



FOCUS AREA PLAN

Revised Draft March 2022

I. Introduction

The City of Santa Clara’s General Plan provides a vision and constitution for long-term development. The Plan contains the City’s policies for land use, transportation, housing, design, environmental resources, health, and safety.

The General Plan also identifies Focus Areas throughout the city, each representing opportunities for more intense development and future economic growth. The purpose of these Focus Areas is to encourage improvements and new development tailored to the unique character and quality of these distinct areas. Additional planning is a prerequisite for development of these Focus Areas, and all plans for the Focus Areas must conform with the City’s overarching General Plan goals and policies.

The Freedom Circle area was not designated in the City’s 2010-2035 General Plan as a Future Focus Area. This employment-rich northern district has become the central focus of redevelopment activity and intensification of existing uses due to its status as an employment and entertainment district and distance from single-family residential neighborhoods. The proposed Freedom Circle Focus Area encompasses approximately 108 gross acres in an employment-rich area of northern Santa Clara, comprising several moderate-intensity office and industrial parks accompanied by surface parking, along with the Santa Clara Marriot hotel.

Given the rate of growth and development interest in North Santa Clara, the City has designated FC as a Future Focus Area. This Focus Area Plan outlines new land uses that will convert the area from an employment center to a high-intensity mixed-use neighborhood including residential developments. These changes will help meet the demand for housing and for using land more efficiently at high, urban densities.

In parallel to the development of this Plan, Greystar Real Estate Partners developed a project proposal for a portion of the Freedom Circle Focus Area, which will be processed as a General Plan Amendment in 2021. The remainder of the FC Plan Area will be built out over the next fifteen years or more.

The Freedom Circle (FC) Focus Area Plan (Plan) establishes a comprehensive planning framework to guide the development of a new mixed-use district in northern Santa Clara. It includes the goals, policies, and design principles that will inform redevelopment in the Focus Area including the Greystar project proposal.

II. Vision and Goals

The long-term buildout of the Freedom Circle Focus Area will create a dynamic, mixed-use district that includes residential developments and community amenities as well as a diverse range of employment uses. It will complement other North Santa Clara neighborhoods and provide a complete network of pedestrian, bicycle and roadway connections to destinations including employment centers, transit stops, and trails.

The Greystar General Plan Amendment proposes to change the land use designation for the 13.3 acre Greystar site from High Intensity Office (maximum Floor Area Ratio of 2.0) to Very High Density Residential (51-100 Dwelling Unit/Acre). Proposed uses include:

- 1,075 dwelling units in three 7-story buildings
- A two-acre public park with a connection to the San Tomas Aquino Creek trail, and
- up to 2,000 square feet of neighborhood-serving retail.

At full buildout, the Freedom Circle Focus Area would allow, subject to a future planning study, 2,500 dwelling units beyond those anticipated in the Greystar General Plan Amendment (described above) and 2 million square feet of additional office space beyond that allowed under the current high-intensity office designation.

Proposed General Plan land use designations (see Figure 1) include:

- Very High Intensity Office / R&D (FAR of 3.0)
- High-Intensity Office / R&D
- Regional Commercial
- Very High Density Residential (51-100 du/acre)
- Public / Quasi Public
- Parks and Open Space

The following goals will guide the development of the Freedom Circle Focus Area

FC-G1: Develop an urban-scale mixed-use activity center in North Santa Clara to support economic vitality while increasing residential options.

FC-G2: Provide for a range of housing types and densities to accommodate future residents and to create diversity in building scale and typology.

FC-G3: Create a complete neighborhood that provides easy access to day-to-day services and amenities for residents, employees and visitors

FC-G4: Reduce reliance on private vehicles and improve jobs/housing balance by locating amenities and jobs that can be comfortably and safely accessed from housing by walking.

FC-G5: Create a human scaled public realm through inviting architecture and urban design.

FC-G6: Improve multi-modal transportation options and connections

FC-G7: Enhance connectivity to the San Tomas Aquino Creek trail.

III. Policies

FC-P1: Allow for a range of housing density and development intensity throughout the plan area, consistent with the General Plan designations and overall buildout capacity.

FC-P2: Co-locate commercial, recreational and other active uses to create nodes of activity throughout the plan area

FC-P3: Require active street frontages and ground floor uses to create a pedestrian-friendly, cohesive urban environment

FC-P4: Provide public parkland and privately-owned public open space (POPOs) that is accessible to all residents and visitors, adequate to meet resident activity needs, and consistent with the General Plan requirements and other City regulations.

FC-P5: Require the provision of open space, or payment of in-lieu fees for parks and open space for residential development, consistent with the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance.

FC-P6: Prioritize size, shape, and location of public parkland to ensure that amenities are usable, programmable, and flexible.

FC-P7: Encourage sensitive design and site planning to mitigate the scale and height of larger buildings through use of building massing, setbacks, façade articulation, fenestration, varied parapets and roof lines, and pedestrian-scaled architectural details.

FC-P8: Provide appropriate transitions between new development in the Focus Area and adjacent uses consistent with General Plan Transition Policies.

FC-P9: Require that building facades and entrances directly face street frontages, with a high proportion of transparent windows facing the street for nonresidential uses.

FC-P10: Minimize surface parking by requiring below-grade or structured parking facilities with active uses along street frontages.

FC-P11: Establish parking ratios that support transit, active transportation and shared vehicle use

FC-P12: Encourage shared parking between uses and parcels, including the shared use of existing structures.

FC-P13: Establish affordable housing requirements for residential and residential mixed-use developments that support regional growth goals, City policy, and local need.

FC-P14: Provide new street, bicycle and pedestrian networks that break down large blocks and sites, accommodate multiple modes of travel, and maximize connections to activity hubs and transit facilities.

FC-P15: Develop design standards and guidelines to support active ground-floor environments, welcoming public spaces, and safe and comfortable sidewalks and pathways.

FC-P16: Design and program the plan area and sites to encourage walking, bicycling and transit use.

FC-P17: Minimize environmental impacts through sustainable building and infrastructure design, consistent with CALGreen and Santa Clara Climate Action Plan requirements.

FC-P18: Redesign Mission College Boulevard, Freedom Circle, and Hichborn Drive to better balance space dedicated to vehicles, bicycle, and pedestrians.

FC-P19: Redesign Mission College Boulevard, Freedom Circle, and Hichborn Drive to facilitate safe and comfortable pedestrian crossings.

FC-P20: Maintain VTA bus transit service in the Focus Area Plan area and improve transit stops and shelters

FC-P21: Design pedestrian and bicycle networks and infrastructure to facilitate access to transit stops on Great America Parkway, Mission College and Tasman Drive

FC-P22: Locate loading zones and rideshare pick-up / drop-off areas away from bus stops.

FC-P23: Require developments to contribute to City vehicle miles travelled (VMT) goals and implement a variety of sustainable transit solutions as a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program.

FC-P24: Require developers and property owners to coordinate with North Santa Clara employers and stakeholders to explore participating in a private transit systems and/or a Transportation Management Agency (TMA) as part of the Specific Plan process

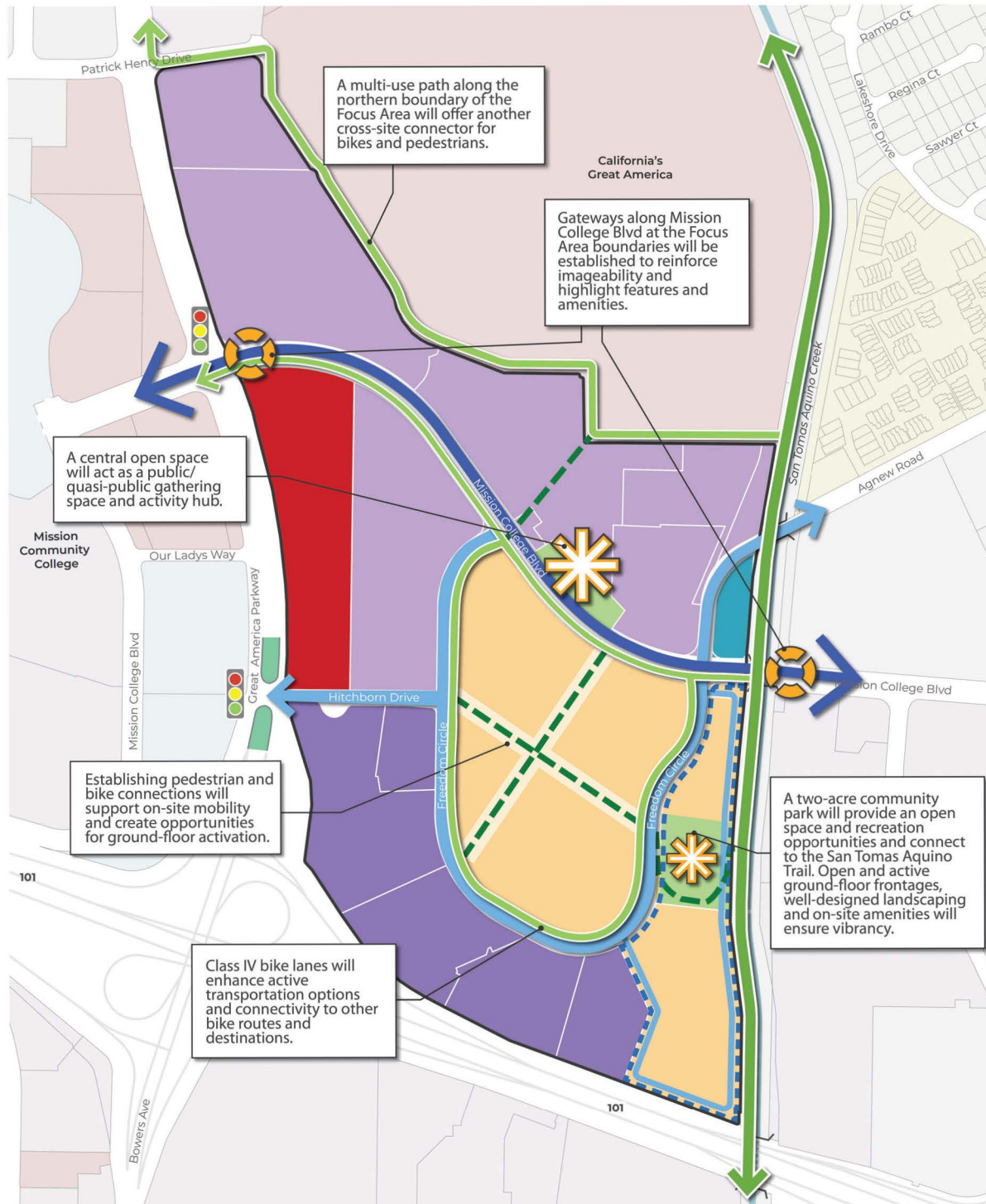
IV. Implementation

Upon plan approval, the Freedom Circle Focus Area will be added as a Phase III Focus Area to the General Plan (Section 5.4.5). Any change in land use designation or rezoning of land within the Freedom Circle area will be subject to the requirements of the Future Focus Area Goals and Policies of the General Plan.

The Greystar project will accomplish this via its General Plan Amendment application, while other property owners will prepare their own plan and/or application in the future.

Since the General Plan did not designate the study area a Focus Area and consequently did not consider any potential land uses changes there in its Environmental Impact Report (EIR), an EIR was required for this Focus Area Plan and for the General Plan Amendment.

Figure 1: Land Use and Urban Design Framework



Legend

- Study Area Boundary
- Greystar Project Boundary

Land Use Designations

- Very High Intensity Office / R&D
- High Intensity Office / R&D
- Regional Commercial
- Very High Density Residential
- Parks / Open Space
- Public / Quasi Public

Urban Design

- Node
- Gateway

Circulation & Mobility

- Bike/Ped Connection
- Primary Vehicular Circulation
- Local Vehicular Connection
- San Tomas Aquino Creek Trail
- Class IV Bike lane
- New Traffic Signal

