



General Plan Organization

This Chapter describes the purpose of the General Plan, its required contents under State law, and outlines the organization of the document, itself. It also provides a description of the “Progressive General Plan,” including areas where new development is anticipated, the phasing of the plan and a summary of the prerequisites for development, which are the fundamental components that shape the Plan.

2.1 PLAN REQUIREMENTS

This General Plan governs the City’s actions related to Santa Clara’s physical development. It is mandated by, and derives its authority from, California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. In the City of Santa Clara, the General Plan is adopted by the City Council to:

- Define a vision for Santa Clara’s long-term physical and economic development;



- Provide specific strategies and policies that support this vision;
- Establish a basis for development and project approvals;
- Support proposals that protect environmental resources and minimize hazards; and,
- Set parameters for plans and programs, such as the Zoning Ordinance, Capital Improvements Program and Redevelopment Plans.

2.1.1 State Requirements

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. In California, local control over land use decisions means that cities have flexibility in preparing general plans, provided certain basic requirements are met. The California Government Code establishes both content requirements for general plans and the rules for their adoption and subsequent amendment. Together, State law and judicial decisions have established four overall guidelines for general plans.

1. *Comprehensive.* This requirement has two aspects. First, a general plan must be geographically comprehensive. It must apply throughout the entire incorporated area and should include other areas that the city determines are relevant to its planning. Second, a general plan must address the full range of issues affecting the city's physical development.
2. *Internally Consistent.* This requirement means that the General Plan must fully integrate its separate parts and relate them to each other without conflict. Consistency applies as much to figures and diagrams as to the text. It also applies to data and analysis as well as policies. All adopted portions of a general plan, whether required by State law or not, have equal weight.
3. *Long-Range.* Because anticipated development will affect a city, its residents and businesses for years, State law requires every general plan to take a long-term perspective. The time horizon for the Santa Clara General Plan is approximately 25 years.

4. *Mandated Elements.* State law mandates that general plans include seven elements: Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety, and Housing. Elements to address other local concerns may also be included. The Santa Clara General Plan includes Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Compatibility. Because this General Plan is an integrated document, it does not have independent elements except for the Housing Element, which is provided in Appendix 8.12. Appendix 8.4 is a matrix that cross-references State general plan required elements with the Santa Clara General Plan text and diagrams.

2.2 PLAN ORGANIZATION

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

- This Chapter provides a description of the “Progressive Plan” and an outline of the organization of the Plan.
- Chapter 1 is the Community Guide to the General Plan. It is a synthesis of the General Plan’s vision, strategies and implementation program. This Chapter is intended as the executive summary of the Plan and serves as a reference guide for community members and policymakers.
- Chapter 3 sets the historical context for the General Plan goals and policies. It is a summary of existing conditions, which provides the framework for the Plan.
- Chapter 4 defines the General Plan’s Major Strategies, which serve as the guiding principles for the Plan itself.
- Chapter 5 includes the goals and policies for land use, discretionary uses, land use transitions, focus areas, historic preservation, mobility and transportation, public facilities and services, and environmental quality that provide direction for future development.
- Chapter 6 provides a description of the local and regional planning context.



- Chapter 7 defines the implementation strategy, in terms of roles, responsibilities and financing for Plan policies and goals. This Chapter also outlines the process for monitoring, amending and implementing the Plan.
- Chapter 8 is the Appendices and contains supplemental documents to the Plan, including:
 - Index, Definitions and Acronyms. The index is intended to help readers locate information by topic in the Plan, and the glossary provides definitions for terms used in the Plan.
 - Matrix of General Plan Land Use Designations. This matrix illustrates the relationship between the 1992 General Plan land use designations and those in the 2010-2035 General Plan.
 - Matrices of General Plan Elements and Other Regulatory Requirements. These Appendices include matrices that cross-reference the State-mandated elements and other regulatory requirements, such as those associated with Senate Bill 2 (SB2), Assembly Bill 32 (AB32) and Senate Bill 375 (SB375), with specific sections, policies and diagrams in the Plan.
 - Assumptions Appendices. These Appendices document the underlying development assumptions associated with land uses in the Plan for growth (such as persons per household, rate of development and the like) as well as the assumptions for the transportation networks.
 - Housing Element. This is the City's Housing Element for the current planning period, which is a technical document, consistent with State law requirements. It provides the basis for many of the residential land use policies found in Chapter 5.
 - Sustainability Goals and Policies Matrix. This Appendix includes a matrix of General Plan policies that correspond to the City's goals for sustainability and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Other Technical Appendices. Included in these Appendices are other documents, such as the noise analysis, historical resources inventory, heritage tree list, parks and open space resources inventory, and school district and facilities information.

- Acknowledgements. This identifies the primary contributors to the production of the General Plan document.

The Goals and Policies are organized from those with broad direction for a variety of land uses to those applying to more specific areas or situations in the City. Goals and Policies are numbered using the Section number, a designation as “Goal” or “Policy” and sequential numbering. For example, Downtown Focus Area Goals are labeled “5.4.2-G1”, “5.4.2-G2” and so on, while Downtown Focus Area Policies are labeled “5.4.2-P1”, “5.4.2-P2” and so on. Note that policies pertaining to public/quasi-public facilities and to parks, trails and open space are included in Section “5.9: Public Facilities and Services” as well as in Section “5.5: Neighborhood Compatibility Goal and Policies” as Discretionary Use Policies.

2.3 PROGRESSIVE GENERAL PLAN

2.3.1 Areas of Stability

Much of the City is not expected to change substantially over the three phases 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. Additionally, General Plan policies support compatibility between new development and existing neighborhoods in terms of scale, height and land use. The City benefits from private investments as a result of implementation of the Plan, including increased revenues from new development, as well as upgraded public facilities, transportation options and retail services. Areas of Stability are illustrated on Figure 2.3-1 in this Chapter.

2.3.2 Areas of Potential Development

Given that the City has virtually no vacant land, all new development will reuse existing underutilized properties for redevelopment. A preliminary market assessment of future land use demand, prepared as part of the analysis for the General Plan Update, identified future opportunities throughout the City for investment in residential, retail, entertainment, office, industrial and data center uses, when the economy supports such development. The Areas of Potential Development illustrated on Figure 2.3-1 in this Chapter were identified using this market analysis, in conjunction with an analysis of the redevelopment



potential for properties based on location and/or relatively low-intensity existing development. While not all of the sites will likely redevelop, the map indicates where new development is anticipated and acceptable. It is possible that by 2035, other, more recently-developed sites may also be ready for redevelopment or intensification. The designated land uses for new development are illustrated in Chapter 5, Figures 5.2-1, 5.2-2 and 5.2-3.

Potential development identified in the Plan includes both intensification under existing land use designations, as well as expansion of the allowed uses under those designations. Only the Downtown and Santa Clara Station Focus Areas and the new residential neighborhoods in the Future Focus Areas, north of the Caltrain right of way, incorporate significant land use designation changes from the prior General Plan.

Both the City's industrial and commercial areas are expected to change from lower to higher intensity development. North of the Caltrain corridor, the City's employment base is expected to expand through the intensification of office/research and development (R&D) uses. Specifically, the Bowers Avenue and San Tomas Expressway transportation corridors are targeted for higher-intensity employment centers. More moderate employment centers surround these corridors. Intensification of commercial uses and expanded opportunities for mixed uses are targeted for the areas along El Camino Real and Stevens Creek Boulevard. The areas included within the Downtown and Santa Clara Station Focus Areas combine new land uses with higher-intensity development in order to take advantage of proximity to transit. Chapter 5 provides more detail on the allowable development intensity for the various land use designations and for the Downtown and Santa Clara Station Focus Areas.



2.4 PLAN PHASES

The Plan is organized into three phases, reflecting near-, mid- and long-term horizons. Each phase includes changes in land uses and development intensities for specific areas. The goals and policies in Chapter 5: Goals and Policies, along with the associated Land Use and Mobility and Transportation Diagrams, include the requirements associated with each phase.

The primary objective for the three phases is to ensure that pressure for new development can be accommodated and supported by appropriate infrastructure and services. Over time, new economic, technological and social conditions may emerge that alter current assumptions about land use needs, compatibility and overall planning. To respond to these unknown factors, the Plan includes prerequisites as described in Section 2.5 and in Chapter 5. For example, as the City faces a new cycle of needs and conditions, General Plan strategies and objectives will be refined and reflected in subsequent phases. Through this iterative process, the Progressive General Plan will continue to preserve the high quality of life enjoyed in the City, encourage the preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods, promote public and private investment in jobs, housing, services and amenities, as well as reflect and support the Major Strategies defined in Chapter 4.

2.4.1 Phase I: 2010-2015

Phase I represents the short-term strategy for growth. It focuses on areas with new development opportunities, including new land use designations and implementation measures for 2010 to 2015. The end of this phase aligns with the next State-mandated housing element adoption cycle and incorporates housing 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 is to:

- 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 residential and commercial uses along El Camino Real, in Downtown, and in Santa Clara Station Area;
- 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, Monroe Street, and at Saratoga Avenue and Stevens Creek Boulevard.

2.4.2 Phase II: 2015-2025

Phase II represents the intermediate strategy for growth. It continues many of the policies defined in Phase I, including the 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 at the City's eastern boundary; and,
- Plan public facilities and services in tandem with new neighborhoods, including retail uses, parks and open space, utilities and other public facilities.

2.4.3 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:

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



2.5 PLAN PREREQUISITES

To address the potential effects of future growth and the associated increased demand for services, resources and changing technology, the Plan identifies intermediate steps, conditions and improvements as prerequisites for implementation of subsequent phases. The intent of these prerequisites is to allow logical planning for responsible growth, ensuring that the City maintains quality services and available resources for existing and future residents and businesses. Prerequisites for future phases will be refined, amended and added over time, as local and regional conditions, as well as technology, change. Prerequisites for phases of the Progressive General Plan are included in Chapter 5: Goals and Policies.

Prerequisites for each phase focus on a reassessment of the Plan prior to implementing the next phase. Through this process, assumptions for future development, as well as for supporting infrastructure and services, can be adjusted to meet changing conditions. An analysis of the fiscal implications for the City is also envisioned between each phase to help define appropriate land use and policy changes.

In addition to prerequisites that keep the Plan current, there are also prerequisites for public improvements. The purpose of these is to promote the concurrent development of facilities and services necessary for new residential and non-residential development. For example, new neighborhoods north of the Caltrain corridors will require comprehensive planning efforts prior to implementation of individual development proposals. This process will identify adequate infrastructure and services, access to transit, open space, recreation and retail and sufficient public facilities (such as parks, schools, libraries and utilities). Finally, transportation improvements to meet future demands of new development and changing priorities for alternate modes are also prerequisites for each phase. These prerequisites include criteria for roadway and intersection improvements, as well as for bicycle, transit and pedestrian facilities.