

Proposed General Plan Update Text



City Design Concepts

The City Design Concepts collectively guide the physical development of the City's Vision. Each of these concepts informs the Goals, Policies and Implementation Actions of the General Plan document and the attributes of the General Plan Land Use / Transportation Diagram. The concepts are interrelated and support one another, and the following text provides a description of each concept and describes its overall intent.

Focused Growth: Urban Villages and Corridors

The Urban Villages and Corridors concept creates a framework for most new job and housing growth to occur within walkable and bike friendly Urban Villages and Corridors that have good access to transit and other existing infrastructure and facilities. Building neighborhood-oriented Urban Villages will enhance established neighborhoods by integrating a mix of uses, including retail, food markets, offices, public services, housing, places of worship, public parks and plazas, within or adjacent to existing or emerging neighborhoods. Larger Regional Urban Villages will also function as complete destinations that integrate a mix of high density housing, employment, and services within existing key business areas to create dynamic urban settings. These Regional Villages serve a much larger area than just the immediately adjacent surrounding neighborhoods. The Corridors identified for growth will include uses and urban spaces similar to those promoted within Urban Villages, but in a more linear form. The Corridors also create a positive identity for San José by creating a consistent urban design character along the major roadways that connect San José's neighborhoods, regional hubs, neighboring cities and the Downtown.

(Additional description regarding employment/housing mix TBD based on Preferred Land Use Scenario)

Design Complete Streets for People

The City's roadways will be designed to be "Complete Streets" that are accessible and function well for everyone. A Complete Street provides safe, comfortable, attractive and convenient access and travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit users of all ages, abilities, and preferences. The design of a Complete Street considers the public right-of-way and the land uses and design of adjoining properties. To support and utilize Complete Street concepts, the City will establish and maintain a land use/transportation network and facilities that promote increased walking, bicycling, and public transit use.

Grand Boulevards

Although the goal of the City is that every street be a "Complete Street," five Grand Boulevards stand out as having great potential to connect City neighborhoods and to contribute to the City's overall identity through cohesive design. These five Grand Boulevards are the North First Street/Monterey Highway, Capitol Avenue/Capitol Expressway, Alum Rock/Santa Clara/The Alameda, San Carlos/Stevens Creek, and Meridian corridors. Because of their importance and location as major transportation routes, and because of the land uses they support, these Grand Boulevards play an important role in shaping the City's image for its residents, workers, and visitors and have the potential to act as major urban design elements at a citywide scale.

The Grand Boulevards require extra attention and improvement. Within the public right of way, special measures could include enhanced landscaping, additional attractive lighting, wider and comfortable sidewalks, and identification banners. For adjoining land uses, design standards will support cohesive and interesting urban development.

Main Streets

Main Streets are roadways that, in combination with the adjacent land uses, play an important role in defining the character and identity of the surrounding neighborhood. Neighborhood residents can enjoy the retail and other services provided along a Main Street, attend community events associated with the Main Street and identify the Main Street as an integral central spine of their neighborhood that is interconnected with the rest of the City's streets.

The Main Street's physical form supports many transportation modes, with significant emphasis given to public pedestrian facilities to facilitate interaction amongst members of the community while also serving as part of the citywide transportation network. Each Main Street may be different in character, and should reflect, with the adjacent land uses, the key characteristics of the adjacent neighborhoods. The City may develop special standards for both the public right-of-way and for the adjoining land uses for the City's Main Streets to support their function as urban corridors, providing high-quality pedestrian facilities and public spaces that are a primary component of the surrounding neighborhood identity.

Destination Downtown

Downtown San José is the cultural heart of San José and it provides employment, entertainment and cultural activities more intensely than in any other area of the City. The Downtown also consists of valuable historic resources, buildings with distinctive architecture and unique neighborhoods, where residents have convenient access to urban activities and amenities. As San Jose's largest and most vibrant urban area, Downtown contributes towards the positive identity of the city to the region, the nation and abroad.

Regional Transit Hubs

Regional Transit Hubs are locations within San José with unique access to major transit facilities of regional significance. Because these Hubs have a large public investment in transit facilities, the General Plan policies and Land Use / Transportation Diagram strongly direct that new job and housing growth occur at these locations at the highest feasible concentration and density. Recognizing their emerging roles as City gateways and primary public spaces, attention will be given to the design of new development within the Hub areas with careful consideration given to the formation of high-quality environments for public circulation and gathering.

Greenline / Urban Growth Boundary

The Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary defines the ultimate perimeter of urbanization in San José. Besides setting limits to urban development as a growth management and fiscal sustainability strategy, the Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary is intended to develop a clearer identity for San José by defining where urban development ends and by establishing policies to preserve valuable open space resources. The natural resources surrounding the area within the Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary are the inspiration for this concept.

The Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary demonstrates the strong, long-standing commitment of both the City of San José and the County of Santa Clara that urban development should only occur within the Urban Service Areas of cities where urban development can safely and reasonably be accommodated and where urban services can efficiently be provided. Lands outside of the Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary are identified as those that are intended to remain permanently rural in character and that should remain under the jurisdiction of the County. Both jurisdictions are committed to the success of this arrangement and will continue to develop and implement consistent land use plans and development policies for lands of mutual concern both within and outside of the Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary. This commitment is reflected in the Greenline/Urban Growth Boundary goals and policies of both General Plans.

A Fiscally Strong City

To provide high quality services to its residents, continue to create economic development, and thrive, it is critical that San José make wise fiscal policy decisions. San José will maintain a Fiscally Strong City, in part, by providing adequate land for uses that generate revenue for the City. San José will focus growth in developed areas where existing infrastructure (e.g., sewers, water lines, and transportation facilities), and City facilities and services (e.g., libraries, parks and public safety) are already available, resulting in maximum efficiency. The fiscal impact of potential land use and policy options will be given serious consideration prior to making a decision. Goals, policies, and implementation actions throughout the General Plan address this important concept.

Environmental Stewardship and Resource Conservation (Green House Gas Reduction)

To support the Environmental Leadership element of the General Plan Vision and the City's Green Vision, the General Plan contains multiple policies to support the implementation of environmental best practices. San José is a city designed, constructed, and operated to minimize waste, to efficiently use its natural resources, and to manage and conserve them for the use of present and future generations. San José acknowledges that it exists within both a regional and global environment. Its decisions regarding natural resources will have impacts outside the City's jurisdiction, and the decisions of others in the region and beyond will impact the City's ability to meet its future needs. San José strives to minimize its contribution to climate change while remaining adaptable to impacts from climate change. San José will encourage and participate in cooperative regional efforts intended to improve the quality of air and water and to conserve land, soil, water, energy and ecosystems such as San Francisco Bay, forests, riparian corridors, fisheries, grasslands, etc.

As the City's guide for growth and development, the General Plan is a unique tool to shape the growth of the City to minimize impacts on resource consumption, reduce the city's contribution to global warming and to preserve and enhance the city's natural environment.

Design for a Healthy Community

The “Design for a Healthy Community” concept crosses through a very broad range of topics, and “Design for a Healthy Community” strategies are integrated throughout the General Plan so that it lays a policy framework to shape and grow a city that provides for the physical health of its residents. General Plan policies support good nutrition and healthy air and water, protect the community from human-made and natural hazards and disasters, provide for economic opportunities that meet the needs of all residents, and provide for the equitable distribution of public resources, including public health facilities, throughout the City.

To further the Healthy City Concept, the Land Use / Transportation Diagram, and the goals and policies related to Quality Neighborhoods, Urban Villages, Urban Design, Complete Streets, and Transportation, encourage physical activity by creating “complete” communities where most of ones’ daily needs can be met walking or biking on safe and convenient paths and routes . The Parks, Trails, Open Space, and Recreation policies also encourage activity by promoting good and convenient access to a large and diverse variety of parks, trails and recreations facilities for all City residents.

As a key factor that encourages the health of its residents, the Land Use/Transportation Diagram, the Quality Neighborhoods policies, and the Land Use policies address improving access to healthful foods, particularly fresh produce. To this end, the General Plan also supports the development of urban agriculture, and the preservation of the existing agricultural lands adjacent to San Jose to increase the supply of locally-grown, healthful foods.