

## **SANTA CLARA GENERAL PLAN**

### **GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING SUMMARY**

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Meeting Date: October 5, 2009

Location: Santa Clara City Hall

Attendees:

**Steering Committee Members Present:**

Joe Kornder, Co-Chair  
Jamie McLeod, Co-Chair  
Dixie Baus  
Michele Beasley  
Ian Champeny  
Ray Hashimoto  
Joe Head  
Teresa O'Neill  
Cynthia Owens  
Kevin Park  
Alice Pivacek  
Andy Ratermann  
Ed Richards

**City Staff:**

Kevin Riley  
Carol Anne Painter  
Julie Moloney  
Alexander Abbe  
Gian P. Martire

**Dyett & Bhatia, Consultants:**

Jean Eisberg

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### **MEETING OBJECTIVES**

- Discuss issues related to: Discretionary Use, Transition, and Historic Preservation Policies.
- Provide input on how to approach these issues in the General Plan.

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **I. Welcome and Announcements (Co-Chair Kornder)**

Co-Chair Kornder welcomed Committee members and described the agenda of the meeting.

#### **II. Discussion of Draft Annotated Outline Sections Related to Discretionary Uses, Transition, and Historic Preservation (Carol Anne Painter)**

Ms. Painter asked Committee members to review the policies provided in the meeting packet and provide feedback.

##### *Discretionary Use Policies*

Discretionary use policies are applicable under specific conditions when a use or intensity other than the one specified on the Land Use Diagram can conform to the General Plan without the need for a General Plan amendment. These policies focus on flexibility to address unique situations, such as small lots, historic resource preservation, or affordable housing. These discretionary policies are supplementary and do not exempt development projects from other applicable policies, such as those related to transitions and environmental quality.

For example, the City could provide incentives for consolidating parcels, which, in turn, could allow more efficient development options.

### *Transition Policies*

Transition policies are applicable to sites where new development is proposed under a land use classification that varies from that of adjacent development. For example, review of development on a site on El Camino Real designated Community Mixed Use adjacent to properties designated Low Density Residential would be subject to Transition, Mixed use and El Camino Real Focus Area policies as well as those related to infrastructure, public facilities, parks, and the environment. General Plan policies are “added together” to meet neighborhood compatibility objectives.

### *Discussion of Discretionary Use and Transition Policies*

The Steering Committee discussed neighborhood compatibility, including Discretionary and Transition Policies, and \ Historic Preservation Policies. The meeting focused on General Plan policies; a separate meeting on process, including implementation measures, City procedures, and public input, will be scheduled with the Zoning Code Update, tentatively in Summer 2010.

- Site design should address the context. For example, a commercial property surrounded on two sides by residential uses should have different requirements than if it were completely surrounded by commercial uses.
- Compatibility should be defined in terms of existing use, zoning, or the General Plan designation.
- Consider height limits and privacy for residential units.
- The cost burden should apply to new development to ensure light, air, and breezes for livability, gardens, and public health. The character and mass are more important than the precise heights. Effective public input from the affected residents is important.
- Criteria for different neighborhoods should be based on their unique needs.
- Appropriate transition landscaping and permeable pavers can help manage stormwater and ensure health of trees.
- Development that obstructs emergency access should be prohibited.
- Flexibility of policies needs to also provide predictability for developers and community members.
- Standards and policies that are essential and non-negotiable should be transparent.
  - Green building (and other desired amenities) should have incentives for: Meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Build It Green or equivalent green building standards in order to allow for tradeoffs (e.g. more area for building in exchange for reduced parking area).
  - Green building, especially for high density developments, could be required.
- Alternatives to encourage more open space could include:

- A model or program to provide open space and related amenities in exchange for a density and/or intensity bonus.
- Courtyards and private balconies in multi-family buildings to ensure both private and common open spaces.
- Open space could be created by reducing or disallowing higher density development or new development altogether.
- The City could purchase land to develop open spaces and other public amenities and provide safe and protected neighborhood streets for children to walk along.

### *Historic Preservation Policies*

Ms. Painter introduced the list of 325 historic resources mapped in the meeting packet. Policies are divided into three types:

- Restrictions/allowances for properties with historic resources..
- Development criteria for properties proximate to a historic resource..
- Requirements for protecting cultural and archeological resources. For properties near historic resources, staff evaluated the concept for an “area of sensitivity,” or a 100-foot buffer around resources to ensure that new development in proximity to historic resources is compatible with adjacent historic resources.

To assist the Committee discussion, Ms. Painter described the local regulatory process. The General Plan establishes big picture policies. The Zoning Ordinance applies standards to implement Plan policies. The Historical & Landmarks Commission may adopt other standards that add another layer of specificity. Finally, staff and decision-makers may apply conditions during the development and environmental review process.

### *Discussion of Historic Preservation Policies*

- Various neighborhoods need different policies and regulations. There must be clarity and flexibility in the policy and procedure system.
- Historic resources in the Old Quad are not consistently regulated. There are various heights and styles.
- The General Plan should encourage information dissemination (e.g. maps, tours, descriptions) about historic resources through the City’s website and local TV. The Historical & Landmarks Commission has a tour map.
- Building markers, plaques, and other signage should be clearly visible.
- The Zoning Ordinance should grandfather historic properties for elements such as setbacks and height that do not comply with current standards. This will encourage property owners to make improvements without risking additional fees or consequences.
- Approval process should be streamlined for rehabilitating historic resources to incentivize improvements and avoid the need for variances.
- Available information could include:

- Building standards and regulations (i.e. what property owners can and cannot do).
- Outline of the process to getting historic properties designated or undesignated.
- Identification of a property within the 100-foot buffer areas (e.g. through a web-based mapping database).
- A 100-foot buffer may be too small, particularly when new developments have consolidated lots and/or are proposing large structures.
- The boundaries of the Old Quad need to be defined.
- Archaeological resources have not necessarily been evaluated. These resources can be disturbed during demolition and construction. The City could expand policies for protection of these resources even though the sites are confidential.
- Parks that include historic sites, such as Mission Library and Mansion Grove, should be preserved.

### **III. Public Comments**

- Policies need flexibility in transitions between residential properties and all other uses. The affected neighborhood should have a primary say in the decision about what happens in these neighborhoods. The goal should be to preserve quality of life with no additional noise impacts or light pollution, and no reduction in views, privacy, or sunlight access. The City needs new decision criteria. Because historic resources are a proven economic resource and are scarce, they should be preserved.
- Public input and affected neighbors should be included early in the process. The City should consider not just what is on the property, but where the property is located (e.g. its proximity to traffic, parking, and noise impacts).
- The City should provide a central location on its website for notifications of projects, meetings, etc.
- The South Forest Neighborhood Association was able to work with the Lexus dealership on Stevens Creek Boulevard to propose a project that was compatible with the neighborhood. Such plans need to consider landscaping, traffic, and access routes.
- Old Quad homes are prohibitive to rehabilitate because of the expense and red tape. The City needs to help facilitate this process.

### **IV. Conclusions**

Co-Chair Kornder thanked the Committee members and City staff for their input and effort throughout the process.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The tentative October 15, 2009 Steering Committee meeting will NOT be held. A Steering Committee meeting will be held early 2010 (February or March) to review the Draft General Plan. Following that meeting, a joint meeting between the City Council, Planning Commission, and Steering Committee will be held. Then, other City boards and commissions, and public agencies will have an opportunity to review the Draft Plan. A Steering Committee meeting is targeted for the summer of 2010 to discuss process and procedures, in the context of the Zoning Code Update.