

**GREENBELT ALLIANCE  
DEVELOPMENT ENDORSEMENT PROGRAM**

**EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR NEIGHBORHOOD-SCALE INFILL PROJECTS AND PLANS**

*Revised May 2016*

Neighborhood-scale infill projects and plans offer a compelling opportunity to create thriving communities with a mix of homes, shops, and services while reducing development pressure on our region's natural lands, farms, and ranches. Because of their scale and impact, these proposals warrant special attention to ensure they are designed in ways that best utilize available land and create the greatest benefit for existing and future residents.

The criteria below are used to evaluate neighborhood-scale infill development projects and plans, including specific plans, neighborhood plans, and master plans. These projects and plans typically address multiple city blocks and include new streets designed for public use. For smaller projects, please see our Evaluation Criteria for Individual Infill Projects. Greenbelt Alliance will determine which set of criteria is applicable for each evaluation.

**BASIC PROJECT FEATURES**

A project must have the following features to be considered for evaluation:

- 1) The project includes a significant housing component.
- 2) The project is within an existing urbanized area and not within the regional greenbelt or any other important natural resource area.

## CRITERIA OVERVIEW

The following criteria will be used to inform Greenbelt Alliance’s review of a project for our endorsement. They include *required criteria* (reflecting core features for all endorsements) and *criteria for points* (additional best practices that contribute to the overall performance of the project; each worth 1-4 points).

**Projects are expected to meet all the required criteria and score at least 12 points to be considered for endorsement.**

Projects that achieve these standards offer compelling examples of how infill development can help make the Bay Area an even better place to live—improving our economy, environment, and quality of life. Projects that do not meet these standards may be considered for endorsement if there is clear documentation of extenuating circumstances, efforts taken to overcome impediments, or alternate methods employed to achieve the intent of the criteria.

Each evaluation will assess the project in light of its unique context (location, project size, local policies, funding sources, etc.) and the expected local and regional impacts. All endorsement decisions are at the discretion of Greenbelt Alliance.

## SEVEN CRITERIA GOALS

- Efficient Use of Land
- Affordability
- Walkability
- Transportation Options
- Environmental Design
- Community and Economic Benefits
- Community Engagement

**EFFICIENT USE OF LAND**

*Goal:*

By making efficient use of land, new development can unlock economic opportunities, support vibrant community life, and reduce development pressure on our natural lands, farms, and ranches. Projects should encourage compact development to create thriving neighborhoods with a rich array of amenities and services close at hand.

*Required criteria:*

- 1) The project must be a minimum of 30 residential units per acre in most situations<sup>i</sup>. If the average density in the immediate vicinity is significantly lower, the project must be at least 20 units per acre and at least double the average density nearby while blending with the character of the neighborhood.
- 2) If the project is located in one of the region’s Priority Development Areas (PDAs), the project must meet or exceed the minimum density that corresponds to that PDA’s “Place Type<sup>ii</sup>.”

<u>PDA Place Type</u>	<u>Density range for new development (units/acre)</u>
a) Regional Center:	75-300
b) City Center:	50-150
c) Urban Neighborhood:	40-100
d) Suburban Center:	35-100
e) Transit Town Center:	20-75
f) Transit Neighborhood:	20-50

*Criteria for points:*

- 1) Will the project provide:
  - a) At least 50 units/acre (**1 points**)
  - b) At least 60 units/acre (**2 points**)
  - c) At least 70 units/acre (**3 points**)
  - d) At least 80 units/acre (**4 points**)
- 2) Will the project help carry out an adopted neighborhood-scale plan for compact infill development? (**1 point**)

## AFFORDABILITY

### *Goal:*

Communities thrive when all people have access to affordable, safe housing. Yet today, too many in the Bay Area lack housing they can afford, straining the region's economy and our quality of life. To address this challenge, projects should provide homes for people across the socio-economic spectrum, especially those most in need.

### *Required criteria:*

- 1) The project must contribute to addressing affordable housing needs of moderate to low and/or very low income households, based on Area Median Income (AMI)<sup>iii</sup>. The project must provide for at least 15% of the units to be deed restricted at below market rate for moderate and low/very low income households, or provide 10% of the units for low or very low income households. This can be accomplished through construction of units, dedication of land, or in-lieu fees.
- 2) If the project is on publicly-owned land, is receiving significant public financing, or is benefiting from significant public infrastructure improvements, it must provide at least 25% of units at below market rate for moderate and low/very low income households or 15% for low or very low income households. This can be accomplished through construction of units, dedication of land, or in-lieu fees.

### *Criteria for points:*

- 1) Will at least 25% of the units be affordable? **(2 points)**
- 2) Will the majority of affordable units be dedicated to low or very-low income residents? **(1 point)**
- 3) Will affordable homes be included within the project area to create a mixed-income development? **(1 point)**
- 4) Will the affordable units include a variety of unit sizes (3-bedroom or larger) for families? **(1 point)**

## WALKABILITY

### *Goal:*

Walkable communities provide a host of benefits, including increased local vitality, support for active and healthy lifestyles, and better environmental performance, such as lower greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle travel. Projects should be designed to create lively, pedestrian-friendly streets with clear views of outside activity from new buildings to foster social interaction and increase safety. They should integrate a variety of uses throughout the site, including neighborhood-serving retail. Projects should be located in areas with a variety of existing amenities—such as transit, housing, employment, and civic uses—to create complete neighborhoods and make better use of existing resources.

### *Required criteria:*

- 1) The project must be designed to encourage pedestrian activity and access:
  - a) Buildings integrated with existing street network, preferably in a grid pattern
  - b) Buildings fronted to the sidewalk with little or no setback
  - c) Street façades that are transparent and activated with pedestrian-scale finishes (e.g. windows, balconies, front stoops, sidewalk dining, murals, landscaping)
  - d) Areas for parking hidden behind, beneath, or on top of buildings
  - e) Pedestrian-scaled lighting
- 2) The street network must provide connectivity for efficient walking, biking, and transit:
  - a) A street or pathway into the project at least every 800 feet
  - b) At least 140 intersections per square mile within the project
  - c) Clear, continuous walking routes
- 3) The project must be within 1/2 mile of one of the following:
  - a) Major transit service; defined as a rail stop (existing or planned with significant funding established), ferry stop, or a bus stop served by four or more buses per hour during the peak commute period
  - b) A job center (minimum 5,000 jobs)
  - c) A commercial center (minimum 500,000 square feet)
  - d) An urban downtown area

### *Criteria for points:*

- 1) Does the project create pedestrian-only zones (paseos) or mid-block crosswalks? **(1 point)**
- 2) Does the project include sidewalks with pedestrian through-zones that are at least five feet wide in residential areas or at least eight feet wide in retail or mixed-use areas? **(1 point)**

- 3) Does the project provide street furniture (e.g. benches, planters)? **(1 point)**
- 4) Does the project provide street trees? **(1 point)**
- 5) Does the project use a form-based code? **(1 point)**
- 6) Does the project provide a street or pathway into the project at least every 400 feet and at least 300 intersections per square mile within the project? **(1 point)**
- 7) Does the project provide residents with a mix of uses on-site? **(1 point)**
- 8) Is the project located in an area where a variety of amenities can be easily accessed by walking, as demonstrated by a walkscore of 70-89? **(1 point)**
- 9) Is the project located in an area where a variety of amenities can be easily accessed by walking, as demonstrated by a walkscore of 90-100? **(2 points)**

## TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

### *Goal:*

All residents deserve a variety of options to reach their destination. Projects should offer transportation choices that encourage physical activity, minimize impacts on local traffic, and support our public transportation systems. Land devoted to parking should be minimized to support other uses and the number of parking spaces should be determined based on proximity to transit, provision of transportation options on-site, and resident demographics.

### *Criteria for points:*

- 1) Bicycle-friendly design
  - a) Does the project provide or contribute funding for bike paths, routes, or boulevards? **(1 point)**
  - b) Does the project include secure bike parking on-site and bike racks on the street? **(1 point)**
  - c) Does the project include at least three bike parking spaces for every 10 units? **(1 point)**
  - d) Does the project provide way-finding signage for cyclists to connect to the larger bike network? **(1 point)**
  - e) If a mixed-use project, will showers, changing rooms, and lockers be provided? **(1 point)**
- 2) Transit-supportive
  - a) Will free or discounted transit passes be provided for at least 30 years? **(1 point)**
  - b) Will a Transportation Demand Management program be included? **(1 point)**
- 3) Progressive parking
  - a) Does the project include a parking benefit district to reinvest in the neighborhood? **(1 point)**
  - b) Will the parking provided not exceed one space per unit in regional centers, urban centers, and urban neighborhoods; not exceed 1.5 spaces per unit elsewhere? **(1 point)**
  - c) Will the project “unbundle” the price of parking from the rent or purchase price? **(1 point)**
  - d) Will parking areas utilize any of the following efficiency techniques:
    - i. Tandem (designed for two or more cars to park end-to-end in one space) **(1 point)**
    - ii. Shared (on-site or through an in-lieu program) **(1 point)**
    - iii. Stacked (through off-site valet parking or hydraulic lifts) **(1 point)**
- 4) Other transportation options
  - a) Does the project include a mode split goal that prioritizes walking, biking, and transit? **(1 point)**
  - b) Will free or discounted membership to a car share program be provided for at least 30 years, with cars available on-site or nearby? **(1 point)**
  - c) Will the project provide or financially support a shuttle or provide a shuttle stop on-site? **(1 point)**
  - d) Will there be electric car parking and charging stations on-site? **(1 point)**

## ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

### *Goal:*

New development that fits in well with the natural environment helps protect our limited natural resources and improve our quality of life. In addition to having a lower carbon footprint, green design can provide cost savings and a safer and healthier living environment. It can also turn natural features into celebrated focal points for the entire community, bringing life to a culverted creek or providing new shoreline access. Projects should enhance any natural elements on the site and use green building technology to reduce the project's environmental impact.

### *Required criteria:*

- 1) The project must protect and maintain important habitat on or adjacent to the site (streams, wetlands, etc.), make improvements to those habitat areas (seeding or planting of bare soil, erosion prevention, etc.) and provide ample buffers from development.
- 2) If the project is redeveloping urbanized bayside lands, measures must be taken to protect environmentally sensitive lands around the waterfront, implement best practices to address sea level rise, and extend or complement the Bay Trail.<sup>iv</sup>

### *Criteria for points:*

- 1) Will existing natural resources be restored (e.g. creek day-lighting, wetland expansion, enhancement of habitat for native plants)? **(1 point)**
- 2) Will the project remediate a former brownfield site? **(1 point)**
- 3) Will the project be oriented and designed to showcase any natural features? **(1 point)**
- 4) Will the project provide access to the urban or regional trail network (Bay Trail, etc.)? **(1 point)**
- 5) Will any heritage or other significant trees be preserved or replanted off-site? **(1 point)**



- 6) Will the project incorporate any of the following green building techniques beyond current regulatory requirements? **(max 4 points)**
  - a) Low-impact development (e.g. permeable paving, bio-swales, green roof)
  - b) Sustainable materials/recycled content
  - c) Water efficiency (e.g. drought tolerant landscaping, grey-water reuse)
  - d) Energy efficiency and production (e.g. solar orientation, solar panels)
  - e) Indoor air quality protections (e.g. low VOC paints, tiered planting of trees as buffer)
  - f) Bird-safe design or light pollution reduction programs
  
- 7) Has the project received other environmental endorsements or certifications (e.g. LEED, Build it Green) or can demonstrate significant progress toward certification? **(1 point)**

## COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

### *Goal:*

New development should have an overall positive impact on the surrounding community. Projects should help create a strong neighborhood identity and sense of place with diversity, variety, and choice rather than repetition to help distinguish the neighborhood from other places. They should incorporate inviting design elements that provide community gathering places, honor local history, and relate well to surrounding buildings. Projects should contribute to meeting the needs of local residents and workers at levels appropriate to market conditions, expected impact on the community, and the amount of public funding. The developer and jurisdiction should take steps to mitigate the risk of displacement to provide stability for current residents.

### *Required criteria:*

- 1) The project applicant must submit documentation identifying the most pressing neighborhood needs and an explanation of the benefits the local community will receive through the project, including a description of any expected financial contributions (e.g. impact fees, donations).
- 2) If the project is replacing existing housing stock, measures must be taken to address displacement and provide stability for impacted residents (e.g. relocation benefits, first right of return, replacement of units at an equivalent level of affordability).
- 3) The project must provide public parks, open space, or outdoor recreational facilities. These features should help overcome existing deficiencies in the community, be easily accessible, and incorporate any high value habitat land on the site.

### *Criteria for points:*

- 1) Will place-making elements be incorporated into the design to create publicly-accessible gathering spaces or public art displays? (e.g. public plaza, pocket park, mural) **(1 point)**
- 2) Will the project provide or include funding or land for any of the following uses? **(max 4 points)**
  - a) On-site day care facility
  - b) Community garden
  - c) Senior center
  - d) Recreation facilities
  - e) Health clinic
  - f) After-school facility
  - g) Community rooms
  - h) Exhibition space

- i) Neighborhood school
  - j) Grocery store
- 3) Will the project include any of the following? (**max 4 points**)
- a) Community Benefits Agreement
  - b) Local hire policies
  - c) Actions to address retention or relocation of businesses or other active uses displaced by the project
  - d) Discounted space for local retailers
  - e) Project Labor Agreement
- 4) Does the project include a mechanism to incentivize public benefits? (e.g. Public Benefit Bonus Zoning, Community Benefits District)? (**1 point**)
- 5) If the project impacts cultural or historic resources, particularly those designated by a public landmarks body, will key features be preserved or adaptively re-used? (**1 point**)

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### *Goal:*

Engaging the community early and often is essential to ensure that new development reflects the needs of current and future residents. Projects should involve local stakeholders in the planning and design process through creative approaches that help build consensus and improve the quality of the finished product. This will facilitate the project approval process and increase opportunities for future infill development.

### *Required criteria:*

- 1) The project applicant must provide documentation of efforts to identify and address neighborhood priorities and concerns and engage with interested stakeholders. In addition, the applicant must:
  - a) Create an email list of interested parties and send out regular announcements, especially at major milestones
  - b) Hold regular meetings with residents, especially at the beginning of the project
  - c) Hold meetings on evenings and weekends
  - d) Partner with the city to offer translation services where appropriate

### *Criteria for points:*

- 1) Has the project applicant partnered with the city to provide childcare at meetings? **(1 point)**
- 2) Has community input been incorporated through a multi-day design charrette? **(1 point)**
- 3) Has the project received other endorsements or certifications from local, regional, or national groups (e.g. Santa Clara Housing Action Coalition)? **(1 point)**

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<sup>i</sup> 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 residential uses.

<sup>ii</sup> Each PDA's Place Type is selected by the local municipality. To determine which Place Type corresponds to the PDA, visit: <http://geocommons.com/maps/141979#http://geocommons.com/maps/141979>. See MTC's Station Area Planning Manual for a detailed description of the attributes of each Place Type.

<sup>iii</sup> 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.

<sup>iv</sup> For sea level rise best practices, see guidance documents from the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the California Coastal Commission, and the California Natural Resources Agency.