Program Highlights

- Update planning and zoning codes to better accommodate infill and smart growth.
- Code revisions focus on form and scale, rather than use, where appropriate, allowing different approaches in different areas within the community.
- Newly adopted climate change element of the general plan builds on the code updates.

Lessons Learned

- Take stock of measures already enacted in your city that helps reduce greenhouse gases; these are an excellent base from which to work when developing a climate action plan.

Climate Action Connection

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Updating city codes to better accommodate smart growth principles reduces overall vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.

Resources to Learn More

- [Livermore Community Development Department](#)
- [Livermore Zoning Code Update](#)
- [Livermore Climate Change Element Final EIR](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Livermore adopted the South Livermore Specific Plan in 1997, followed by ballot approval of an urban growth boundary on its southern edge one year later. In 2002, local residents approved an urban growth boundary for the northern portion of the city. With the adoption of these urban boundaries that encircle the entire city, Livermore now focuses future growth inward to several smaller infill sites, as well as to the downtown area, for which a Downtown Specific Plan has been adopted.

In 2007, Livermore received a \$300,000 grant from Caltrans to update its planning and zoning code to better accommodate infill and smart growth principles. In 2008, a consultant was hired to conduct public workshops and prepare the code revisions. The city directed the consultant to incorporate a wide variety of smart growth principles, including, encouraging infill and mixed-use, maximizing use of existing infrastructure; and promoting an interconnected street network that enhances pedestrian and bicycle mobility. It also incorporates a form-based code regulatory framework. Form-based codes emphasize the relationship between the physical form of the building and the scale and types of streets and blocks.

Climate Change Element Adopted

Livermore's interest in these code revisions is an outgrowth of the climate change element of the city's general plan, adopted in March 2009. To prepare this element, city planners compiled a list of existing programs that reduce carbon emissions, such as energy efficiency, recycling, and creating more bike paths. They also proposed new policies to further reduce locally generated greenhouse gas emissions. The city has conducted a greenhouse gas inventory and is preparing a climate action plan that will further identify actions to reduce carbon emissions over time.

The city's greenhouse gas inventory determined that 63 percent of Livermore's carbon emissions come from automobiles. Hence, in addition to the planning and zoning code revisions, the city is in the process of updating its bicycle master plan. Livermore already plans to double its r bike paths from 46 miles to nearly 90 miles and walking trails from 22 miles to 108 miles. In addition, it is working with the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) to plan a line extension to the city. The city's general plan has already identified an area for transit-oriented development around a future BART station.

4) Community: City of Petaluma (Sonoma County)

Population: 56,000

Summary

The Petaluma General Plan 2025 reflects planning goals across all its elements that are designed to mitigate future greenhouse gas emissions. Highlights include policies that encourage higher densities around a new regional rail system and in the central core, as well as greener buildings among existing and future development.

Program Highlights

- Communitywide greenhouse gas inventory forms basis of general plan policies.
- Central Petaluma Specific Plan promotes higher density in central district and around planned regional rail.
- Urban growth boundary guides extension of infrastructure to serve areas within the boundary.
- Petaluma's residential growth management system limits new residential units to a maximum of 500 units per year.

Climate Action Connection

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Petaluma's planning and housing policies are key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Lessons Learned

- It's a challenge to quantify greenhouse gas reductions attributable to land use planning policies.
- As land use planning based on greenhouse gas mitigation becomes more commonplace, more readily available resources will be available to help cities and counties with their planning efforts.

Resources to Learn More

- [Petaluma General Plan 2025](#)
- [Central Petaluma Specific Plan](#)
- [City of Petaluma](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Petaluma is a leader in California's smart growth movement. In the 1970's, the city adopted a pioneering policy of setting an annual cap on the number of housing units built at a maximum of 500 new homes per year. In 1998, residents approved an urban growth boundary through 2018. At the same time, downtown Petaluma has enjoyed a renaissance of renovation and development, guided by the Central Petaluma Specific Plan.

In late 2007, with its general plan update well underway, the city conducted a greenhouse gas inventory. As a result, newly revised general plan update instead focuses on goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As it re-evaluated its draft general plan update, the city realized many of its existing policies contributed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, the city decided to go further by drawing a connection between general plan policies and their contribution toward greenhouse gas reduction.

General Plan Update Based on Climate Change Actions

Petaluma has adopted a greenhouse gas reduction goal of 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2015. It is one of the first cities to incorporate a baseline, community-wide greenhouse gas inventory into its general plan and to build general plan policies around greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Petaluma's recently adopted general plan projects growth to the year 2025. Half of the general plan elements include policies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These include policies that promote infill, high density, mixed-use, and transit oriented development, limit new growth to within the urban growth boundary and preserve open space. For new growth proposed to occur outside the established core, the general plan calls for higher density residential development in adjoining urbanized areas and gradually lower densities as new development moves toward the urban growth boundary.

In addition, the Petaluma General Plan 2025 anticipates 6,000 new residential units at build-out by 2025 or later. Since 39 percent of the city's greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, to mitigate emissions from future growth, Petaluma is modifying its current voluntary green building program. The new program is proposed to be mandatory and apply to residential and commercial development.

Directing Growth to the Core

Petaluma is also planning for more intense growth in its urban core and intends to take advantage of a new regional rail line and station in order to provide higher density transit-oriented development with a broad mix of uses. It expects its Central Petaluma Specific Plan to have the single biggest impact on its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

A newly approved Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) rail line and station will be within walking distance to the city's downtown. The area specific plan allows for 60

units to the acre, twice the density previously allowed for downtown. The 400 acres downtown is now primarily zoned for mixed use.

Petaluma has redeveloped six previously vacant and underutilized blocks immediately outside its downtown in an area known as the Theatre District. Named for the multi-screen movie complex, the district also includes high density office, retail and housing.

Read the Petaluma climate leadership case story on [Efficient Transportation](#).

5) Community: City of Riverside (Riverside County)

Population: 300,000

Summary

The Riverside bicycle master plan, the result of comprehensive planning for future bicycle mobility in the city, envisions over 140 miles of new bike paths, lanes and routes to connect commuters with jobs, students with schools, and the general population with parks, shopping and regional bicycle trails.

Program Highlights

- Riverside General Plan 2025 directs future growth around established in-town corridors, rather than urban fringe, facilitating increased bicycle mobility.
- Bicycle master plan incorporates extensive analysis of commute times and patterns to accommodate future bicycle commuters.
- Integration of major general plan elements and Green Riverside Action Plan with bicycle master plan.
- Bicycle master plan includes 13 miles of new Class I bike paths, 110 miles of new Class II bike lanes, and 18 miles of new Class III bike routes.

Climate Action Connection

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Planning for bicycle mobility in tandem with other land use planning provides residents the opportunity to use non-polluting forms of transportation, thus reducing vehicle miles traveled.

Lessons Learned

- Before proposing bike lane locations, undertake a thorough analysis of street conditions and their suitability to future bike lanes.
- It's important to educate public about roadway limitations for future bicycle lanes.

Resources to Learn More

- [Riverside Bicycle Master Plan](#)
- [Riverside Public Works Department](#)
- [Green Riverside Action Plan](#) - click on "Action Plan" in left column

The Rest of the Story...

Riverside adopted its first bicycle master plan in 1970. In the intervening years, bike lanes were added to most major streets and the rate of bicycling within the city grew. Riverside updated its general plan in 2007, and emphasized future growth along existing corridors and mixed-use development that is compatible with non-motorized transportation. The Riverside General Plan 2025 further identifies several streets as “parkways” that are intended to accommodate multi-modal links between the city’s 26 neighborhoods, two major industrial parks, schools and recreational facilities.

The city conducted extensive community outreach, particularly with the two local bike clubs, to determine their priorities for future bicycle travel. While two primary bike trails already exist within Riverside, bicyclists and other residents identified a need for enhanced bicycle connectivity between job centers and shopping. Within the framework of the updated general plan goals and this community input, the Riverside Bicycle Master Plan was updated in 2007 with the goal of tripling the existing 56 miles of bike lanes, paths and routes.

Bicycling For Commuting, Shopping and School

The Riverside bicycle master plan commits to planning future bike facilities not just for recreation, but for commuting and linkages with shopping and schools. To this end, the city undertook an extensive analysis of existing commute times and overlaid this information with job centers, school locations, and retail centers. As a result, the city determined that over 4,000 Riverside residents bicycle to work, school or shopping with a potential to encourage at least 6,000 residents to use their bicycle for essential travel.

The updated bicycle master plan includes 13 miles of new Class I bike paths, 110 miles of new Class II bike lanes, and 18 miles of new Class III bike routes at an expected cost of \$29 million (\$21 million alone for the new Class I bike paths). Since the plan was adopted, the city has already added another 20 miles of proposed Class II bike lanes, and is actively pursuing grants to make this possible.

Relationship to Other Planning Efforts

The underpinning of the city’s General Plan is a commitment that Riverside residents will have “easy access to an efficient, multi-option transportation system that enables them to meet their needs within the community.” The Riverside Bicycle Master Plan is consistent with other key elements of the city’s updated general plan, including the land use and urban design, parks and recreation, and the circulation and community mobility elements.

The city also has adopted the Green Riverside Action Plan which emphasizes planning for walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, including the goal of making bicycles a key mode of transportation for everyday travel and not just for recreation.

6) Community: Sacramento County

Population: 1.4 million

Summary

Sacramento County encourages greater infill development with a three-pronged approach that includes 14 corridor plans with updated designs and densities for older, under-utilized commercial corridors; a general plan update focused on infill; and staff assigned to facilitate infill in the county unincorporated area.

Program Highlights

- Corridor plans for 14 older, commercial corridors increase residential capacity from 2,000 up to 20,000.
- The general plan update incorporates strategies to encourage infill, including a revised housing element that rezones 205 acres for affordable and multi-family housing near public transit.
- A fulltime infill coordinator, with responsibility reaching across multiple departments, helps develop infill policies and works with developers undertaking infill projects.

Climate Action Connection

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Sacramento County plans to reduce vehicle miles traveled and thus reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by encouraging higher density residential infill along older, commercial corridors.

Lessons Learned

- It's important to review zoning codes and development policies to determine which must be amended to accommodate desired infill development.
- In difficult fiscal times, funding may no longer be available before large-scale planning is complete.

Resources to Learn More

- [Sacramento County Planning & Community Development Department](#)
- [Sacramento County General Plan Update](#)
- [Sacramento County Infill Programs and Principles](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Sacramento County has undergone significant outward suburban expansion over the last two decades. With the most recent General Plan update, the county wanted to steer future development toward infill sites along older commercial corridors, while at the same time taking advantage of opportunities to mix uses and increase density around existing and planned transit stations.

The county identified 14 older commercial corridors, some spanning city and county boundaries, that were ripe for compact development and revitalization. The 14 coordinated corridor plans are the underpinning of Sacramento County's contribution to higher development intensities as part of the award-winning and nationally recognized Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint, a regional plan to consolidate development and reduce auto dependency and vehicle miles traveled.

Higher Densities, Closer In

The new focus on infill development will be achieved along the 14 older commercial corridors. Each will have its own specific plan, known as a corridor plan, which includes specifications for financial assistance, infrastructure, land uses, and connections with public transit. They are intended to maximize opportunities for living and working near transit stations.

To date, four of the 14 corridor plans have been completed, including plans for development around four light rail stations. The corridor plans are intended to make it easier for developers to build to the specified densities without requiring special approval, general plan amendments or conditional use permits. The corridor plans reflect an underlying general plan policy that specifies development intensity, depending on whether a site is one-eighth, one-quarter or one-half mile from a bus or light rail station. The county recently approved plans along these corridors for mixed-use developments with densities as high as 80 units to the acre. The projects will be implemented when the economy turns around.

The county also re-zoned 205 acres of land with good proximity to public transit for affordable and multi-family housing. This was done to increase total future housing capacity from 2,000 units, under the older zoning designation, to as many as 20,000 units under the new, mixed-use designations.

Staff Support Important

Sacramento County recognized that creating the corridor plans, and their accompanying specifications, would not be enough to facilitate future infill development. It has hired a full-time infill coordinator to act as the primary ombudsman for infill in the unincorporated area of the county. The infill coordinator is responsible for working

across departments to facilitate changes to the existing zoning code and development policies, as well as assisting developers wishing to build on a designated infill site.

Read the Sacramento County climate leadership case story on [Commercial Recycling](#).

7) Community: City of San Diego (San Diego County)

Population: 1.3 million

Summary

After two decades of expanding outward and reaching the limits of developable land, the City of San Diego's recent general plan update incorporates a City of Villages concept that directs future growth to mixed-use communities that are pedestrian friendly and linked to regional transit.

Program Highlights

- Mixed-use "villages" will cluster housing, shopping, jobs and civic uses around future regional transit stations.
- Individual community plans will reflect the city's general plan goals.
- New infill growth strategy is dependent on coordination between land use and transportation planning.
- Over time, intent is to reduce auto dependency with walkable, bikeable, and transit-linked neighborhoods.

Lessons Learned

- It is more resource and time efficient to get community consensus on a vision statement or a council resolution, and then go forward with a general plan update.
- When undergoing a general plan update, take advantage of e-mail to reach residents and stakeholders. Make documents available for review on the Internet, providing residents who otherwise cannot come to community meetings an opportunity for input.
- Take advantage of local cable TV for outreach to the community providing residents the opportunity to watch and participate from home.

Climate Action Connection

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San Diego's City of Villages planning concept promotes mixed use neighborhoods and communities to reduce auto dependency and support a larger regional transit system, thus reducing vehicle miles travelled and greenhouse gas emissions. The city's general plan also includes sustainable development and other carbon-reducing strategies.

Resources to Learn More

- [San Diego General Plan](#)
- [San Diego Climate Protection Plan](#)
- [San Diego Development Services Department](#)

The Rest of the Story...

The City of San Diego previously updated its general plan in 1979, when the city still contained a substantial amount of undeveloped land to accommodate new growth. As a result of subsequent growth, now less than four percent of the city's land area is vacant and available for new development. Recognizing that future growth must come largely from redevelopment and infill, the city evaluated how to promote infill.

In 2002, the city council formally adopted the City of Villages strategy, as a part of a new strategic framework of the general plan. It became the guiding document for the general plan update adopted in 2008. During this time, the city completed a community-wide greenhouse gas inventory and subsequently a climate protection action plan. In addition to the conservation element of the general plan, they comprise San Diego's sustainability goals.

City of Villages as Growth Management Strategy

The San Diego general plan and the City of Villages concept form the city's growth management strategy. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are expected to decrease over time as villages are introduced within targeted areas of existing communities. Each village will become the heart of the community, designed for walkability, with housing, jobs, shopping and parks, and linked to other villages and activity centers by transit. The village strategy also emphasizes the importance of respecting the city's natural open space network and the distinctive characteristics of individual neighborhoods. Fourteen community plan updates are completed or will begin in the next fiscal year. These comprise approximately one-third of the city's land area.

The village concept takes advantage of existing conditions and the potential to make existing neighborhoods and already urbanized and suburbanized areas more complete communities. Although "village" typically connotes smaller areas, San Diego has designated various levels of "village" to include its metro center, urban hubs, residential neighborhood centers, transit corridors, and future villages to be built on undeveloped or redeveloped land. Some of the city's oldest malls, for example, are being planned for new mixed-use neighborhoods, including one whose redevelopment plan was approved by the city council and accepted into the LEED-ND (Neighborhood Development) pilot program.

Applicability to Other Communities

San Diego's award winning general plan and its City of Villages concept demonstrates the potential to transform existing neighborhoods and zones into walkable, mixed use communities where transit connections provide links to employment and other specialized centers. Many of the mixed-use and transit concepts adopted in San Diego can be applied in smaller communities as well.

8) Community: City of Vista (San Diego County)

Population: 95,000

Summary

Vista is updating its existing downtown specific plan to allow for much higher residential densities than envisioned in the original 1993 plan.

Program Highlights

- Bedroom community promotes increased residential densities and mix use around three transit stations.
- Updated downtown specific plan emphasizes higher residential densities, higher quality commercial uses, and better pedestrian and bicycle connections.

Lessons Learned

- Do a greenhouse gas inventory and write a climate action plan prior to undertaking a general plan update.
- Get the word out to the entire community, including all ethnic and economic groups, when promoting public meetings to discuss increasing land use densities.

Resources to Learn More

- [City of Vista Community Development Department](#)

The Rest of the Story...

Vista is a long-established bedroom community in San Diego County. Over several years, the city has worked to upgrade its downtown area. An existing downtown specific plan adopted in 1993 emphasizes commercial over residential development.

Vista is currently updating the downtown specific plan to accommodate higher density residential uses within the specific plan areas, which include three separate rail stations. The revised specific plan will specify four-story buildings (unless approval is requested for more), and a minimum of 40 units to the acre (unless higher density approval is

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Land use planning that directs future growth into higher density communities with easy access to public transit, reduces the need for automobiles and thus vehicle miles travelled and accompanying greenhouse gas emissions.

requested). Any building higher than four stories will have to be compatible with those in the rest of downtown. The updated downtown specific plan will also emphasize higher residential densities near rail stations.

Recently Approved Projects

Although approval of the updated downtown specific plan is in process, the city has approved two mixed-use projects within the past year under the old downtown specific plan. The first, called Vista Village Plaza, is an 83,000 square foot mixed-use building with retail, office and 30 townhomes on $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. This project will achieve the city's proposed increased density level of 40 residential units per acre.

The second, called the Santa Fe Station for its proximity to a rail station, includes a four story building on 1.29 acres with 24,000 square feet of ground floor retail space and 80 residential units on the remaining floors, for an overall density level of 62 units per acre. The city envisions six additional similar projects once the Downtown Specific Plan is updated and the economy improves.

Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Climate Planning

In conjunction with 10 other San Diego counties, Vista is conducting a community wide greenhouse gas inventory, to be completed in late 2009. It will subsequently prepare a climate action plan, to be incorporated into its upcoming general plan update.

9) Community: City of Windsor (Sonoma County)

Population: 27,000

Summary

Windsor has adopted special area plans and compact zoning designations for key parts of town. They are designed to channel future growth into certain geographic areas and to encourage mixed uses, smaller lot sizes, and minimum two-story residential and commercial structures in these locations.

Program Highlights

- Area plans will channel growth into three primary parts of town.
- High density development slated for land around downtown train station.
- Three zoning designations – Compact Residential, Boulevard Mixed-Use and Regional Mixed-Use – will steer new growth onto smaller lots with higher density.

Lessons Learned

- Make commercial downtown zoning building design flexible enough to accommodate large and small retailers.
- Do not force commercial space into downtown areas where no foot traffic exists.
- Do your homework: know your market, and prepare for an anchor tenant and supporting businesses.

Resources to Learn More

- [Town of Windsor](#)
- [Downtown Windsor](#)
- [Shiloh Road Village Vision Plan Guiding Principles](#)

Climate Action Connection

Green buildings reduce energy consumption, use water more efficiently and utilize materials with recycled content, thus saving money and natural resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Windsor building officials plan to develop a green building tracking process to evaluate the number of projects and the types of measures utilized to better determine the energy and greenhouse gas savings from the program.

The Rest of the Story...

The Town of Windsor incorporated in 1993 in response to growth pressures in this previously rural hamlet. Following incorporation, a ballot initiative established an urban growth boundary and the town council adopted a growth ordinance limiting the number of new homes to 150 per year. In recent years, focused area plans have resulted in directing new growth to three primary parts of town – the Old Redwood Highway, Shiloh Boulevard, and the downtown. The three area plans include designations for mixed uses, smaller lot sizes, minimum two-story residential and commercial structures, as well as a prohibition of parking in front of commercial structures.

In order to achieve this compact development and implement the adopted area plans, Windsor created three specific zoning designations:

- **Compact Residential** zoning allows 12-32 units per acre with a minimum 3,000 square foot lot size. It provides flexibility in setback and height limitations to meet the desired density requirement.
- **Boulevard Mixed-Use** zoning allows up to 32 residential units per acre on and requires three-story buildings with a ground floor. Typically, Windsor requires at least 24 residential units to the acre under this zoning designation.
- **Regional Mixed-Use** zoning allows more traditional, lower-density commercial development; only a limited number of acres in Windsor have this designation.

Vision Plan and New Development

As the result of a vision plan prepared for 80 acres of Shiloh Road, Windsor approved plans for Shiloh Village, a four-story building with 76 units of affordable senior housing, an anchor grocery store, and 60,000 square feet of restaurants, shops and a health clinic. The project is expected to be built to LEED Gold standards. Two additional projects have been approved under the compact zoning designation for this area as well.

Without the compact zoning designation and vision plan, this area would otherwise have been developed at typical suburban densities of six to eight residential units per acre. The area plan and accompanying special zoning eliminates the need for project applicants to get a general plan amendment or a conditional use permit.

Evolution of Windsor's Downtown

Over the last six years, Windsor's downtown has evolved into a series of three-story, mixed-use buildings centered on a five-acre town green. All buildings include ground floor commercial with residential condominiums above. One new project includes a rebuilt restaurant with four apartments added above.

Beginning in 2011, the new Sonoma-Marín Smart Train (SMART) will run through Windsor. A new train station has already been built downtown with higher density mixed-use zoning surrounding it. The new passenger train and freight trains will run on tracks previously unused for 25 years. The Windsor bicycle master plan provides for new bike trails throughout the town with a bike path paralleling the resurrected train tracks.

With planning to concentrate development into targeted areas and to encourage higher density development, Windsor expects it is primed to meet new SB375 goals and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Read the Town of Windsor climate leadership case story on [Green Building](#).