



Major Strategies

The seven Major Strategies, defined in the community planning process in 2008, are presented in this Chapter. These provide the foundation for decisions in the coming years by the City Council, the City Planning Commission, other City commissions and boards, and City staff. These Strategies are the basis for the goals and policies in the General Plan. In this context, each Strategy is a focal point of community interest and, used together, they create the foundation for civic priorities and a framework to support decisions that will shape the future development and growth of the City of Santa Clara. The Major Strategies should be considered and applied in concert in order to reinforce the purposes of this General Plan. Each Strategy is described below. One or more is evident within each of the goals, policies and implementation programs articulated in the General Plan, providing the basis for City actions.



4.1 ENHANCE THE CITY'S HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE



Santa Clara's high quality of life is defined by opportunities for recreation and open space, as well as by well-established residential neighborhoods and strong employment core. Maintaining and building upon these elements will continue the City's high quality of life for future residents.

The City's high quality of life is available to residents, workers and visitors. The Plan ensures that existing and new neighborhoods have access to a full complement of services, including parks, stores and other amenities for everyday living. New residential neighborhoods are focused at locations that do not impact existing neighborhoods, with an emphasis on access to existing and future transit. Comprehensive planning for new neighborhoods in the Future Focus Areas will address connections to employment centers, open space and neighborhood retail. Walkability is a key component. The General Plan encourages sidewalks and streetscape improvements, connections through large sites as they redevelop, urban design to facilitate pedestrian movement, safety and visibility and appropriate transitions between varying uses. Improved transit, bicycle and trail networks will also enhance connections throughout the City.

The Santa Clara Community enjoys a high quality of life relative to many places in the region and the State due to factors such as geographic location, climate and availability of resources. Affordable and high quality services and amenities, like utilities, parks, libraries, roads and public safety, are available for citizens everyday in Santa Clara. Over many years, decisions by civic leaders and actions by citizens and the business community, past and present, have created the conditions that define the attractiveness of this City. Looking into the future, City decisions and investments should protect and enhance those very benefits that reflect this high quality of life.

City residents, workers and visitors have a wide variety of interests and not everyone takes advantage of all community assets. Maintaining and enhancing the quality of life should, however, be applied with all interests in mind. This Major Strategy promotes:

- High quality, affordable City services and utilities;
- Broad variety of cultural and recreational facilities and amenities;
- High quality educational opportunities; strong civic/education partnerships;
- Convenient and comprehensive retail services;
- Economic vitality that provides jobs and revenues; and,

- Safe, effective and convenient access and mobility around the City.

The ability to maintain and enhance these amenities will rely upon efficient and prudent use of City revenues, partnerships with school districts and other local agencies, and good choices in development opportunities over time. Land use decision-making will need to ensure that projects, most of which will replace existing older uses, contribute both economically and socially to the community in return for the benefits that will be enjoyed by becoming a part of Santa Clara. Santa Clara has been successful since its incorporation in 1852 by not only preserving the important resources of its past, but also by embracing the future through new urban development that enriches the City's social fabric.

4.2 PRESERVE AND CULTIVATE NEIGHBORHOODS

For Santa Clara residents, a sense of community and neighborhood identity is an important aspect of City life. Each neighborhood has its own distinctive character and sense of community. This strategy seeks to preserve and enhance these community assets. The Plan ensures that new development fits into each neighborhood's scale and context through careful transition policies for scale, height and use. This ensures that neighborhood cohesiveness is preserved, particularly within single family residential neighborhoods where change is an issue.

The Santa Clara community places high value on its residential neighborhoods. Many of these neighborhoods are well-established and comprised of single family homes with particular styles, streetscapes and ample trees that define neighborhood character. Infill development, higher density housing and commercial uses have all developed within and adjacent to these established neighborhoods. Updating neighborhood infrastructure, street design and amenities are supported by this Major Strategy as a means to continue neighborhood vitality. The General Plan recognizes the importance and value of the City's neighborhoods and promotes opportunities for improvements as an important part of cultivating neighborhood character. In addition, the Plan promotes preservation through goals and policies for neighborhood integrity that address the scale, density and design of new development adjacent to existing homes. In concert, the Plan incorporates complementary measures to address the preservation and cultivation of the City's existing and future neighborhoods.



4.3 PROMOTE SUSTAINABILITY

The Plan focuses on conservation of resources and reduction of impacts to the local and regional environment. Policies encourage sustainability measures for both new and existing development, ranging from those that help reduce water and energy consumption to those that promote redevelopment of infill sites as a healthy, cost-effective way to improve the local environment. Sustainable land use and design policies emphasize environmentally responsible construction techniques and conservation of energy and water. Additionally, prerequisites for new development include adequate infrastructure, alternate transportation options and public facilities to ensure consistent services to support the growth of the City.

Sustainability pervades all aspects of development in a City, from the type, location and intensity of land uses to actual materials for building and landscaping. All of these components have a direct effect on the local and regional environment. By implementing sustainable measures and policies, Santa Clara can reduce its contribution to global climate change, minimize reliance on oil and other fossil-fuels and decrease consumption of natural resources.

Santa Clara has been a leader in sustainable development for more than 40 years, and the City's residents want to see these efforts continue as the City moves forward. The City has collaborated on regional efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to conserve water and energy resources, to recycle both waste and wastewater and to expand transit-oriented and sustainable development opportunities.

The General Plan broadens the City's participation in sustainability efforts by responsible development through promoting the application of goals and policies to efficiently use the City's resources. Taking into account the City's existing development pattern, the planned intensification of uses in specific locations will ensure a more efficient use of land and support expanded transit options, partially for new residents. Opportunities for access to sustainable resource, like alternative energy, local and organic food and recycled water, will also provide a means for the City's residents and businesses to take an active role in ensuring Santa Clara's sustainable future.

4.4 ENHANCE CITY IDENTITY

The Plan includes policies to improve the identity and visual character of the City, emphasizing urban design to shape the character and appearance of major corridors and Focus Areas. Streetscape design policies will also help to guide development in order to enhance the pedestrian experience. New centers of neighborhood-oriented activity in strategic locations will serve as gathering places, for both current and new residents, while a regenerated Downtown will further define the City's identity as a destination. The General Plan includes standards for transitions between existing and new development as well as for urban design concepts along corridors such as El Camino Real and Stevens Creek Boulevard.

City identity is an important aspect of community living. It is expressed through the street design, architecture, landscaping and signage. The resulting visual composite plays a significant role in the sense of place. The design and character of key gateways, destinations and corridors provide opportunities for establishing a strong City identity for visitors and residents alike.

While Santa Clara is also known as the Mission City, there are a wide variety of architectural styles represented across the City. Much of Santa Clara was developed during the rapid growth period following World War II, with little attention to the Mission style. Much of the commercial property was developed in the 1950s and 1960s and is now suitable for renovation or redevelopment to serve today's community needs. The General Plan identifies Focus Areas to support changes in land use and enhance community identity. These areas constitute the greatest potential for establishing vibrant, attractive destinations in the City. From improving the quality of retail development and creating new centers of activity along El Camino Real, to establishing a new Downtown and future mixed-use neighborhoods in the northern half of the City, the General Plan offers a new vision for the City that preserves existing, vital residential neighborhoods. In order to better define these opportunities, goals and policies for the Focus Areas are highlighted in a separate section of the Plan that provides more detail for future land use and design.



4.5 SUPPORT FOCUS AREAS AND COMMUNITY VITALITY

The Plan identifies Focus Areas throughout the City to support and foster the City's diverse economic and cultural base. It encourages improvements to the design and quality of development along El Camino Real and Stevens Creek Boulevard with a greater mix of land uses at activity centers, in conjunction with improved commercial and streetscape design. Santa Clara's Downtown will also be regenerated, creating a new center of activity that will serve as a City-wide draw for shopping, eating and entertainment. New nuclei of employment activity, particularly along corridors like San Tomas Expressway and Bowers Avenue, expand overall local and regional accessibility to jobs with an emphasis on transit accessibility. The Plan builds upon the City's strong industrial base, ensuring that key employment areas are protected and flexibility is retained to promote growth and change over time.



Accessibility to transit and alternative modes of transportation, as well as improved transit facilities will support higher intensity development along the City's key corridors and near transit stations.

Providing a strong foundation for economic growth requires both an investment in the City's infrastructure, as well as a well-defined land use strategy to capitalize on local assets. An attractive physical setting can encourage investment, help retain existing businesses, and support new businesses that provide the services and goods desired by residents and visitors. The City of Santa Clara's existing infrastructure, location in the heart of Silicon Valley and access to major transportation corridors all support future economic prosperity in the City. In addition, the City's employment areas north of the Caltrain corridor foster inter-business relationships and expansion with minimal land use conflicts. Beyond the focus on enhancing the successful employment core, the Plan designates Focus Areas for mixed-use development to improve the City's economic vitality and cultural amenities. These include redefining El Camino Real as a pedestrian-oriented corridor, including a diverse array of uses, with an emphasis on increasing the intensity of development at mixed use areas that have larger properties for redevelopment. Similarly, Stevens Creek Boulevard is identified as a Focus Area for durable goods, auto-related uses and other commercial establishments. Downtown and the Santa Clara Station Area also offer opportunities to promote the City's economic health through mixed uses and revitalization. For later phases of the Plan, the Future Focus Areas will continue to support community vitality and this Major Strategy through the development of new master planned neighborhoods.

4.6 MAINTAIN THE CITY'S FISCAL HEALTH AND QUALITY SERVICES

The Plan encourages a mix of uses to ensure that sufficient revenues are garnered to cover the cost of service needs. It is phased to enable growth that respects existing development while providing new revenue sources. The Plan includes an opportunity to evaluate the City's fiscal health between the Phases as a means to provide appropriate planning and financing of new infrastructure and services to support future development.

As new development occurs, it is essential to balance growth with service and infrastructure requirements. New growth will strengthen and diversify the City's tax base. It will also place demands on infrastructure and essential services. Not only is a mix of uses important for the City's fiscal health, the timing and coordination of development with the provision of infrastructure and services are also important. Santa Clara's strong economic base is indicative that the City has effectively balanced its growth. To continue to maintain the City's fiscal health, the progressive approach for the General Plan provides the framework for measured growth to ensure adequate services and infrastructure. The need for maintenance and replacement of utility and roadway infrastructure serving existing neighborhoods will be a significant challenge without new revenue sources. Retaining the City's diverse employment base and building on taxable sales through new commercial development will balance the demand for services associated with new residential development and with the maintenance required for existing neighborhoods. The Plan also incorporates an opportunity to evaluate its fiscal resources and costs at each phase of the Plan in order to maintain the City's fiscal health and quality services.



4.7 MAXIMIZE HEALTH AND SAFETY BENEFITS

The Plan offers a proactive approach for public safety, crime reduction, sensitivity to hazards and noise and air quality, as well as access to open space and public services. Urban design and transportation policies also emphasize public safety through improved visibility, pedestrian-oriented building design, lighting and infrastructure in order to promote for safe walking, bicycling and driving.

Creating successful, attractive business and living environments is directly related to the health and safety benefits that cover a wide range of issues from police services and crime prevention to protection from hazards like floods and earthquakes. A healthy, safe community also requires facilities and land uses to support healthy choices such as recreation, medical services and access to locally-grown food. While Santa Clara is located in an ideal climate for recreation and outdoor activity, the City is also located within an area subject to floods and seismic activity. The City is susceptible to potential health and safety concerns related to hazardous waste and airport-related noise, as well as to poor air quality. To support this Major Strategy, the General Plan employs a combination of goals and policies to promote safe construction practices and to encourage land use patterns that reduce the potential negative effects of development.