

MEMORANDUM

DATE August 31, 2022
TO San Mateo Planning Commission
FROM Joanna Jansen and Carey Stone, PlaceWorks
SUBJECT Summary of General Plan Subcommittee Input on the Draft Policies and Actions

This memorandum summarizes the General Plan Subcommittee (GPS) input on the draft policies and actions. The GPS met three times on August 11, 18, and 30, 2022 to review and provide feedback on the policies and actions.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Overall, the GPS felt that the draft goals, policies, and actions are well written and reflect community input to date.
- Make sure there is deliberate thought given to which policies begin with “continue to” versus which ones do not.
- Climate change should be featured prominently in the General Plan, and the General Plan and the City’s Climate Action Plan should align.
- Highlight climate change and sustainability similar to how environmental justice policies and actions are highlighted, or consider if we should have an Energy and Climate Change element.

COMMUNITY DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

- Aspire to make El Camino Real a space to spend time, not only a space to rush through.
- Replace “pedestrian-oriented” with “people-oriented.”
- Throughout the design-related policies, shift language to be less subjective and more objective.
- Include objective standards to preserve historic resources
- Add language that emphasizes the importance of keeping architectural details at the human-scale.
- Acknowledge the important architectural features of traditional pre-war architecture that should be carried forward in new development downtown.
- Preserving cherished and beautiful historic buildings is important, but historic preservation should not be weaponized to prevent homeowners from upgrading their own property or to prevent needed new housing.
- Define “character” to clarify that it refers to visual or architectural rather than social characteristics.

- The General Plan should address historic preservation at a general level of detail and not get into the weeds; the Historic Preservation Ordinance and State and federal regulations should provide more detail.
- Goal CD-2 should reference preserving heritage trees “where feasible.” Sometimes old trees are dangerous and need to be removed. Goal CD-2 should also reference median trees.
- Policies and actions under Goal CD-3 should be broadened to refer to historic “assets,” not only buildings, consistent with the wording of the goal. Consider adding policies or actions under Goal CD-3 to adopt incentives for property owners to preserve and/or restore historic assets.
- In response to Goal CD-4 about City Image, some GPS members expressed that San Mateo has lost a sense of a identity that distinguishes it from other Peninsula cities, and that the General Plan could be an opportunity to clarify what makes San Mateo unique. Some ideas were Downtown, dining, Hillsdale Mall, and the San Mateo Bridge. A unique identity should be consistently expressed through signage and other City materials.
- Under Goal CD-5, delete Policy CD-P5.1 regarding building mass and scale. This policy is too vague and is not needed; the desired outcomes are addressed more clearly and explicitly in other policies under this goal.
- Consider adding area-specific design policies for the San Mateo Park and Baywood-Aragon neighborhoods.

CONSERVATION, OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

- Address public accessibility of private open spaces, including signage.
- Address the lack of access to recreational facilities for neighborhoods east of El Camino Real and especially east of 101.
- Add language about public spaces that are age-integrated and offer spaces for teens.
- Strengthen references to local school districts and mutual collaboration in support of recreational access.
- Confirm that the parks figure accurately reflects facilities at Bayside/Joinville (school district property), Dale Avenue, and Station Park Green.
- Add an Action under Goal COS-2 to develop a volunteer stewardship program, especially as the City opens up access to creeks.
- Goal COS-4 should acknowledge the importance of reducing vehicle miles traveled as a way to improve air quality.
- Goal COS-6 could include an action to modernize and make more accessible data that the City has on areas with high archaeological sensitivity.
- Policies under Goal COS-9 should mention wi-fi, water fountains, and restrooms public amenities offered in park and recreational facilities.
- Consider an action under Goal COS-10 to do more frequent surveys of residents to ask about park and recreation amenities.
- Add an Action under Goal COS-11 to identify new funding sources for parks and recreation facilities.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES ELEMENT

- Consider whether we need to add more policies about code enforcement in the General Plan.
- Sewer laterals upgrades should be covered in the General Plan to address leakage. The policy could help encourage sewer laterals maintenance and replacement. Reference the City's program that helps subsidize these type of upgrades.
- Add "as needed" after new fire stations in Policy PS-P1.3. Fire stations are a very expensive investment.
- Add a policy that encourages existing homes to convert to water efficient landscaping under Goal PS-2. Offer incentives, rebates, and education in partnership with Cal Water.
- Mention greywater and potable water in Action PS-A2.1. Also, reference the City's water treatment facility where there are ongoing measures to produce greywater and potable water. Maybe there is more that can be done to encourage greywater systems in residential and commercial buildings.
- Include stronger language about water conservation in Policy PS-P2.2.
- Add the word "coordinate" to action PS-A3.1.
- Add "and bay" after lagoons at the end of Policy PS-P3.3. Simplify and make this policy stronger.
- Mention bicycle and pedestrian projects in Action PS-A3.3.
- Add "consider" at the beginning of Policy PS-P4.3.
- Add language that encourages green space in Policy PS-P4.9.
- Under Goal PS-5, add a policy or action about encouraging the development of licensed preschool facilities. This should be a priority. Also work with school districts to encourage efforts to provide more before and after school programs.
- Agree with Policy PS-P5.2, but rewrite the policy to make it more clear. Explain what "compatible with surrounding land uses" means.
- Emphasize non-residential development in Action PS-A5.2.
- Revise Policy PS-P5.5 to address inadequacies in existing childcare facilities. There are a number of existing facilities under Parks and Recreation that cannot be utilized for child care because they do not meet the square footage requirement to be a licensed facility. We need to go beyond retaining facilities and consider if there are some existing facilities that need to be shutdown or expanded. Also, collect park fees and make it a priority to expand existing childcare facilities.
- Add a policy under Goal PS-6 about distributing health centers throughout the city to make sure they are accessible. Also add a policy about mobile health care, perhaps the City can help support the County's efforts.
- Ensure Policy PS-P6.3 balances the need for social services in each community while also ensuring that services are not concentrated in one area.
- Add nonprofits and community based organizations to Policy PS-P6.4. Revise this policy to say "support vulnerable populations by prioritizing reduction of vulnerabilities" and then list nonprofits and religious groups to help.

SAFETY ELEMENT

- Support efforts to underground utilities.
- Revise the examples in Policy S-P1.7 to include data-driven defensible design examples.
- Consider vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists, in Policy S-P1.8 and Action S-A1.10. Do not support expansion of Highway 101 and other roadways. Focus on designing roads that help prevent traffic fatalities. There should be a reference somewhere in the language that addresses roadway design for vulnerable users.
- Revise Policy S-P5.6 to ensure monitoring of peakload water supply is occurring by the appropriate entity.
- Add policies and actions to reduce per capita energy use, such as “encourage energy use reduction by incentivizing active transportation and reducing single occupant vehicle use”. Another policy could be “encourage the creation of energy efficient homes, businesses, and other buildings”. Possible actions could be “encourage energy use reduction through the creation of safe and comfortable opportunities for active transport modes by implementing the City’s pedestrian and bicycle master plan and focusing new development near major transit nodes”. Another action could be encouraging the installation of energy efficient home insulation, weather sealing and other physical means to reduce heating and cooling needs through greater Title 24 building efficiency.
- Cover energy saving appliances and electric appliances.

NOISE ELEMENT

- Revise Policy N-P1.2 to add a reference about outdoor equipment such as leaf blowers and two-stroke engines. Maybe the policy can be revised to list the known noise irritants. Consider adding a reference about outdoor equipment in Policy N-P2.1.
- Consider whether the roads mentioned in Policy N-P2.4 will actually be widened since Caltrans has been deprioritizing widening of roads.
- City could help reduce traffic speeds in Policy N-P2.4 since they are a noise generator.
- Emphasize or add more about railroad noise.

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

- Support for many of the revisions requested in the letter submitted by Move San Mateo.
- Add a threshold for the size of development when we say “require new developments to” in the policies and actions. Applying requirements for new development makes sense for larger projects.
- Replace walking, bicycling and transit everywhere it appears with “transit and active transportation modes”. A few subcommittee members disagree and believe the General Plan should include commonly known terms.
- Add an action under Goal C-1 that requires implementation of the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure outlined in the Circulation Map anytime a roadway is resurfaced. This is partially covered by Action C-A4.2, but it only mentions bicycle infrastructure and could be expanded to include pedestrian infrastructure.

- Revise Policy C-P1.3 as follows:
 - Delete “works towards”.
 - Revise policy to say: Use a safe systems approach for transportation planning, street design, operations, emergency response, and maintenance that proactively identifies opportunities to “improve safety where conflicts between users exist in order to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in our roadways”.
- Revise Policy C-P1.5 to address high capacity travel, facilitate efficient travel, and limit left turns during high traffic hours. However, there may not be much the City can do because El Camino Real is a State road.
- For Action C-A1.5, study not only where people already go, but where they would like to go and build routes around their needs.
- Clarify the word “consider” in the second sentence of Action C-A2.1.
- Be more specific about “safe routes to school” in Action C-A2.5.
- A few subcommittee members would like to revise Action C-A2.7 to say “required” instead of “encourage”, but some believe the General Plan should stay high level.
- Modify Policy C-P3.2 to require the widest sidewalks that are feasible and comfortable.
- Unsure why Policy C-P3.4 is under the pedestrian goal.
- Action C-A3.1 should be revised to clarify that there is an urgent need for implementation of pedestrian improvements.
- Add increasing sight lines and removing conflicts at the cross walks to Action C-A3.5. There should be an action about the visibility at cross walks for pedestrians.
- Change “transit centers” to “community destinations” in Policy C-P4.3.
- Add “undercrossings” in Action C-A4.3.
- Add “at intersections” to Action C-14.6.
- There is a transit operator shortage not ridership shortage. Maybe we need to change the focus to “increasing the service” instead of “increasing ridership” in Policy C-P5.1.
- Break Policy C-P5.5 into two policies. Also, revise the policy to educate the public about all alternative travel modes, not just transit.
- Do not limit Action C-A5.2 to only include disadvantaged communities. There should be a focus on disadvantaged communities, but the action should be expanded to other areas.
- Explain what vehicles miles traveled per capita is in Goal C-6. Say “efficient and safe” operations and also say “residents” instead of “modes”.
- Revise Policy C-P6.4 to include a reference to improving the City’s process to request and receive traffic calming measures on residential streets.
- One subcommittee member would like Action C-A7.2 revised to say “implement” instead of “evaluate”, but another subcommittee member disagreed.
- Revise Action C-A8.4 to address data privacy. Do not limit the action to new technology options, we should require this from public transportation as well.

- Prioritize traffic calming measures in Goal C-6 and focus on areas with the highest vehicle collisions. Add an action under this goal that calls for annual vehicles, pedestrian and bicycle counts at different intersections to measure how the City is doing.
- Add an action that requires new development in Downtown to have shared parking agreements that allows the public to use the parking space in the evenings. One subcommittee member believes we should remove existing public parking spaces if we are adding more public parking opportunities in Downtown.
- Add a new policy or action about education under Transportation Demand Management. There are programs out there where people can trade in their car to get transit and e-bike credits.
- Add a policy or goal about connecting neighborhoods or reducing barriers to help traffic flow, for example there is a wall that separates the Shoreview neighborhood and the new parks on J Hart Clinton Drive.
- Place a stronger emphasis on traffic efficiency, infrastructure, traffic calming, and parking in the Circulation Element. One subcommittee member believes the focus should be on getting people out of their cars, which helps reduce traffic.
- In addition to greenhouse gas emissions, also reference vehicle miles traveled in the goals of this element.
- Consider how some of the emerging technology trends could change the city if they actually came into fruition.
- Add an action about school safety speed zones.
- Make sure we are prioritizing local projects, not only regional projects.
- Concern about scooter safety.

LAND USE ELEMENT

- Revise Goal LU-1 as follows:
 - Change “citizens” to “residents.”
 - Include a reference about affordability. Suggested revision could be “provides ample housing which is affordable at all levels”.
 - Consider using “balanced” instead of “orderly” growth.
- Revise Policy LU-P1.1 to add the word affordability. Would like to see one or two actions that could meaningfully achieve this policy.
- Revise Action LU-A1.1 to be more specific. Would also like to see an action about maintaining a real time list of pipeline projects such as the amount of office, jobs and housing that is planned. There should be a requirement that we report this information on an annual basis.
- Consider using “encourage” instead of “require” in Policy LU-P1.2.
- Unsure why Action LU-A1.2 is titled as surplus land inventory.
- Revise Policy LU-P1.3 to say, “component to provide”.
- Policy LU-P1.6 may be outdated.
- Define what the Sphere of Influence is in Policy LU-P1.7.
- Define the term “equity priority communities” used in Policy LU-P1.8.

- Flush out the community benefits in Policy LU-P2.2. Would recommend building heights above 65 feet only for projects that provide housing as a community benefit. An increase in height should be tied to housing being a major part of that building and also providing a greater amount of below market rate units than what the City's inclusionary ordinance requires. Include high quality materials and context appropriate design as a community benefit for taller buildings. One subcommittee member believes we should be careful about how much we ask for from developers because there are other ways to make a project pencil that may not benefit the community, such as hiring out-of-state labor.
- Add the concept of access to commercial services in Policy LU-P2.5.
- Add the word "recreation" to Goal LU-3.
- Add circulation somewhere in Policy LU-P3.2, but unsure were.
- Policy LU-P3.6 seems to be outdated.
- The following comments were received about Policy LU-P3.9:
 - This policy should not dictate the type of businesses. Delete "to research and development, bio-tech, and life sciences uses, and/or".
 - Clarify what "as far as possible from high-volume roadways" means.
 - California Air Resources Board recommends against siting sensitive uses, like housing, within 500 feet from high-volume roadways which is defined as 100,000 vehicles or more a day. El Camino Real does not meet that criteria, but Highway 101 and State Route 92 East of El Camino does meet the criteria. There seems to be contradiction in the General Plan, we say we have a policy to locate new residential away from high volume roadways, but Study Area 7 and another study area along State Route 92 are designated as high and medium density residential.
- Revise Policy LU-P3.12 to encourage the design of publicly accessible spaces that people can intuitively know the space is for their use.
- Comments received on Policy LU-P3.14:
 - This policy is the same policy as PS-P5.2.
 - Policy is outdated and confusing, it needs wordsmithing.
 - Delete the rest of the policy after the first sentence.
 - The school district and the City have a 55 year lease on Bayside Park. Maybe we can have a separate policy that references Bayside Park because that lease will come up at the end of this General Plan.
- Replace "support" with "prioritize" in Action LU-A4.1.
- Action LU-A5.1 is missing what the alternative transportation is alternative to. Change "alternative transportation" to "active transportation".
- Encourage buffers between people and cars in Policy LU-P5.2. Mention the City's tree planting plan here. There needs to be a discussion about downtown landscaping in this policy.
- Add an action about the pedestrian mall.
- Revise Policy LU-P6.1 to say world class transit-oriented "mixed use" development.
- Concerned about including the term "gentrification" in Policy LU-P8.2.

- Add green space where it says “includes retail, services and housing” in Policy LU-P7.1.
- Add biking and walking facilities to Action LU-A7.2, similar to Bridgepointe.
- Add a separate policy or action for the King Center instead of including it in Policy LU-P8.3. There is a need to enhance the King Center beyond maintaining it. Also, confirm if the park impact fees are only supposed to be for physical park improvements and address this in the action.
- Identify other funding sources in Action LU-A8.3.
- Unsure if we should keep convenience markets in Policy LU-P8.5 since they do not typically provide healthy foods.
- Suggested revisions to Action LU-A8.5:
 - Maybe we can say “balance safety improvements with optimizing the existing parking supply” or “balance the design of the safety improvements.”
 - There was a North Central community based transportation plan that was well received. Reference the plan or maybe we need to complete a new plan, it received a lot of public support at that time.
 - Possible new language “the plan shall seek to make the North Central neighborhood streets a measurably safer place while improving accessibility for residents and visitors. Parking availability and access shall be featured as a factor in assessing the planning and design of projects. Changes shall be developed and enacted with the expressed purposes of improving health, safety, welfare and comfort for members of the community”.
- Add “sanitation” to Action LU-A8.6.
- Comments received on Policy LU-P8.7:
 - Not sure this is within the City’s purview; the County health department has been closely working on healthy food in school efforts.
 - This policy seems outdated.
 - There was a question about whether the school district has a meal program for the summer or if the City can help fill the gap. Historically, the school district does not provide food for the community in the summer only for summer school.
 - One subcommittee member asked if we could add language about “explore or incentivize plant based foods in schools”, but a few subcommittee members disagreed.
 - Maybe this policy should go beyond schools. Having fresh produce in neighborhoods is the key thing people need access to.
- Modify Action LU-A8.7 to go beyond partnering with neighborhood organizations and instead also encourage neighborhood cleanliness and beautification programs that do not rely solely on volunteers and neighborhood organizations.
- Highlight how members of the public can influence development projects through community engagement under Goal LU-9.
- Add child care in Policy LU-P9.1 as a feature of public meetings that will increase attendance.
- Add a policy or action about recycled water under Goal LU-10. Remove the word “boldly” from this goal.

- Change “reduce” to “eliminate” in Policy LU-P10.2 since this is a long term plan.
- Change five years to three years in Action LU-A10.3 since the reach codes and building codes come out every three years.
- Improve the definition of “provide a living wage” in Action LU-A11.1. Maybe we should say “a wage that is indexed to the cost of living”.
- Mention “support remote work options” and “public wifi” in Policy LU-P11.3 about telecommunications.
- Clarify what projects Action LU-A12.1 would apply to. This action is also not clear.
- There is no action for the Shoreview shopping center, only for the Bridgepoint and Bel Mateo shopping centers. Add an action for the Shoreview shopping center.
- Add an action about jobs housing balance. Mountain View’s East Whisman Precise Plan has a requirement of 3 units of housing to be built for every 1,000 feet of commercial. Redwood City’s General plan also specifies a maximum additional residential capacity of 2,500 units, a maximum additional office capacity of 574,667 and a maximum additional retail capacity of 100,000 sq. ft. within their Downtown area. Would like to see a similar action in the General Plan.
- There is an area in the Land Use Map that is designated mixed use low right next to State Route 92, across from The Fish Market, City Council asked for this parcel to be designated as mixed use medium but it was recorded in the notes as mixed use low. Note to staff to go back and watch the recording to double check.
- Add an action to increase the urban tree canopy while maintaining existing trees as much as possible. Identify neighborhoods with less street tree canopy and adopt programs to add climate adapted trees to the right of ways and front yards of adjacent properties.
- Add an action under the Hillsdale Station Area about working with Caltrain to make the station accessible for biking.
- Ensure there are roughly equal heights along contiguous blocks. There are some blocks where it goes from residential to mixed use. Important where it changes to residential and mixed use to have a consistent height between these types of land uses.
- Add mention about having less paved surfaces that reflect heat in our city under climate change and sustainability.
- Add a policy or action about green infrastructure in multi-unit developments under climate change and sustainability.
- Consider how Assembly Bill (AB) 297 would eliminate parking requirements for projects within a certain distance of transit.
- Think about how the City is moving towards reallocating the public space for a wider variety of uses that could be used by small businesses.
- Mixed use should not only include office and residential, but it can also include commercial service type of uses.
- High speed rail is a huge land use issue that should be addressed further. Add a reference to preserving access to Downtown and neighborhoods.