



# CITY OF SAN MATEO

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## Agenda Report

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**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Drew Corbett, City Manager  
**PREPARED BY:** Community Development Department  
**MEETING DATE:** November 7, 2022

**SUBJECT:**

Draft Goals, Policies and Actions for the Land Use, Community Design and Historic Preservation, and Safety Elements – General Plan Update

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Provide direction on the Goals, Policies and Actions for the Land Use, Community Design and Historic Preservation, and Safety Elements that should be included in the City's Draft General Plan Update.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City's General Plan Update (GPU) kicked off in fall 2018 and began with a series of visioning workshops and community meetings. From April 2019 through July 2022, the General Plan team held a series of meetings and events to establish the General Plan study areas, create the range of alternatives, confirm the draft alternatives, and receive feedback and direction on the preferred land use and circulation scenarios from the community and, ultimately, the City Council. More information about the background information, technical reports and the outreach process, including meeting materials and recordings, is available online at [www.StriveSanMateo.org](http://www.StriveSanMateo.org).

To date, the Strive San Mateo General Plan Update has focused on crafting a shared community vision for what San Mateo can be in the year 2040, as well as selecting the preferred land use and circulation scenarios that will guide the General Plan's Land Use and Circulation Elements. The process is now shifting to focus on the goals and policies for all of the elements in the City's General Plan Update. The draft Goals, Policies and Actions were published on July 21, 2022, which started the next phase of community outreach and engagement (public meetings, workshops and pop-up events, as well as an online survey), that wrapped up at the beginning of October 2022.

Goals, Policies and Actions Definitions

A General Plan is made up of a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles (Attachment 1), text describing key issues of community interest, and goals and policies that outline how the City will address those issues, as well as accompanying maps and diagrams. Each element of the General Plan will also include a concise set of background narratives that summarizes current conditions in the city related to the topics in the element. The background information will provide context about the issues the City plans to address, explaining why there is policy direction so that the the policies and actions can focus on how the City can achieve a desired outcome. The narratives also provide information on other regulations and/or agencies that influence the decision-making process. Together, these items paint a picture of the community's future. A draft outline of how the complete draft General Plan will be composed is included in Attachment 2. It is anticipated that this outline will continue to evolve and be refined based on ongoing community input and Council direction before the draft General Plan document is published in 2023.

Each element, or chapter, of the General Plan addresses a specific set of topics and includes a set of goals, policies and actions that provide a blueprint for how the City will address these issues. Definitions of what a goal, policy, and action are, and the relationship between them, is as follows:

- A goal is a description of a general desired result that the City seeks to create through the implementation of its General Plan.
- A policy is a specific statement that regulates activities in the City, guides decision-making and directs ongoing efforts as the City works to achieve a goal. General Plan policies establish standards that will be used by City staff, Planning Commission, and City Council when prioritizing initiatives and expenditures, reviewing and approving new development, and in related City decision-making.
- An action is a measure, procedure, or technique intended to help reach a specified goal or implement a policy. The actions in the General Plan will serve as a to-do list for City staff and officials to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan.

These goals, policies, and actions provide guidance to the City on how to direct change and manage resources over the next 20 years.

The basis for the draft Goals, Policies and Actions started with the City’s current General Plan. However, there are many important policy topics in which the current General Plan policy language is outdated and/or no longer adequately responds to current conditions and other present-day issues. To address these policy gaps, the General Plan team drafted updated versions by refining existing policies and creating new ones, as needed. The process to prepare the draft Goals, Policies, and Actions that go into the GPU includes the following steps:

- **Review of existing General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions.** City staff from all departments, the GPU Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), reviewed the existing General Plan Goals, Policies, and Actions and provided direction on which policies needed clarification, improvement, or removal. In addition, the General Plan team carefully reviewed the Goals, Policies, and Actions and identified what changes were needed to respond to community input collected throughout the GPU process and State requirements by drawing from best practices used by other California communities.
- **Draft new and revised Goals, Policies, and Actions.** The preparation of the updated Goals, Policies, and Actions for the GPU has been going on for over two years, with the TAC and General Plan Team focused on addressing policy gaps, alignment with current processes and policies, and in response to community input. These draft Goals, Policies, and Actions are available online at: [www.strivesanmateo.org/general-plan-documents/](http://www.strivesanmateo.org/general-plan-documents/).
- **Collect input and direction on draft Goals, Policies, and Actions.** The General Plan team is sharing the draft Goals, Policies, and Actions with the community, General Plan Subcommittee, Planning Commission, and City Council this summer and fall to receive input and direction. Table 1 summarizes the community outreach program.

**Table 1 – Goals, Policies, and Actions Outreach Activities and Events**

Event	Date
Strive San Mateo Newsletter	Mailed to all households Citywide during week of July 19-22, 2022
Online Survey	Monday, July 18 to Friday, October 14, 2022
Informational Virtual Workshop	Thursday, September 8, 2022
In-Person Spanish Language Workshop	Saturday, September 10, 2022 at the King Center
In-Person Open House	Saturday, September 17, 2022 at the Downtown Library
Pop-up Events	See Attachment 4 for the list of events
Community Group Presentations	Dates and locations TBD

Community Feedback

On July 21, 2022, the City published an online survey to collect feedback and reactions to the draft Goals, Policies and Actions. Survey participants had the option of selecting which draft Goals, Policies, and Actions from the seven General

Plan Elements to provide feedback on. The online survey was open through October 14, 2022, and a total of 221 responses were submitted. In addition, as of October 21, the City had received 39 written comment letters. Based on the survey responses and written comments, some of the key issues that the community wants to see addressed within the GPU are as follows:

- Improving public safety;
- Limiting noise exposure;
- Maintaining the City’s visual and architectural character;
- Adding more affordable housing;
- Preserving historic resources;
- Planning for sea level rise;
- Maintaining and improving infrastructure, public services, parks and recreational facilities; and
- Improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and connectivity.

A more detailed summary of the online survey results, community input and comment letters received through October 21, 2022, is included in Attachment 3.

#### General Plan Subcommittee Meetings

The General Plan Subcommittee (GPS) met on August 11, 18, and 30, 2022, to review and provide feedback on the draft Goals, Policies and Actions. At all three meetings, the GPS accepted public comments, asked clarifying questions and provided a range of comments and feedback on all of the topics covered in the seven elements. Some of the overarching themes that emerged from the GPS’s discussions and comments are listed below. A more detailed summary of the comments and input provided by the GPS is included in Attachment 4.

- Focus on ways to support increased housing production and providing housing for residents at all income levels.
- Support the transition away from single-occupancy vehicles to other forms of mobility and prioritize investment in infrastructure that supports the safety and comfort of walking, biking and transit.
- Highlight how the City will be addressing environmental justice and climate change in all of the elements.
- Support high quality, pedestrian oriented, human-scale design in new development, with a focus on establishing objective standards for architectural design and historic preservation.
- Support investment in the City’s parks and recreational facilities, and ensure that they are accessible to all residents and neighborhoods.

#### Planning Commission Meetings

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft Goals, Policies and Actions at their meetings on September 13 and September 27. At the September 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Commission provided recommendations on the Land Use, Community Design and Historic Preservation and Safety Elements. Overall, the Commission generally supported the comments provided by the GPS and made comments about the need for some policies to be more focused and, in many cases, include stronger language. Some of the Commissions’ overarching recommendations for each Element are listed below. A more detailed summary of the input and recommendations provided by the Planning Commission is included in Attachment 5.

- **Land Use Element**
  - Address the City’s jobs-housing balance and include policies that improve the balance.
  - Support the inclusion of environmental justice policies and actions in the General Plan.
  - Strengthen policies related to climate change.
- **Community Design and Historic Preservation Element**
  - Clarify what the term “character” means in the General Plan.
  - Avoid stark differences in building mass within a single block.
  - Revisit the language in the historic preservation policies and actions.
- **Safety Element**

- Sea level rise is an important hazard to consider in the General Plan.
- Provide an emphasis on emergency readiness in the equity priority community areas.
- Add policies focused on reducing per capita energy use.

To respond to reoccurring comments and feedback that were received from the community, GPS and/or Planning Commission, the General Plan Team drafted updated language for various goals, policies and actions in the four elements under review at this meeting (Attachments 6-8). These recommendations include edits/revisions to existing language, as well as potentially new policies and actions for the Council to consider. Policies and actions with suggested revisions are shown in track changes and listed below the original draft language that was published in July 2022 for comparison purposes. These recommended edits are not inclusive of all comments received and should be considered a starting point for the discussion. Staff is looking for direction on other topics and comments before drafting edits or evaluating updated policy language.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The goal of this meeting will be for the Council to provide direction to the General Plan Team on the draft Goals, Policies and Actions and which ones should or should not be included in the draft General Plan. As noted above, for this meeting, the Council is reviewing and providing direction on the Goals, Policies and Actions for the following three General Plan elements:

- Land Use (Attachment 6)
- Community Design and Historic Preservation (Attachment 7)
- Safety (Attachment 8)

When considering the draft Goals, Policies and Actions, as well as all of the comments and feedback collected, the Council should consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed revisions to the draft Goals, Policies, and Actions, and the proposed new policies and actions in response to input received to date (Attachments 6-8)?
- Is there anything you would add or change?
- Should any of the policies be changed from a recommendation to a requirement or vice versa?
- Are there additional specific actions that should be added to support implementation of the policies?

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

Following the two October meetings, the General Plan Team will finalize the Goals, Policies and Actions per Council direction and incorporate them into the draft General Plan. Publication of the draft General Plan is targeted in spring 2023. The draft General Plan will then be available for review and input from the community, the GPS, the Planning Commission, and the City Council in spring and summer of 2023.

#### **BUDGET IMPACT:**

There are no direct budgetary impacts to taking this action.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

In accordance with Public Resources Code section 21065, the City Council's direction on the draft Goals, Policies and Actions is not a project subject to CEQA because it can be seen with certainty that this activity will not cause a physical change in the environment. Preparation of a draft Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan Update commenced in August 2022, with publication of the report for public review anticipated in the spring of 2023. The draft Environmental Impact Report will have a 45-day public comment period once it is published. A final EIR will be prepared prior to any formal decisions on the updated General Plan.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

A summary of the community feedback and comments on draft Goals, Policies and Actions that has been received since July 2022 is included in [Attachment 3](#). All written comments that have been submitted on this topic are available online at [www.strivesanmateo.org/documents/publiccomments](http://www.strivesanmateo.org/documents/publiccomments). This link also includes all comments that have been submitted since the beginning of the GPU effort in September 2018.

**NOTICE PROVIDED:**

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Att 1 – General Plan Vision Statement

Att 2 – Draft General Plan Outline

Att 3 – Updated Summary of Community Feedback

Att 4 – Summary of General Plan Subcommittee Meetings

Att 5 – Summary of Planning Commission Recommendations

Att 6 – Land Use Element Draft Goals, Policies and Actions

Att 7 – Community Design and Historic Preservation Element Draft Goals, Policies and Actions

Att 8 – Safety Element Draft Goals, Policies and Actions

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