



A Community Guide to the General Plan

The City of Santa Clara General Plan presents the vision for the evolution and enhancement of the Santa Clara community through the year 2035. This General Plan's vision is long-range, supported by a spectrum of strategies and policies to deal with changing priorities and development pressures that the City will face through the coming years. Because this Plan looks forward 25 years into our future, it recognizes that changing circumstances may alter our collective choices as we move toward that far-time horizon.

This General Plan has been designed as a "Progressive Plan" that breaks down the 25-year horizon into three planning phases that are more manageable and responsive to change and our future needs. As we near the conclusion of each of these short, medium and long-term planning phases, to 2015, 2025 and 2035, respectively, there will be renewed community participation efforts to check our direction and priorities, as well as to reaffirm and extend our long-term vision each time.



In order to provide a structure for decision-making for development in the City, the General Plan outlines Major Strategies that provide the foundation for defined goals and policies. Together, these guide decisions that affect land use, neighborhood conservation, transportation, parks, and other aspects of the City's physical form. These Strategies, goals and policies should be evident in the actions the City takes on public and private development in the City. Implementing these Strategies through the City's development decisions will reflect the importance of treasuring our history, taking best advantage of today's community and regional assets, and making the most of the challenges and opportunities that we will face in the future.

“
*... Santa Clara is
a desirable place
to live, work and
play.*”

*A Letter to the Future
Children of Santa Clara,
General Plan Steering
Committee Member,
October 2009*

This Community Guide has several purposes.

- First, it presents a summary of all that makes up the General Plan, with a concise, but comprehensive view of the detailed information that is contained within the Plan. It is presented in a format that corresponds to the order of the larger document to facilitate access to more detailed information.
- Second, because it is a summary of the General Plan, it provides a resource for the community to readily evaluate how decisions about development projects conform to the Major Strategies, goals and policies that are in the General Plan.
- Third, it presents an overview of the purpose and requirements for general plans, and highlights how the City's Strategies, goals and policies are consistent with those requirements.

Both the Community Guide and the General Plan, itself, are arranged to support the community planning process and encourage public participation. Each of the General Plan chapters is summarized in this Community Guide, and discussed in greater detail elsewhere in the General Plan.

Chapter 1: A Community Guide to the General Plan

Chapter 2: General Plan Organization

Chapter 3: Treasuring Our Past, Present and Future

Chapter 4: Major Strategies

Chapter 5: Goals and Policies

Chapter 6: Local and Regional Planning Context

Chapter 7: Turning the General Plan into Action

Chapter 8: Appendices

The Santa Clara Vision

Santa Clara has a rich history and a promising future. Mission Santa Clara, rebuilt several times prior to its current home on the Santa Clara University campus, is a fitting icon for the City's seal. It represents a commitment and a will to succeed. Leadership in Santa Clara takes many forms, and overall it has been forward thinking and supportive of the growing City since its incorporation in 1852, but at the same time, protective of its cultural and historical treasures. Together, the residents and businesses of Santa Clara have built a community that is strong and successful well beyond its modest reputation.

Modern Santa Clara sprang from two centers, the central core that grew outward from the original downtown and the Old Quad residential areas, and Agnew Village, a satellite area that established a base for residential neighborhoods in northern Santa Clara. Primarily an agricultural community through the mid-1900s, it came to life as a family-oriented, suburban community of comfortable neighborhoods in the post World War II era and as the heart of Silicon Valley in the electronics industry boom of the 1970s.

Because City leadership had the foresight to develop its own electric, water and sewer utilities, as well as to support an industrial and retail economic base that has resulted in robust property and sales tax revenues, Santa Clarans have enjoyed high quality services for many years in the form of affordable utility rates, abundant parks and recreational amenities, good streets and admirable community facilities, such as the Senior Center, the Central Park Library and the municipal Santa Clara Golf & Tennis Club, to name a few.

In crafting a General Plan that articulates a vision for the City, the community participants who lead this effort recognized the importance of protecting and preserving the heritage of past





generations and the neighborhoods. At the same time, because the world does not stand still, these leaders realized that we must look forward, just as our community forefathers did, and make bold plans to maintain and enhance that quality of life for Santa Clarans to come. The policies in this General Plan, and the underlying Strategies for Santa Clara's vision, will support decisions, large and small, that continue to make Santa Clara a great place to live, work and play.

Just after the turn of the millennium in 2000, it became clear that forces of change larger than our local decisions were beginning to alter the economy of Silicon Valley. While the headquarters of major electronic firms, such as Intel, Applied Materials, National Semiconductor and Sun Microsystems/Oracle, among many others, remain, much of the production and manufacturing activities of these enterprises moved away. Many jobs were lost, with commercial and industrial vacancies hitting a high in late 2009. The management, design and development activities of these companies have stayed, indicating the confidence in the area's wealth of brain power and entrepreneurial spirit.

The challenge for realizing Santa Clara's vision will be to preserve the best of the community we have cultivated over many years, while finding and making the most of the opportunities that stem from the pressures of development that are brought before us. Santa Clara is built out, with over 97 percent of its land area developed primarily in a low density, suburban form. New businesses and residences will need to intensify existing development. Planned growth, economic, physical and social, should be directed to areas where already developed properties can be enhanced and intensified with little or no adverse effect on areas that we wish to preserve.

Growth that is well done, and in the right location, will provide new revenues to support current and new services and replace aging infrastructure. It will generate jobs for residents and families who want to remain in Santa Clara, support new and better retail services through reinvestment in older properties, and put new housing in areas where services can be added or enhanced. These improvements will increase transportation options for new and existing residents, alike, and reduce their reliance on automobile trips.

Santa Clara’s geographic location at the center of the Valley presents a number of advantages for new development that can provide the growth and rejuvenation of the community’s physical environment necessary to maintain our City’s economic health. Five State highways, including El Camino Real and three County expressways, serve Santa Clara well. In addition, three light and heavy rail corridors, as well as County bus service and future BART and High Speed Rail service, will enhance transit options for residents, visitors and employees. These transit services offer an opportunity for new, concentrated growth that minimizes impacts on existing neighborhoods and provides choices for living and working with less reliance on the automobile for every trip.

Santa Clara’s vision to preserve the things we like about this community and direct beneficial growth to the right locations, with good design, should result from the application of the Major Strategies, goals and policies in this General Plan. The General Plan should be used by developers to understand the opportunities and limitations presented in our vision, by staff to guide developers toward appropriate project applications, by residents and businesses to measure the success of proposals and decisions made with regard to our priorities, and by decision-makers to determine the appropriate development that is best for the community.

“
... a healthy,
thriving and safe
city in which to
live, work and
enjoy life.”

“
... people of all
ages, incomes and
cultures are able
to live in Santa
Clara.”

1.1 GENERAL PLAN PURPOSE AND PROCESS

1.1.1 Why a General Plan?

The State requires that every city and county in California prepare a general plan. The City of Santa Clara’s General Plan lays out broad goals and specific policies on land use, community design, circulation, housing, public facilities, open space, recreation, conservation, noise, seismic and safety, and historic preservation. The General Plan provides information for the community to define acceptable development. It is a guide for decisions by the City Council, Planning Commission, City Departments and other governmental agencies on specific development applications. In sum, the purpose of the General Plan is to:

*A Letter to the Future
Children of Santa Clara,
General Plan Steering
Committee Members,
October 2009*



“...a high quality of life for its residents, with distinctive and thriving neighborhoods and excellent transportation.”

- Formally state the development policies of the City;
- Set forth a framework of principles and standards;
- Guide future decisions affecting the development of the City;
- Create a desirable environment for living, working and playing;
- Define acceptable locations for facilities contributing to the social, economic and cultural goals of the community; and,
- Establish a vision for the future of Santa Clara.

1.1.2 What Is Required?

Framework

A city’s general plan can be described as its constitution for development and the framework for decisions related to growth, public services and facilities and environmental protection. General plans are as diverse as the communities they guide. The State allows local jurisdictions flexibility in their general plans so that they can reflect the needs and interests of individual communities. State law does, however, establish the following basic requirements for general plans:

“... set the stage for a strong economy, so you can provided for your family and the City can provide services to meet your needs.”

- The plan must be comprehensive, in terms of geography and content, must cover the entire city, as well as any other areas deemed relevant, and must address the full range of issues that affect a city’s physical development.
- The plan must be internally consistent, meaning that all aspects must be integrated and relate to each other without conflict.
- The plan must take a long-term perspective, typically 20 to 30 years.

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Elements

State law requires that general plans address seven specific areas, called “elements.” These required elements are: Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety and Housing. During the City of Santa Clara’s planning process,

historic preservation and neighborhood compatibility emerged as important components for inclusion in the General Plan, as well. Instead of treating each area as separate elements, this General Plan integrates them into a comprehensive guide for the City's future. The State required elements are cross-referenced in Appendix 8.4. Note that the General Plan Housing Element is a stand-alone document in Appendix 8.12. Policies from that document are also incorporated into the residential land use goals and policies found throughout Chapter 5.

1.1.3 How Was the Plan Prepared?

Plan Development

This General Plan developed through public engagement to reflect the vision and desires of the community. The planning process began with visioning and technical analysis to establish a foundation and direction for the Plan. Next, an analysis of alternative land uses led to the selection of a preferred plan, which provided the basic framework for the General Plan and its policies. A comprehensive Environmental Impact Report was also prepared in parallel with the General Plan, pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

Public Participation

While the development of this General Plan was influenced by many sources, the most important voice was that of the community. The ideas, suggestions, insight and critical input from the community resulted in a Plan that reflects Santa Clara's vision. To that end, public participation for the City of Santa Clara was structured for each phase of the planning process. A variety of opportunities were offered to engage community participation, including workshops, stakeholder meetings, a City-wide survey and neighborhood outreach meetings. More than 2,500 people participated directly in a workshop or the survey. The General Plan Steering Committee, comprised of 19 individuals, representing a variety of interests, was appointed by the City Council to guide policy development and direction for the General Plan. Information about public participation opportunities and information about work products were provided through newsletters, Inside Santa Clara (the City's quarterly newspaper distributed to all residents and businesses) and the City and project website. City Council and Planning Commission study sessions were also held throughout the process to present findings and obtain feedback.

General Plan

The General Plan outlines land use envisioned for each area of the City, such as residential, commercial and open space, while zoning regulates the details of use, height, setbacks, activities and other aspects of development.

Environmental Impact Report

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a detailed analysis of the potential environmental effects of a plan or development project. An EIR identifies alternatives to the proposed plan and presents ways to reduce or avoid potential environmental effects. A General Plan EIR is required and regulated by the California Environmental Quality Act.



1.2 GENERAL PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Santa Clara General Plan is organized into seven chapters and multiple appendices.



- **Chapter 1** (this chapter) is the Community Guide to the General Plan. It is a synthesis of the General Plan’s vision, strategies and implementation program, and is intended as the executive summary of the Plan and serves as a reference guide for community members and policymakers.
- **Chapter 2** provides a description of the progressive structure of the Plan. This chapter also describes the State requirements for general plans.
- **Chapter 3** sets the historical context for the General Plan goals and policies.
- **Chapter 4** defines the Major Strategies which are the guiding principles for the Plan, itself.
- **Chapter 5** includes the goals and policies that direct the Plan implementation. Policies for land use, discretionary uses and land use transitions, focus areas, historic preservation, mobility and transportation, public facilities and services, and environmental quality provide the direction for future development.
- **Chapter 6** provides information about the local and regional planning context, including parallel planning efforts by the City, surrounding jurisdictions and regional agencies that have implications for development in Santa Clara.
- **Chapter 7** defines the implementation strategy, in terms of roles, responsibilities and financing, to meet Plan policies and goals.
- **Chapter 8** is the Appendices. It contains supplemental documents to the Plan, including the City’s Sustainable Community Plan, a matrix of the Plan’s consistency with regulatory requirements, the Housing Element for the current planning period, a glossary of definitions for terms referenced in the Plan, an index for the Plan and its

policies, a summary of the General Plan assumptions, and other technical information.

General Plan goals and policies in Chapter 5 provide the foundation for decision-making in Santa Clara. Goals are the City's statements of broad direction, philosophy or standards. Policies provide specific direction and requirements to guide future development. Goals and policies may include programs or development standards from previous planning documents. The environmental assessment of this Plan was conducted in parallel with preparation of its policies, such that some of the policies serve as mitigation measures for the Plan. In many ways, this General Plan is a "self-mitigating" document.

The General Plan is the vision for the City's future. Much of its implementation comes from the individual efforts of private development. While the General Plan enables the implementation of the goals and policies, it does not ensure that all aspects of the Plan will occur.

1.2.1 Progressive General Plan

The City of Santa Clara General Plan is a "Progressive General Plan" which provides a multi-horizon sequence for development as a mechanism to facilitate responsible growth. The framework of the Progressive General Plan represents the City's commitment to a viable and sustainable Plan for future development, while meeting the goals and standards envisioned by the community. The Plan includes three phases that direct change in the short, mid and long-term for the City's growth and development.

To address the potential effects of future growth and the associated increasing demand for services, the Plan identifies the steps, conditions and improvements required for implementation of subsequent phases as prerequisites. The intent of these prerequisites is to allow logical planning for responsible growth, ensuring that the City maintains quality services for existing and future residents and businesses. Prerequisites for future phases can be refined, amended and added over time, as local and regional conditions change. Specific prerequisite policies are included in Chapter 5.

1.2.2 Areas of Stability and Potential Development

Most areas of the City are not expected to change substantially over the course of the Plan. Specifically, Santa Clara's established residential neighborhoods, with their distinctive character and sense of community, are not proposed for land use changes.

“... have a place to live near where you work.”

“... an identifiable Downtown with a successful mix of residential, retail commercial and entertainment.”

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Additionally, General Plan policies support compatibility between new development and existing neighborhoods in terms of scale, height and land use. Current residents will benefit from public and private investments resulting from the implementation of the Plan, including new and upgraded public facilities, transportation improvements and retail services planned in concert with new development.

Given the built-out nature of the City, virtually all new development will reuse existing, underutilized properties. A preliminary market assessment prepared as part of the analysis for this Plan, identified future opportunities throughout the City for residential, retail, entertainment, office, industrial and data center uses, when the economy is ready for such development.

1.2.3 Plan Phases

The Plan is organized into the three phases listed below, reflecting near-, mid- and long-term horizons. Each phase includes changes in land uses and development intensities for specific areas. The primary objective for the phasing is to ensure that new development is supported by the appropriate infrastructure and services. Over time, new economic, technological and social conditions may emerge that alter assumptions about land use needs, compatibility and overall planning. To respond to these unknown factors, the Plan includes a reassessment toward the end of each phase. As the City faces a new cycle of needs and economic conditions, General Plan strategies and objectives can be refined and reflected in subsequent phases. Through this iterative process, the Progressive General Plan can continue to promote the high quality of life enjoyed in the City; encourage the preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods; foster public and private investment in jobs, housing, services and amenities; and support the Major Strategies.

Phase I 2010-2015: This phase represents the short-term strategy for growth, between 2010 and 2015. It focuses on implementing new land use classifications and implementation measures. The end of this phase aligns with the beginning of the next State-mandated Housing Element adoption cycle. It incorporates potential development of housing sites located near the Santa Clara transit station, Downtown, El Camino Real and other residential and mixed-use areas. In sum, the intent of Phase I of the Plan is to:

“
*... provisions for
safe pedestrian
and bicycle
pathways and
convenient public
transit.*”

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- Define opportunity sites for housing that are well-connected with existing residential neighborhoods, City services and public transit;
- Focus intensified employment centers north of the Caltrain corridor;
- Support infrastructure improvements;
- Develop mixed-use residential and commercial development along El Camino Real and in Downtown;
- Preserve and expand commercial uses along Stevens Creek Boulevard; and,
- Establish new neighborhood-oriented retail uses and services along Homestead Road at Lawrence Expressway and Kiely Boulevard and Monroe Street, and at Saratoga Avenue and Stevens Creek Boulevard.



Phase II 2015-2025: This phase represents the intermediate strategy for growth, between 2015 and 2025. It continues many of the policies defined in Phase I, including employment intensification north of the Caltrain corridor; mixed-use development along El Camino Real and in Downtown; and commercial uses along Stevens Creek Boulevard. New initiatives in Phase II are to:

- Develop new residential neighborhoods north of the Caltrain corridor to capitalize on existing transit near the Caltrain Station at Lawrence Expressway and adjacent to the Tasman light rail corridor; and,
- Plan public facilities and services in tandem with new neighborhoods, including retail as well as, parks, open space and other public facilities.

Phase III 2025-2035: As the City's long-term strategy for growth, Phase III applies to the period between 2025 and 2035. For this time period, some of the General Plan assumptions may need re-evaluation. A reassessment of this phase before 2025 will help to better align growth and development with future conditions and changing needs. Looking ahead, applicable long-range initiatives in Phase III are to:

“
*... a range of safe
 and comfortable
 homes that
 residents and the
 local workforce
 can afford to own
 or rent.*”

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“
*... a varied and
vibrant business
community.*”

- Develop new residential neighborhoods in conjunction with appropriate retail, parks, open space and other public uses, along transit corridors, such as Great America Parkway, Central Expressway and De La Cruz Boulevard; and,
- Explore a civic presence in Downtown and continue the intensification of residential and mixed uses along El Camino Real.

1.3 TREASURING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

“
*... local and
regional
transit systems
are robust,
interconnected
flexible and
reliable.*”

Santa Clara, “The Mission City,” has been transformed over the past century, from a small agricultural town to the center of technology in the Silicon Valley. The City’s rich past is rooted in the early history and development of California. While some aspects of the City have changed with its transition from a Mission outpost and agricultural town, key reminders of Santa Clara’s history remain throughout the City. These features are evident in the City’s historical resources, like Mission Santa Clara, the Santa Clara Railroad Depot, the Old Quad and Agnew Village neighborhoods and vintage period architecture. As Santa Clara continues to evolve, understanding and honoring the past will ensure that the City’s cultural heritage and identity are maintained and enhanced.

1.3.1 The City Today

Today, Santa Clara consists of vibrant residential neighborhoods and job centers that continue to grow and evolve. The City is adjacent to San José, the largest city in the Bay Area, the San José Norman Y. Mineta International Airport (Airport) and regional transportation corridors. Like its neighbor, Santa Clara is centrally located in Santa Clara County, one of the fastest-growing counties in the State and home to numerous high technology companies. The City’s industrial core includes Intel, Applied Materials, Sun Microsystems/Oracle, Nvidia, National Semiconductor and other major companies. Mission College, Santa Clara University and the UCSC Extension in Silicon Valley are also located within the City. As a result, the pressure for Santa Clara to absorb a substantial share of the region’s growth is likely to continue.

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1.3.2 Vision for the Future

Several common themes emerged during the planning process, forming an overall vision for Santa Clara's future:

- Preserve the City's small-town feel, particularly by maintaining the character and quality of the City's residential neighborhoods;
- Add opportunities for a mix of residential and commercial uses throughout the City in places with access to existing and future transit;
- Revitalize a landmark Downtown;
- Improve the visual and physical character of the City's commercial corridors;
- Enhance walkability and bicycle circulation throughout the City;
- Reduce traffic congestion and promote expansion of the public transportation system;
- Diversify industrial and business uses and intensify the employment base;
- Provide neighborhood commercial centers;
- Continue high quality public services and amenities, including open space and parks; and,
- Encourage sustainability to protect energy, water supplies and air quality.

These themes serve as the basis for the General Plan Major Strategies, which are summarized below. They also provide the context for the General Plan policies as well as for the population and job growth projections identified in Appendix 8.6.

“
*... farmers'
 markets, outdoor
 cafes, pedestrian
 paseos and public
 art activate the
 street and invite
 people to share
 ideas, linger, walk
 and window shop.*”

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1.4 MAJOR STRATEGIES

The seven Major Strategies represent the overarching principles of the Santa Clara General Plan. The Strategies expressed here are reflected throughout the Plan, providing the direction for goals and policies, as well as for implementing actions. Each Strategy listed below defines a distinct priority, such as economic vitality or sustainability. The synthesis of these individual Strategies into General Plan goals and policies mutually reinforces the overall purpose of the Plan to enhance quality of life for existing and future members of the City of Santa Clara.

1. Enhance the City's High Quality of Life
2. Preserve and Cultivate Neighborhoods
3. Promote Sustainability
4. Enhance City Identity
5. Support Focus Areas and Community Vitality
6. Maintain the City's Fiscal Health and Quality Services
7. Maximize Health and Safety Benefits

1.5 GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals and policies of this General Plan are organized around land use; discretionary uses and transitions between varying land uses; focus areas; historic preservation; mobility and transportation; public facilities and services; and environmental quality. These goals and policies describe the priorities and strategies for the City's General Plan vision.

1.5.1 Prerequisites

Prerequisite goals and policies identify fundamental steps, or milestones, that must be undertaken or reached, prior to moving on to subsequent phases of the General Plan. The prerequisites provide the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the City's progress at regular intervals. Some goals and policies are specific to a particular year or phase, while others apply to all phases.

Each of the policies must be followed to graduate to the next phase.

1.5.2 Land Use

Because Santa Clara has virtually no vacant land, new development will primarily redevelop existing sites from lower to higher intensity uses. Intensifying existing development will result in a more efficient, sustainable use of limited land and resources, particularly along El Camino Real and Stevens Creek Boulevard, as well as in the City's employment core north of the Caltrain corridor. Focusing increased intensities at these locations will maximize opportunities for mixed uses and future transit, without impacting the City's existing residential and industrial character.

Components of the City's land use policies include:

- Revitalizing Downtown with a mix of commercial and residential uses;
- Redefining El Camino Real as a vital, pedestrian-oriented corridor, with a greater diversity of uses;
- Reinforcing Stevens Creek Boulevard as a regional destination for durable goods and other commercial outlets;
- Maintaining the integrity and character of existing residential neighborhoods with improved pedestrian amenities and local-serving retail;
- Intensifying employment centers for the industrial, research and development uses within the City;
- Taking advantage of the City's accessibility to regional transportation corridors and supporting alternative transportation modes;
- Creating new residential neighborhoods north of the Caltrain corridor with a full complement of services and infrastructure like those provided to existing Santa Clara residents;
- Retaining Heavy Industrial uses to support the City's employment base; and,

“
... urban parks,
community
gardens and public
plazas that are
integrated well
within the larger
community.”

“
... promoting
eating locally
grown, organic
produce, walking,
physical activity
and socializing
with neighbors.”

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- Maximizing accessibility to parks, trails, retail and commercial centers.

While much of the City is not anticipated to change significantly in character, land use or development intensity over the next 25 years, all areas will be influenced by new growth in the City. As a result, the City's growth strategy addresses sustainability and fiscal responsibility, as well as the City's role in supporting innovation and expansion for existing and new businesses.

1.5.3 Focus Areas

The Plan identifies Focus Areas throughout the City to support and foster the City's diverse economic base. The purpose of these Focus Areas is to encourage improvements and new development tailored to the character and quality of these areas. Near-term Focus Areas include the El Camino Real and Stevens Creek Boulevard corridors where a mix of land uses at key locations, in conjunction with improved commercial and streetscape design, are encouraged. Santa Clara's Downtown is another Focus Area for regeneration as a center of activity to draw patrons City-wide for shopping, eating and entertainment. The fourth near-term Focus Area is centered on the Santa Clara Transit Station. Future Focus Areas are envisioned along transportation corridors, such as San Tomas Expressway and Bowers Avenue, in order to facilitate greater mobility and expand accessibility to jobs in these areas. Comprehensive planning is a prerequisite for all the Future Focus Areas prior to development approvals.

1.5.4 Neighborhood Compatibility

Policies for neighborhood compatibility promote livability through the design of new public spaces, such as streets and plazas, as well as through the application of interface solutions between new development and existing neighborhoods. These policies protect Santa Clara's existing assets in order to maintain the City's identity. Neighborhood compatibility policies focus on protecting existing neighborhoods, as well as on providing appropriate transitions between varying planned intensities and uses.

Components of neighborhood compatibility include discretionary use and transition policies. Discretionary Use Policies are used to address unique cases in which uses and/or densities, other

than those designated on the Land Use Diagrams, may conform to the General Plan. Transition Policies focus on preserving neighborhood character through design continuity between higher-intensity, or varying uses, in order to respect the scale of existing neighborhoods.

1.5.5 Historic Preservation

Santa Clara's character and identity relate directly to its history as a Mission City. The goals and policies for historic preservation protect the City's existing assets to support the Major Strategies of enhancing the City's identity through its distinctive past, and cultivating existing neighborhoods through the preservation of historic and archaeological resources for years to come.

1.5.6 Mobility and Transportation

A convenient and efficient Citywide system that promotes a balance of all modes of transportation is essential. Santa Clara's Mobility and Transportation goals and policies support connected networks that facilitates pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular movement throughout the City. Emphasis is placed on alternative transit modes to support increased densities, a mix of uses, as well as walking and bicycling as a practical solution for everyday transportation. Additionally, improving the City's transit network will offer viable alternatives to the automobile, resulting in reductions in per-capita vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.

Components of the City's policies for Mobility and Transportation include:

- Creating a universally accessible transportation system that meets the needs of all segments of the population, including youth, seniors, persons with disabilities and low-income households;
- Providing a multi-functional street system that ensures the safe and efficient movement of people, goods and services, and promotes a high quality of life and economic vitality;
- Establishing flexible transportation service standards that encourage increased densities and a mix of uses to increase transit ridership, biking and walking and encourage decreased auto travel, air pollution, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions;

“
... attractive,
walkable
neighborhoods
with a vibrant
mix of homes,
shops, restaurants
and offices.”

“
... a variety of
housing types and
levels of cost to
choose from.”

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- Designing, constructing, operating and maintaining City streets based on the concept of “Full-Service Streets” to provide safe, comfortable and attractive accessibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users of all ages and abilities;
- Supporting flexible parking standards to limit supply to meet business needs and encourage transit ridership, bicycling and walking;
- Supporting transportation demand management strategies to decrease single-occupant automobile ridership and vehicle miles traveled; and,
- Maximizing the quality of all travel modes in the City, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists through the application of standards for vehicular movement that minimize the need for roadway and intersection widening and improve the levels of service for alternative transportation modes.

1.5.7 Public Facilities and Services

The Plan ensures that existing and new neighborhoods have access to a full complement of parks, public facilities and City utilities, such as water, sewer, electricity and other public services for everyday living. The Plan’s phasing and its prerequisites for new residential uses in future Focus Areas provide an opportunity for appropriate planning and financing of new infrastructure and services to support future development.

Components of the City’s policies for providing public facilities and services include:

- Supporting efforts by school districts to maintain, improve and expand educational facilities and services;
- Ensuring that arts, cultural and other community facilities continue to be available;
- Providing a comprehensive and integrated network of parks and open space, with access to existing facilities as well as to additional facilities provided with new development;
- Using trails along creeks and other rights-of-way to link parks and open spaces; and,

- Providing responsive police and fire services to ensure a safe and secure environment for people and property in the community.

1.5.8 Environmental Quality

The quality of the environment that surrounds us, whether it is rural, suburban or urban, affects quality of life and physical, mental and emotional health. Preserving environmental resources, maintaining water and air quality and protecting plant and wildlife habitat are important to environmental health. Environmental quality also includes protecting the community's safety against the risks posed by hazards. Potential safety hazards can be associated with seismic and geologic conditions, flooding, hazardous materials and waste, as well as excessive noise. Like most Bay Area communities, Santa Clara is located in a seismically active region. The City is also proximate to the San José Norman Y. Mineta International Airport, rail lines and various highway corridors, all of which generate noise. Addressing these environmental issues is important as the City becomes more densely developed.

Components of the City's policies for maintaining environmental quality include:

- Maximizing opportunities throughout the City to provide open space and habitat;
- Protecting and improving air quality by reducing vehicle trips;
- Continuing to develop cost effective alternative power sources and to encourage conservation;
- Maximizing recycling and composting to save energy and resources, as well as to reduce demand on solid waste facilities;
- Requiring water conservation and recycled water use to ensure an adequate water supply and to save energy;
- Requiring that urban development not reduce water quality;
- Participating in a regional Non-Point-Source Control Program to reduce storm water runoff pollutants;





- Protecting life and property from hazards related to seismic activity, hazardous material exposure, flooding and fire; and,
- Minimizing exposure to noise through site planning design and construction techniques.

1.5.9 Sustainability

The City’s sustainability goals and policies are predominately incorporated within the land use, transportation and mobility, and environmental quality sections. They are summarized and cross-referenced in Section 5.11: Sustainability and in Appendix 8.13: Community Sustainability and Health Goals and Policies Matrix. These policies support the City’s current efforts in energy, water, and solid waste reduction as well as in addressing global climate change. As a prerequisite requirement for Phase II of the General Plan, a Climate Action Plan, consistent with the recommendations of the California State Attorney General’s Office, as well as with those of the California Air Resources Board, will be prepared and included in Appendix 8.13 of this General Plan.

“
... spaces that promote a healthy lifestyle, access to proper housing for all, a commitment to a safe and comfortable environment, a quality of life that is filled with invitation and openness.”

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 Committee Member,
 October 2009*

1.6 LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

There are several planning initiatives and development projects moving forward in Santa Clara, as well as in neighboring cities, that may affect Santa Clara residents and land use decisions. In addition, regional initiatives, including planning efforts in the City and along El Camino Real, may provide development and funding opportunities for the City. These efforts are summarized in the following Table 1.6-1.

TABLE 1.6-1: LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

Local Planning Efforts	
Jurisdiction	Plan Name
City of Santa Clara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa Clara Station Area Plan • Downtown Plan
City of Cupertino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Cupertino General Plan • North Vallco Master Plan



Local Planning Efforts	
Jurisdiction	Plan Name
City of San José	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of San José General Plan Update Alviso Specific Plan North San José Vision Plan
City of Sunnyvale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Sunnyvale General Plan Update Lawrence Station Area Plan El Camino Real Precise Plan Lakeside Specific Plan
Regional Planning Efforts	
Association of Bay Area Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Hazard Mitigation Plan: Taming Natural Disasters
Association of Bay Area Governments, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and Metropolitan Transportation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation 2035 Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area FOCUS Program: Priority Development Areas
California High Speed Rail Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> California High Speed Rail
Caltrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caltrain Electrification Project
Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> El Camino Real Grand Boulevard Initiative Climate Protection Disaster Planning Initiative Silicon Valley Economic Development Alliance
Norman Y. Mineta San José International Airport Land Use Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan
San José/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> San José/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant Master Plan South Bay Water Recycling Project
Santa Clara County, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Santa Clara Valley Water District, City of San José, City of Gilroy, City of Morgan Hill, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Santa Clara Valley Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus Rapid Transit Facilities Design Valley Transportation Plan 2035
Metropolitan Transportation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation 2035 Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area



“
... set aggressive standards to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect water resources.
 ”

A Letter to the Future Children of Santa Clara, General Plan Steering Committee Member, October 2009

1.7 TURNING THE GENERAL PLAN INTO ACTION

The City uses a variety of regulatory mechanisms and administrative procedures to implement the General Plan. These include the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, Uniform Building Code, International Fire Code, Capital Improvements Program, neighborhood planning and an environmental review process consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act. Implementation tools are described below.

1.7.1 Implementation

The City's General Plan policies are designed as implementing actions. Collectively, these policies comprise the Plan's implementation program. Policies provide direction for public improvements, define appropriate land uses, identify standards for new development and detail measures to protect the City's environmental quality.

Implementation of the General Plan involves the City Council, the Planning Commission, other City review bodies and City staff and the community. The Planning and Inspection Department staff has primary responsibility for implementing the Plan. The City also consults with Santa Clara County, adjacent cities and other public agencies on proposals that affect their respective jurisdictions.

1.7.2 Regulatory Framework

Consistency between Zoning and the General Plan is fundamental to Plan implementation. This consistency ensures that the Plan's Major Strategies and the City's overall vision are realized. The City's Zoning Ordinance translates General Plan policies into specific regulations, development standards and performance criteria applicable development on individual properties. The General Plan establishes the policy framework, while the Zoning Ordinance prescribes specific rules and procedures for development. Revisions to the City's regulations are anticipated as part of a comprehensive Zoning Ordinance update approximately one year following the adoption of the 2010 – 2035 General Plan.

“
*... a city that has
 a strong economic
 and financial base
 so you and your
 family receive
 outstanding
 public services
 – libraries,
 police, fire, parks,
 and recreation
 facilities.*”

*A Letter to the Future
 Children of Santa Clara,
 General Plan Steering
 Committee Member,
 October 2009*



1.7.3 Neighborhood Planning

The General Plan focuses on City-wide policies. Other than the policies and design elements tailored to the four, near-term Focus Areas, the Plan does not include detailed neighborhood plans. The Plan does, however, outline a process for existing neighborhoods and districts to initiate separate, private planning efforts to create smaller scale Neighborhood Improvement Plans. These community-initiated plans are intended to help neighborhoods to define and preserve their individual neighborhood character.

For Future Focus Areas, the General Plan includes criteria for comprehensive planning as a prerequisite for new development. Comprehensive plans for Future Focus Areas can be either developer or City-initiated. These plans will specify land use, utilities, streets, services, parks and other public facilities for each area.

“
*... bike friendly
streets all
throughout the
City to encourage
motorists to get
out of their cars
and children to
walk or ride to
school.*”

*A Letter to the Future
Children of Santa Clara,
General Plan Steering
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