



**City Council**  
January 13, 2026

**Item #8 RTC 26-1542  
Study Session on the  
Santa Clara Station  
Area Specific Plan**

**Afshan Hamid**  
Director of Community Development

1

## Introductions

### CITY STAFF

**Afshan Hamid**  
Director, Community Development

**Lesley Xavier**  
Planning Manager, Community Development

**Rebecca Bustos**  
Principal Planner, Community Development

### VTA STAFF

**Melissa Cerezo**  
Transit-Oriented Communities Program Manager

**Robert Swierk**  
Principal Transportation Planner

### CONSULTANT TEAM

**James Stickley**  
WRT, Principal-in- Charge

**Deeksha Rawat**  
WRT, Project Manager


**Dena Belzer**  
Strategic Economics, Market + Economics

2

2

## General Plan Focus Area

Santa Clara Station Area Focus Area



**City of Santa Clara**  
The Center of What's Possible

### Focus Area Overview


- *Purpose: Encourage improvements and new development tailored to the character and quality of these areas.*
- Near Term Focus Areas:
  - El Camino Real: mix of land uses
  - Stevens Creek Boulevard corridor: mix of land uses
  - Santa Clara Downtown: shopping, eating & entertainment
  - **Santa Clara Station Area: greater mobility and expand accessibility to jobs**
- 2022: City entered into a Cooperative Agreement with VTA to define the working relationship.
- December 2022 & April 2023: 11 member Station Area Task Force appointed by Council
- 2023: RFP Process and WRT selected for expertise around station areas.

3

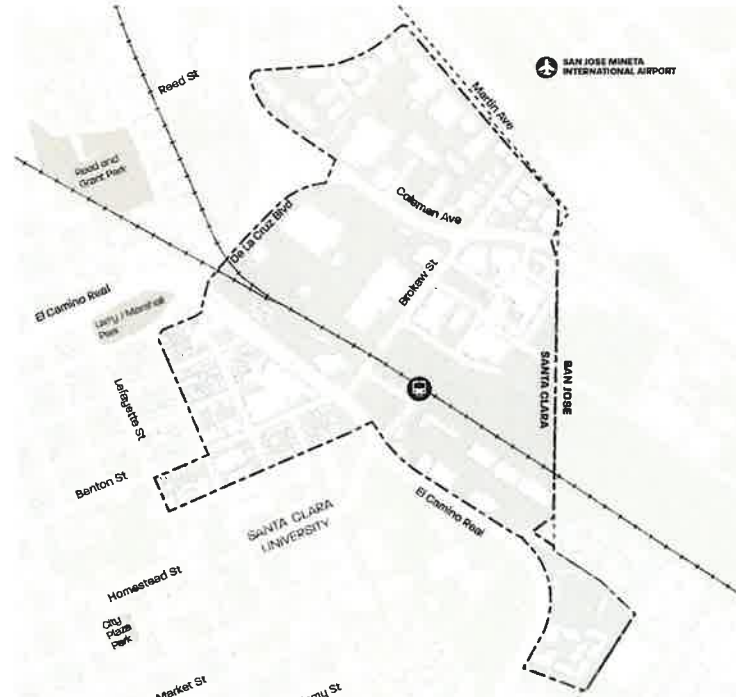
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## General Plan Focus Area

Santa Clara Station Area Boundary Map



**City of Santa Clara**  
The Center of What's Possible

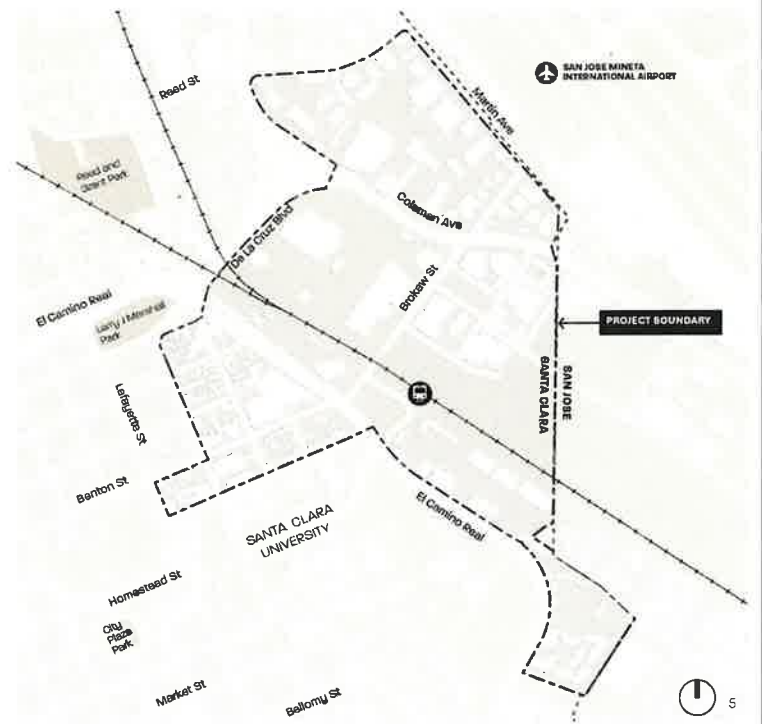


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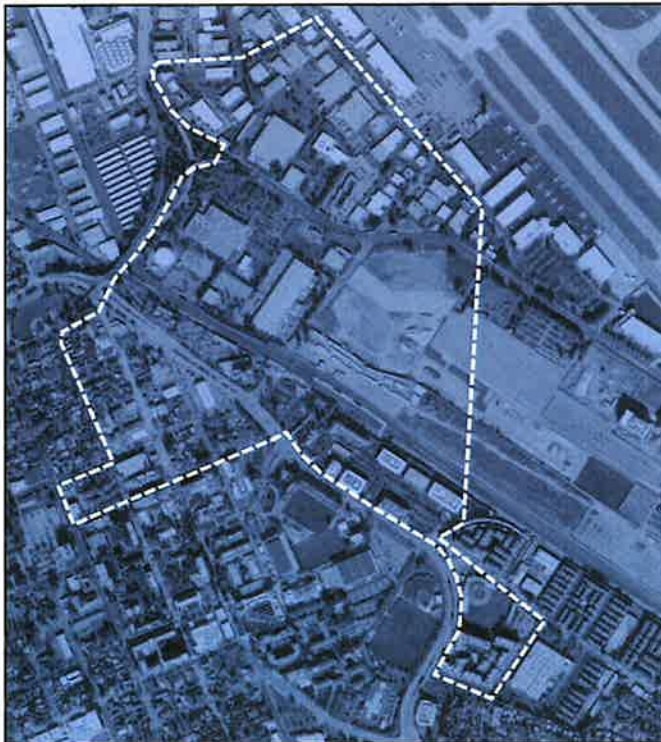
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## Objectives of the Station Area Specific Plan

- Addressing the evolving needs of the community
- Aligning with VTA/MTC TOC goals and VTA policies
- Building a community vision for a vibrant transit hub
- Guiding future investment in the area
- Advancing Santa Clara General Plan 2035 goals
- Promote multi-modal transportation and connectivity
- Compliance with the Climate Action Plan



5



## Agenda

1. Vision & Guiding Framework
2. Community Outreach
3. Preferred Development Concept
4. District Development + Economic Vitality
5. Placemaking + Public Realm
6. Planning Commission Feedback
7. Next Steps + Questions

6

6

## City of Santa Clara & VTA Partnership

- **Project Lead: City of Santa Clara**
  - Project lead
  - Day-to-day project management of consultant
  - City Council study sessions and reviews
  - City Council decision and Plan adoption
- **Project Partner: VTA**
  - Funding partner
  - Procurement and contract management of consultant
  - Strategy partner on development of Plan
  - VTA Board of Directors review of draft and final Plan



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## VTA's Roles and Policies in Land Use & Transportation

- Congestion Management Agency / Transportation Agency for Santa Clara County
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Program

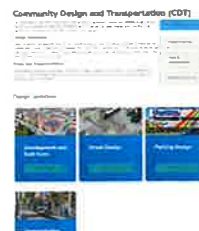
[VTA Land Use & Development Review Policy, updated February 2025](#)



[VTA Transit-Oriented Communities Policy, updated January 2024](#)



[VTA Community Design & Transportation Manual of Best Practices, updated 2023](#)



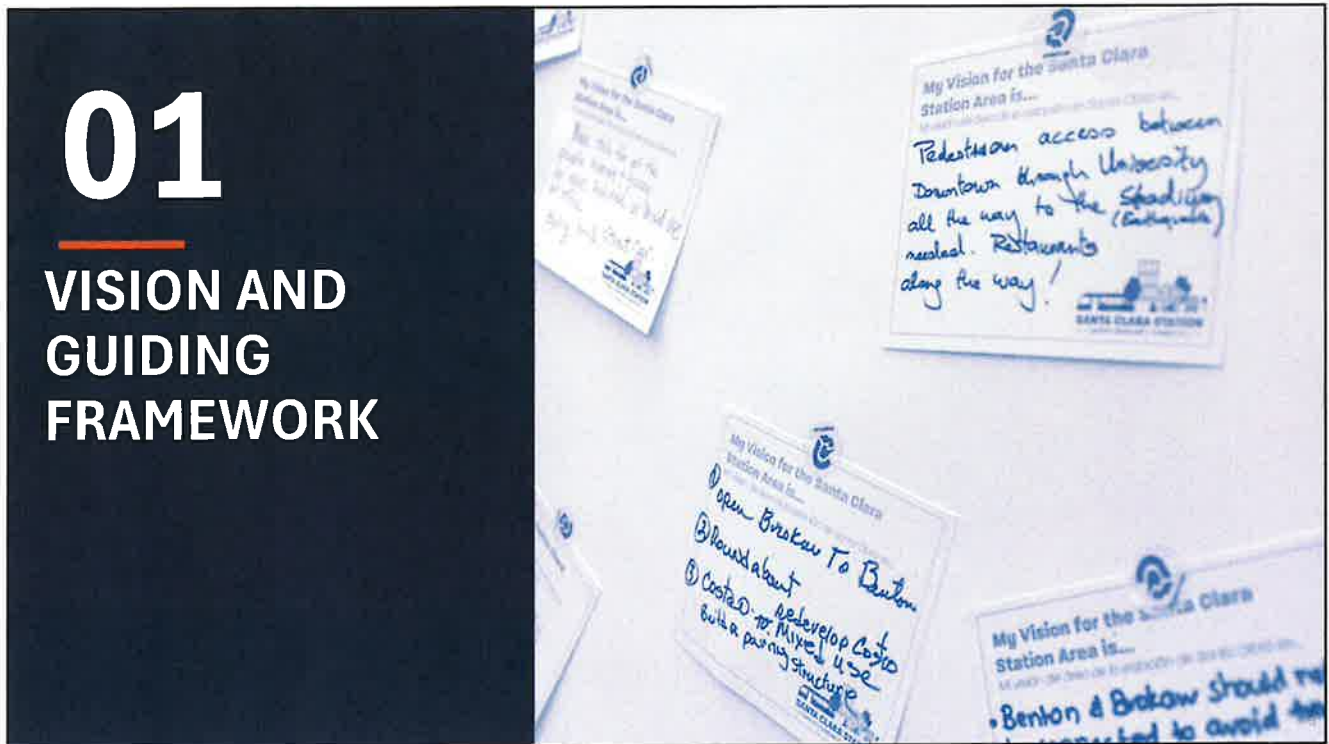
[Santa Clara BART Station Area Playbook, 2019](#)



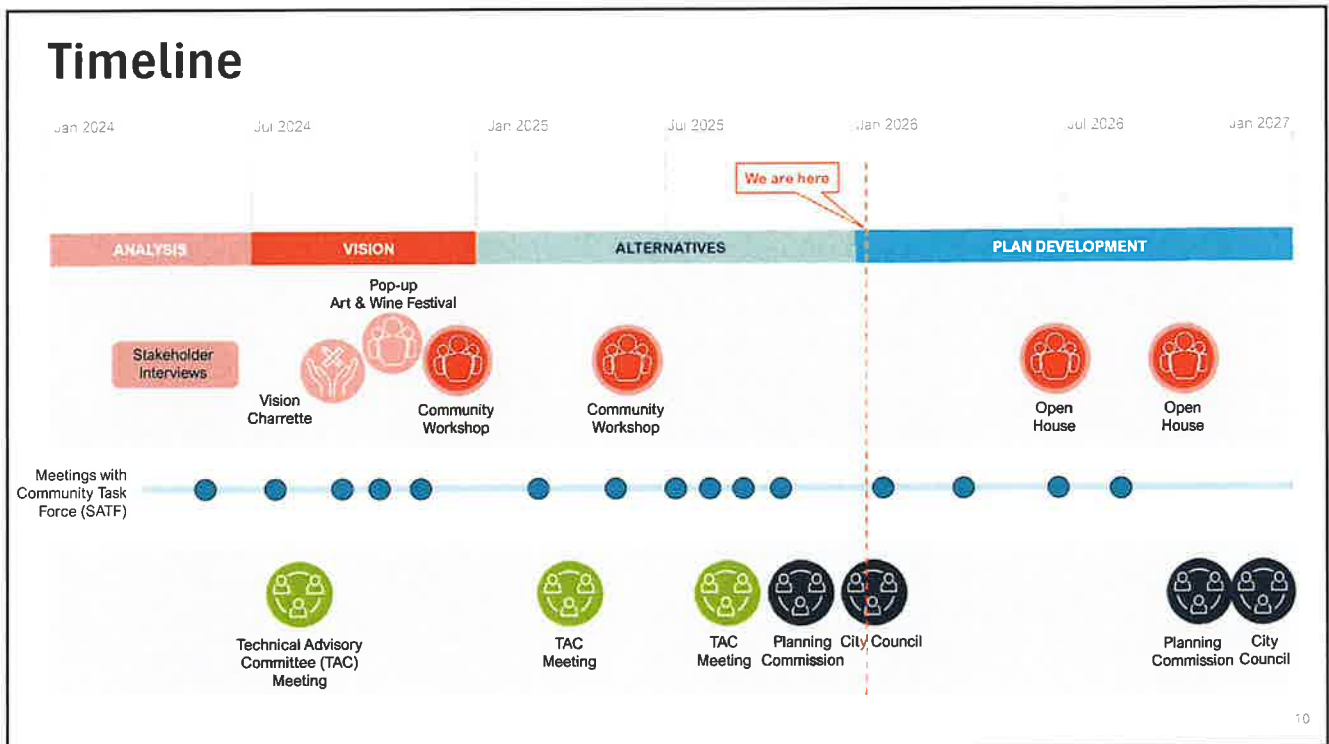
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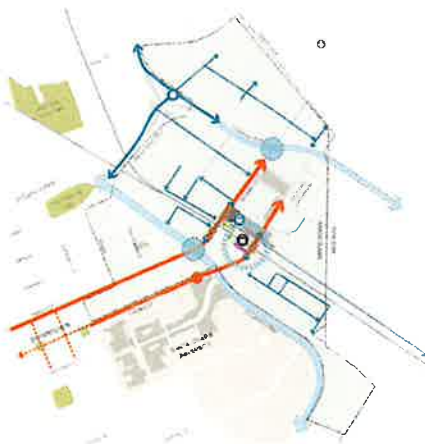
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## Draft Vision Statement

“The Station Area will be a **vibrant, transit-oriented district** that leverages regional transit to build a **thriving, walkable, accessible community** unique to Santa Clara. Grounded in equity, the Station Area will **prioritize diverse housing, inclusive mobility, and economic opportunity**, fostering a strong sense of place through thoughtful design that builds upon Santa Clara’s distinctive cultural and ecological heritage. Sustainable, climate-conscious infrastructure will enhance resilience, positioning the district as a **future-ready, flourishing neighborhood.**”

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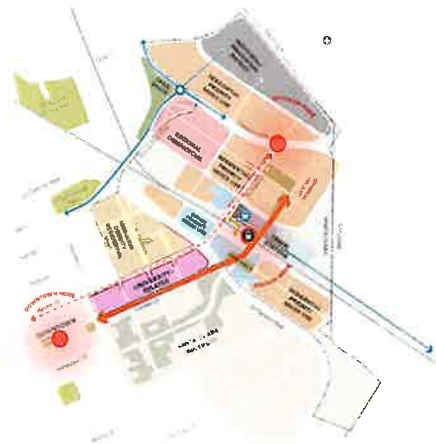
## Development Framework



**Mobility + Connectivity  
Opportunities**



**Placemaking +  
Public Realm Opportunities**



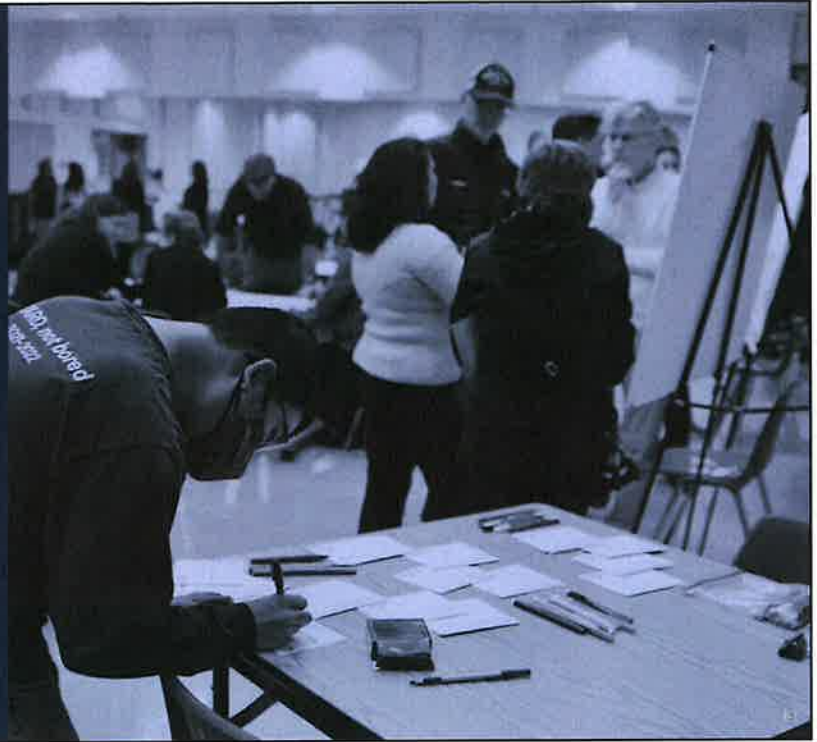
**District Development +  
Economic Vitality Opportunities**

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12

# 02

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



13

## Community Engagement

1. **Stakeholder interviews**  
7 interviews, including mobility partners, Santa Clara University, and affordable housing developers.
2. **Station Area Task Force (SATF)**  
13 meetings held
3. **Property owners meeting**  
Virtual meeting, November 12, 2024.
4. **Community workshop 1**  
Station Area Visioning, November 13, 2024
5. **Pop-up event**  
Art and Wine Festival, Sept 2024
6. **Visioning charrette**  
Collaboration between City department representatives, SATF and VTA.
7. **Community workshop 2 (virtual)**  
Preferred Concept selection, May 15, 2025  
Up to 70 participants.



14

## Key Community Priorities

### Mobility and Connectivity

- Safer pedestrian crossings along El Camino Real and near Caltrain
- Separated bike lanes, potentially buffered by trees and safe student routes
- Better last-mile connections (shuttles, bus, micromobility)
- Bike/ped bridges or underpasses across tracks
- Maintain some parking near the historic depot for visitors

### Placemaking and Public Realm

- Wide, shaded, green, and well-lit sidewalks
- Active plazas and gathering spaces with art and amenities
- Restrooms, seating, and senior-friendly design
- Connections to nearby parks and family-oriented spaces
- Civic or community uses that add identity and activity

### District Development and Economic Vitality

- Mix of mid- and high-rise housing near transit
- Retail that complements, rather than competes with, Downtown.
- Housing opportunities along Coleman Ave and Reed St / De La Cruz Blvd
- Some industrial property owners want flexibility to continue current uses without redevelopment pressure
- Retain Costco, potentially integrated with a future mixed-use development

15

15

## Upcoming Community Engagement

### 1. Public Scoping Meeting *(Winter 2025)*

Kick off the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process as required under CEQA and gather early input on the scope of analysis.

### 2. Open House #1 *(Summer 2026)*

Coincides with the public release of the Draft Plan and Draft EIR (DEIR).

### 3. Open House #2 *(Fall 2026)*

Held prior to Planning Commission and City Council adoption hearings.

### 4. Social Media Campaigns *(ongoing)*

Ongoing social media campaigns will be used to inform the community about the release of the public draft and to publicize open house events.

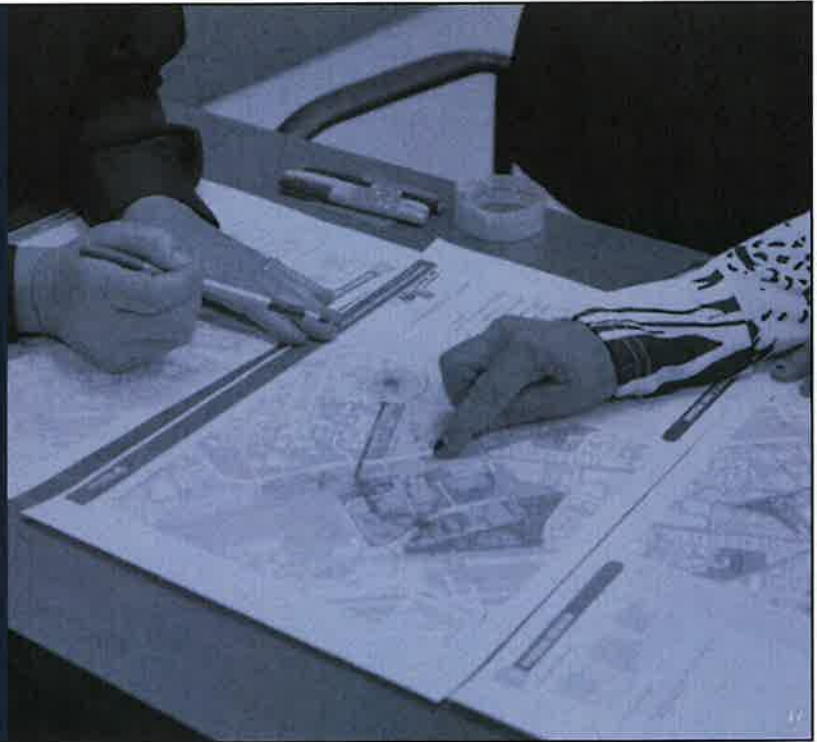
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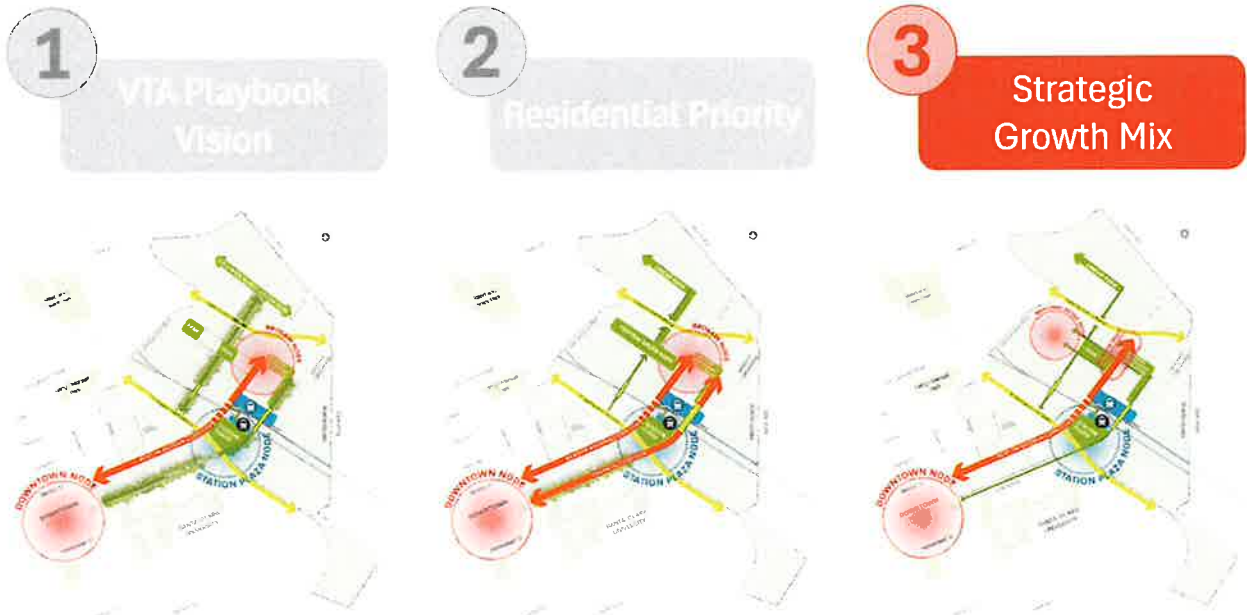
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## PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT



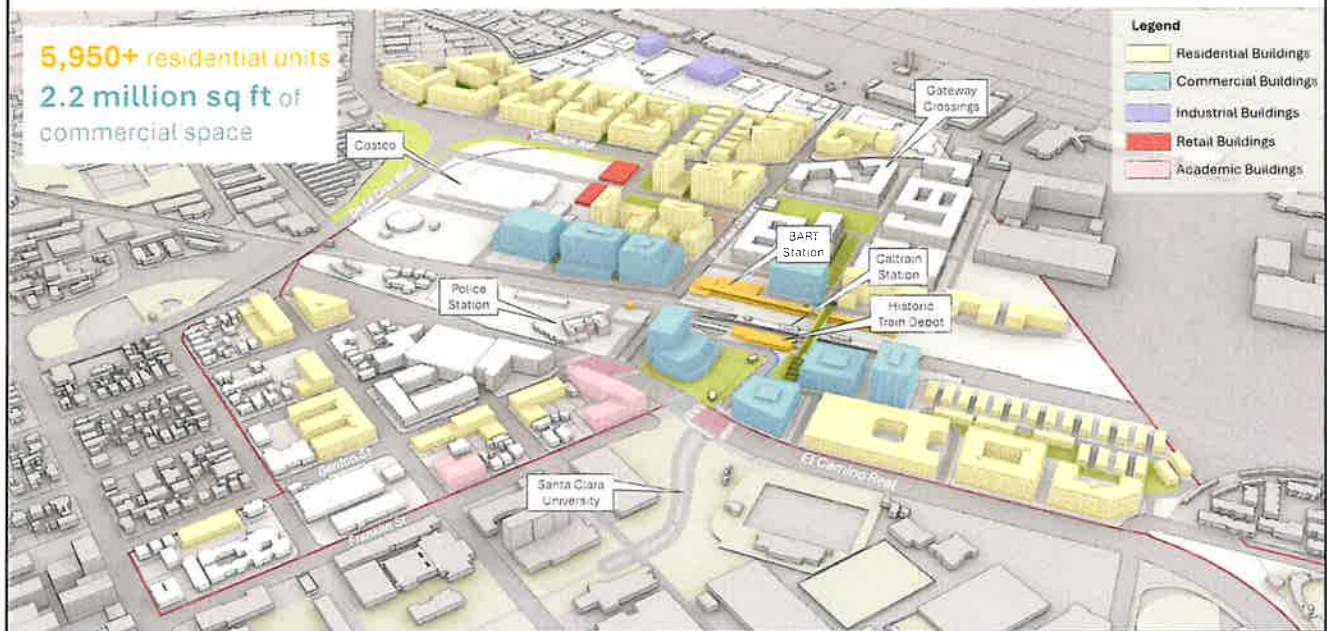
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### Preferred Concept



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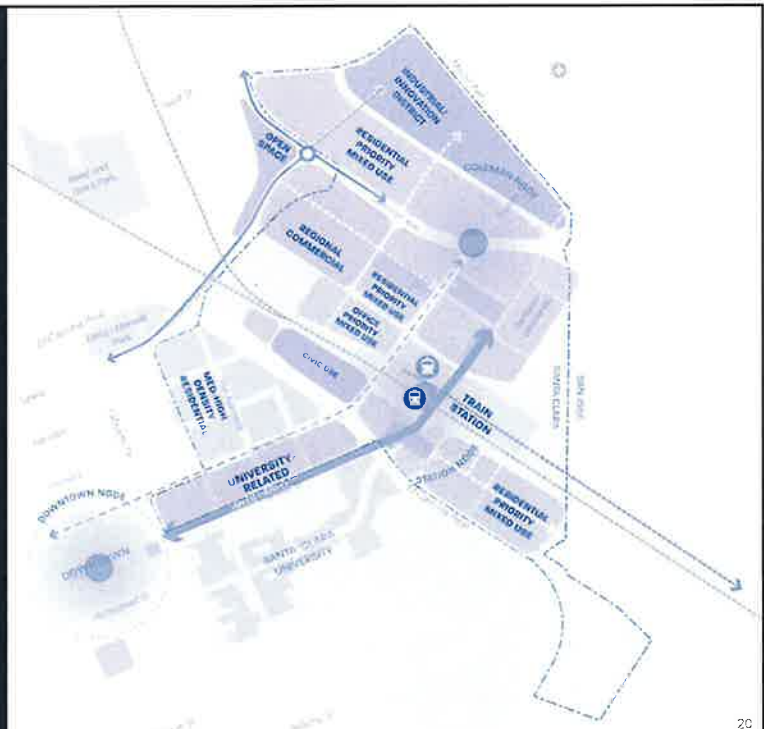
## Preferred Development Concept



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# 04

## DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT + ECONOMIC VITALITY

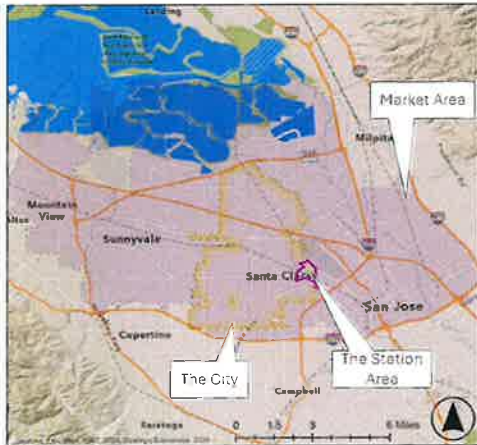


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## Real Estate Market Update & Opportunities

### Three Geographies Studied to Capture Demand/Supply Dynamics



- Despite job layoffs and stories about people leaving California, the Bay Area remains the global center for tech innovation.
- The region has had more venture investment in AI than any other place in the world.
- The AI investment is driving demand for more innovation in the semiconductor industry

**Office** is starting to stabilize. This reflects some pruning of older supply. Demand for new Class A space is very robust. Rents have increased over the past year, but so have vacancy rates

**Multifamily Residential** (does not include townhouses) had a strong year in 2025. Construction will likely slow in 2026 due to market uncertainty but will resume if interest rates continue dropping and employment stabilizes or starts to expand.

**Industrial** demand remains strong for industrial space with rents increasing and vacancy rates decreasing. This is contrary to regional trends where industrial demand has slowed due to a slowdown in demand for logistics space.

**Retail** is flat with no new construction. Leasing activity is focused on commercial space in mixed use buildings where tenants tend to be cafes, fast casual dining, fitness and wellness, and other personal services, larger projects may have a grocery store.

**Hotel** has been significantly impacted by a decline in business travel.

21

21

## Real Estate Market Update & Opportunities

### Multifamily and “Shopfront” Retail



**Multifamily** rents in the Station Area are **13 percent** higher than rents per sq in Santa Clara, proving that the Station Area is already a proven location for dense housing projects.

*(This only includes multifamily buildings with 20 units or more)*



Ground floor shop space is not fully leased up and retail tenants are consistent with the larger market area trends with cafés and personal service type businesses

### Office



The Area's office market has **low rents**, but **vacancy rates are lower** than for the City or the market area, showing that there is evolving demand for this location.

The best market opportunity for office development is to begin to merge the Station Area's identity with the Coleman Highline Business Park, which is demonstrating that modern high-quality office space is in demand.

The **Coleman Highline Business Park** is fully leased, **rents are higher** than the market area average, and tenants include Roku, Byte Dance, TikTok, and Yahoo.

22

22



## Real Estate Market Update & Opportunities

### Industrial



The older industrial buildings in the Station Area have **potential for adaptive reuse or redevelopment**.

Tech companies are expanding their **research and development activity** in Santa Clara in part because of the City's competitively priced power.

Having ready access to power and the supportive regulatory environment created by the Station Area Specific Plan may be a sufficient incentive for tech companies or investors to consider development of more R&D innovation space in the area.

### Hotel



**Hotel occupancy rates** in the Station Area are **creeping back up** and now appear to be on par or slightly better than occupancy rates in the City

In addition to the events at Levi Stadium geared to an international audience, PayPal Stadium is also increasing its regional visibility, which will also help the hotel market in the station area

However, the **lack of business travelers** is **hampering new hotel construction** across the region and new hotel investment in the Station Area may lag behind more office development

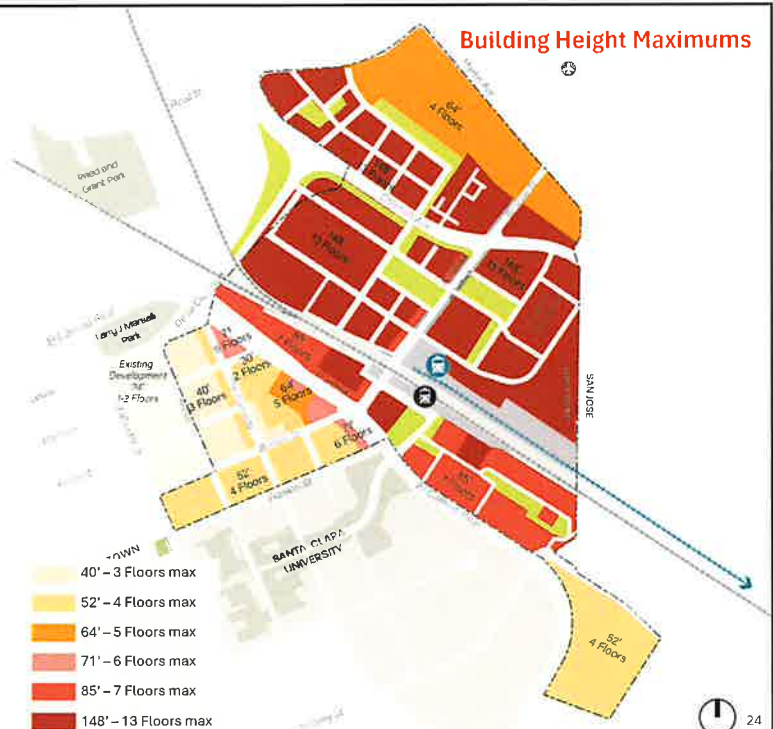
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## Regulating Building Heights

### Residential Building Tower Regulations

1. To provide adequate sunlight and air to streets and open spaces, a minimum distance of **100 feet** must be preserved between all structures above 85 feet in height at all levels above 85 feet in height.
2. The maximum diagonal building length for portions of a building above 85 feet shall be **200 feet**.
3. Limit the maximum residential tower floorplate above the seventh floor to **12,000 square feet** to promote slender towers and reduce bulk.
4. The tower component of a build (height about 85 feet) shall not exceed **80 percent** of the block front.











24

24



## Active Frontages

-  Activity Node/ Corridor Opportunity
-  Retail Ready Frontages
-  Retail Frontages
-  Future BART Station
-  BART Line
-  Rail Corridor
-  San Jose Airport
-  Santa Clara Station



25

# 05

## PLACEMAKING + PUBLIC REALM



26

## Public Space Network

Park Space Added – 11.8 acres

Community Recreation Center – 47,000 sq ft

- Proposed Parks
- Proposed Trails/buffers
- Existing Parks/Open Spaces

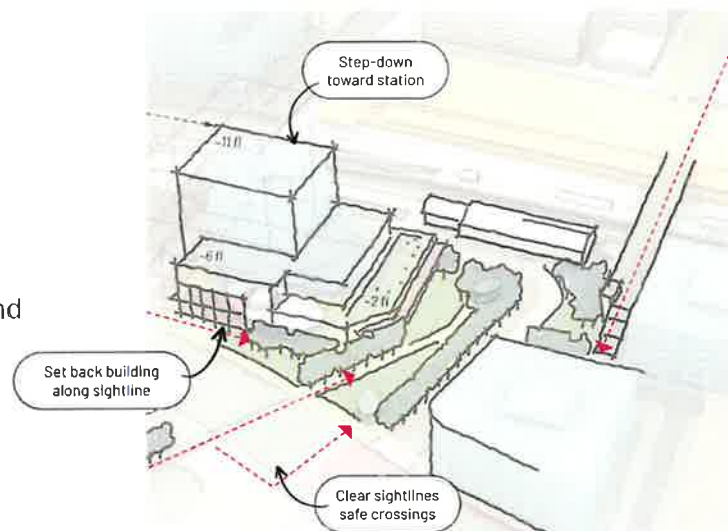


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## Station Plaza Design Objectives

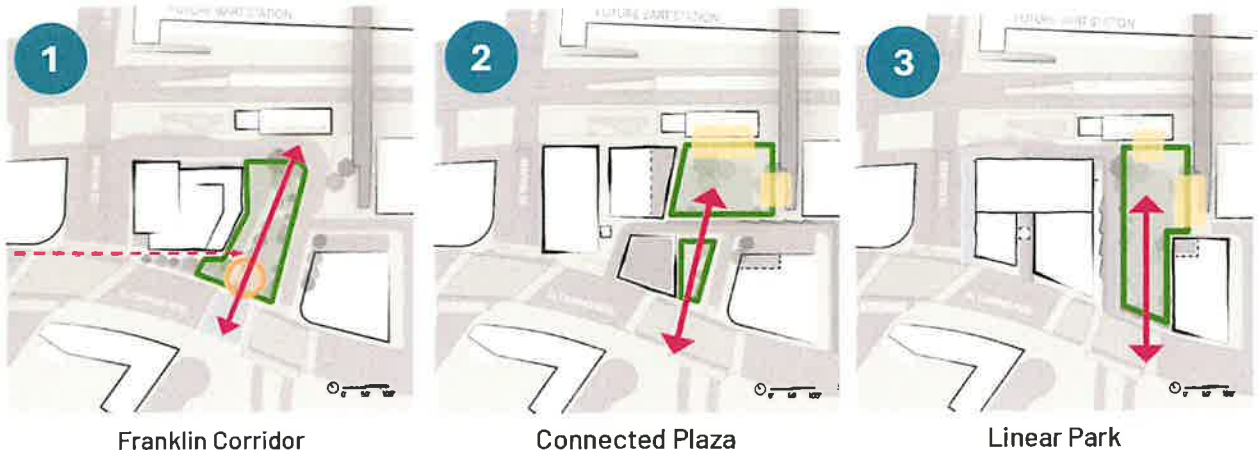
1. Connect People and Modes
2. Create a Strong Sense of Arrival
3. Celebrate Heritage
4. Activate and Humanize the Plaza
5. Leverage Unique Transit-oriented Development Opportunity on Public Land
6. Foster Community Life
7. Advance Sustainability



28

28

# Station Plaza Flexible Design Approach



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# Station Plaza Sketch

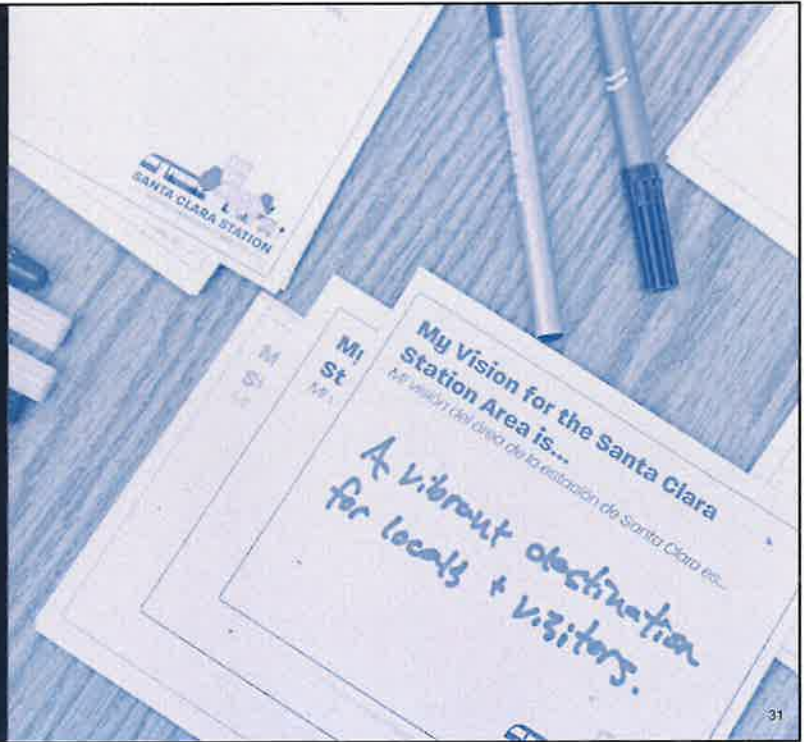


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# 06

## PLANNING COMMISSION FEEDBACK



31

## Planning Commission Study Session Feedback

October 8, 2025

- Potential development impacts on airport operations—and airport constraints on future development
- Traffic circulation challenges and congestion issues along Coleman Avenue
- Optimal size, function, and programming of the station plaza
- Consider a bolder design and vision

32

32



# 07

## Senate Bill 79



33

## Senate Bill 79

### Summary

- **Effective date:** July 1, 2026
- **Purpose:** SB 79 overrides local density limits to allow high-density housing development within one-half mile of qualifying transit stops (including Caltrain, BART, and VTA) in counties such as Santa Clara County where there is significant existing transit infrastructure

34

34

## SB 79

By-Right High-Density Housing Near Train Stations

Tier 1: Heavy Rail & High-Freq. Commuter Rail [Santa Clara Station; Lawrence Station]

Tier 2: Light Rail & Lower-Freq. Commuter Rail  
[4 VTA Stations along Tasman Drive]

35

35

## SB 79

Type of Stop	Distance	Density*	Max Height	FAR
Tier 1	0	30 - 160	95'	4.5
	≤ ¼ mi	30 - 120	75'	3.5
	¼ - ½ mi	30 - 100	65'	3.0
Tier 2	0	30 - 120	85'	4.0
	≤ ¼ mi	30 - 100	65'	3.0
	¼ - ½ mi	30 - 80	55'	2.5

\* prior to density bonuses

36

36

## **SB 79 cont'd**

### Requirements

Must have at least 5 du

If mixed-use, 2/3 of sf must be residential

Max unit size: 1750 sf

37

37

## **SB 79 cont'd**

Affordability: 7% ELI, 10% VLI, or 13% Low

Labor: prevailing wage, skilled workforce if > 85' h

Applies to residential, mixed-use & commercial sites

Process to exempt certain sites, if alt sites designated &  
*approved by HCD by July 1, 2026*

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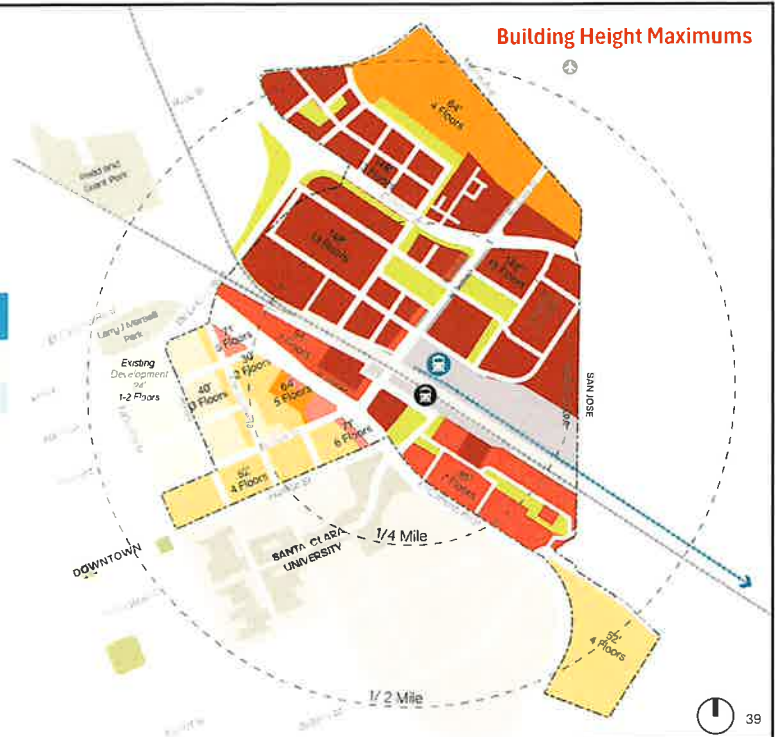
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## SB 79 Radius

Degree of upzoning depends on the classification of the transit and the distance from the station, as measured from the pedestrian access points.

Distance from TOD Stop	Minimum Height Requirement	Residential Density (du/ac)
Directly Adjacent Sites (≤ 200 ft)	95 ft (75 + 20 ft bonus)	160 du/ac (120 + 40 bonus)
Within ¼ Mile	≥ 75 ft	≥ 120 du/ac
¼ – ½ Mile	≥ 65 ft	≥ 100 du/ac

40' – 3 Floors max
52' – 4 Floors max
64' – 5 Floors max
71' – 6 Floors max
85' – 7 Floors max
148' – 13 Floors max



39

# NEXT STEPS

- CEQA – Environmental Impact Report
- PC/CC Study Sessions
- Adoption: Winter 2026
- Contract Ends: January 2027

40

40



# QUESTIONS?

Requesting feedback on:

- Draft Vision Statement
- Preferred Plan
- Building Heights Approach
- Station Plaza Objectives

41

41

# THANK YOU!

42

42



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