

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Executive summary

The City of San José and the greater Bay Area region have the unique opportunity to build an internationally prominent transportation center and to develop a superb destination within the area around the Diridon Station. This Station Area Plan presents an overview, a direction, and many critical aspects for the successful future of the Diridon area. The Plan integrates open space, transportation and land uses to create an expansion of Downtown San José, while respecting existing environments. The plan weaves new ideas and new development possibilities within existing city fabric and strong neighborhoods. Large proposals, such as the California High Speed Rail Diridon Station and a new Major League Baseball Stadium, are incorporated into the plan. In addition, proposals are made to strengthen existing features of the area, such as Los Gatos Creek and the current Diridon Station.

The Diridon Station Area Plan has been formulated with numerous stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, agencies, institutions, and many private and public entities. Three public community workshops, led by the Field Paoli team, and a considerable number of community events by related groups have contributed to the creation of the Plan. It has been incredibly valuable to have such a wide and diverse dialogue about important issues concerning the future of the area, and it has been the team's purpose to include many of the creative ideas into the Station Area Plan.

The Plan proposes ideas for thirty years into the future. For any such plan to be relevant over a long period of time, it needs to make a bold framework for development, while also being flexible for change within that framework. It is impossible to predict the future with assurance, but major policies and large physical realities of the plan can be set. Development actions will occur in different forms as markets and other circumstances evolve over the coming decades. The Diridon Plan proposes the largest ideas for the Station Area and outlines many of the policies and physical design concepts for the future.

Beginning with goals and objectives, the Plan describes the many aspects of the Preferred Plan for the Diridon Station Area. Design guidelines follow, which are a tool to guide the future implementation of the plan by public and private development. An exploration of one possible future of the preferred plan is presented, which considers what a maximum amount of development could be in the future. Then the Plan considers the next steps in the planning process, including environmental analysis and actions for implementation.

San José is poised to create a model urban transportation hub within an exciting and livable downtown environment. This Diridon Station Area Plan is a vital step on the way toward the creation of an innovative urban place, a place which has the potential to serve as a model for the United States and the world.

## 1.2 Project Goals and Objectives

In July 2008, the City of San José was selected as an award recipient for the Diridon Station Area as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC's) Station Area Planning Grant Program. One aspect of the Grant Program is to fund city-sponsored planning efforts for areas around future BART stations.

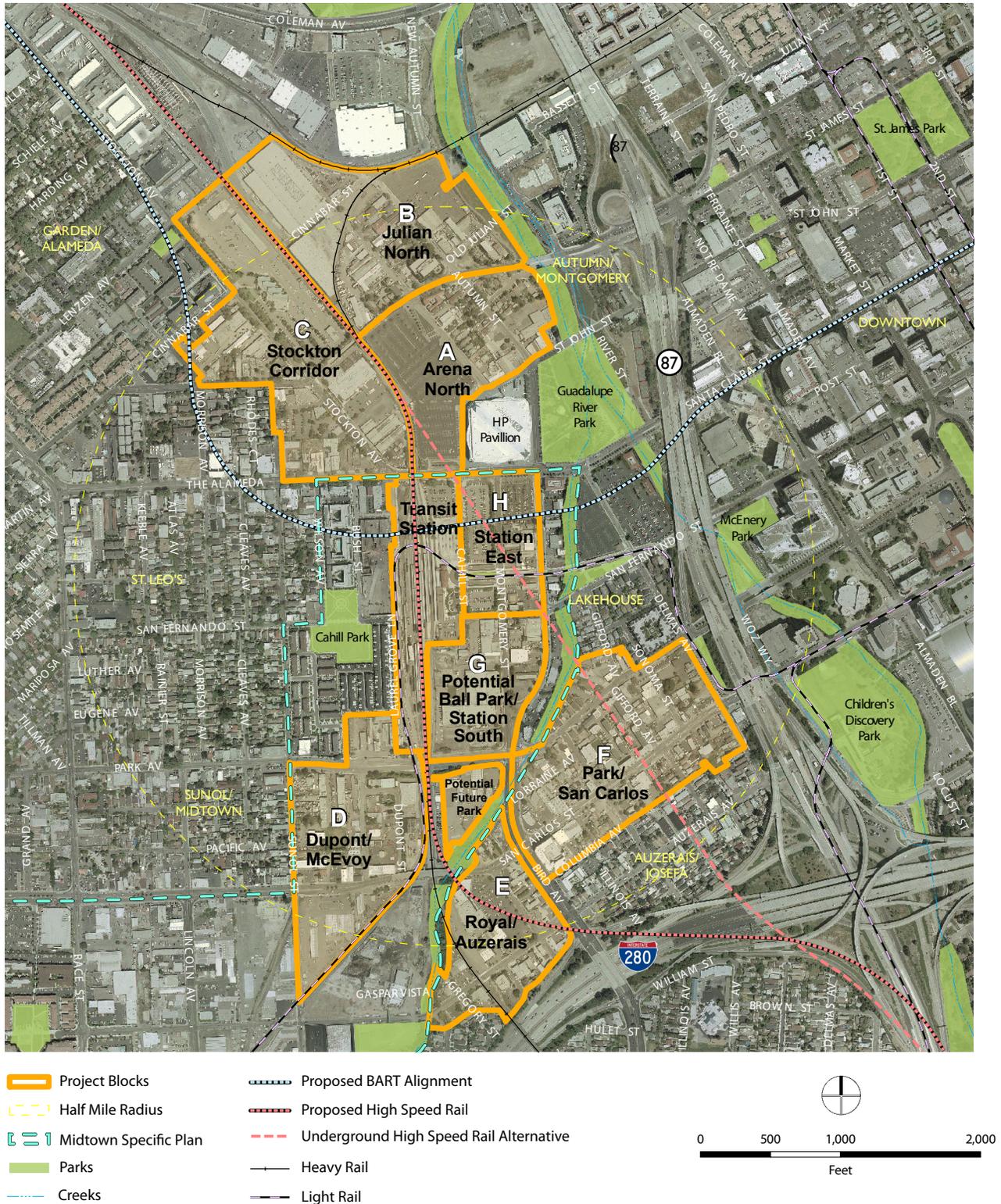
In November 2008 California voters approved Proposition 1A to fund the initial stages of developing a High Speed Rail (HSR) system linking Northern and Southern California. Diridon has been identified as one of the stations along the route, thus eventually establishing this location as one of the best connected multi-modal transit hubs in the Western United States.

The project goal is to develop a Station Area Plan around the Diridon Station transit center that anticipates maximum possible build-out of new transit-related development and to obtain environmental clearance under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

This report contains a description of the preferred plan for the Diridon Station Area and some general design guidelines to assist The City with subsequent projects and eventual implementation. It builds upon two previous reports. The Existing Conditions Report, published in March 2010 included an evaluation of existing and proposed land uses, market, regulatory, and infrastructure conditions. The Alternatives Analysis Report, published in July 2010, contained a summary of three project alternatives and an evaluation of their relative merits, including feedback received from various stakeholders, as a basis for developing a preferred plan.

This report analyzes the expansion of the existing Diridon Station and the development of land uses within the 250 acre project boundary surrounding the station. The description of the preferred plan and the general design guidelines contained within this report will become the basis for the City of San José to establish regulations, implementation strategies and detailed

FIGURE I-2-1: DIRIDON STATION AREA IN CONTEXT



design guidelines to encourage appropriate transit-adjacent development within the Diridon Station Area.

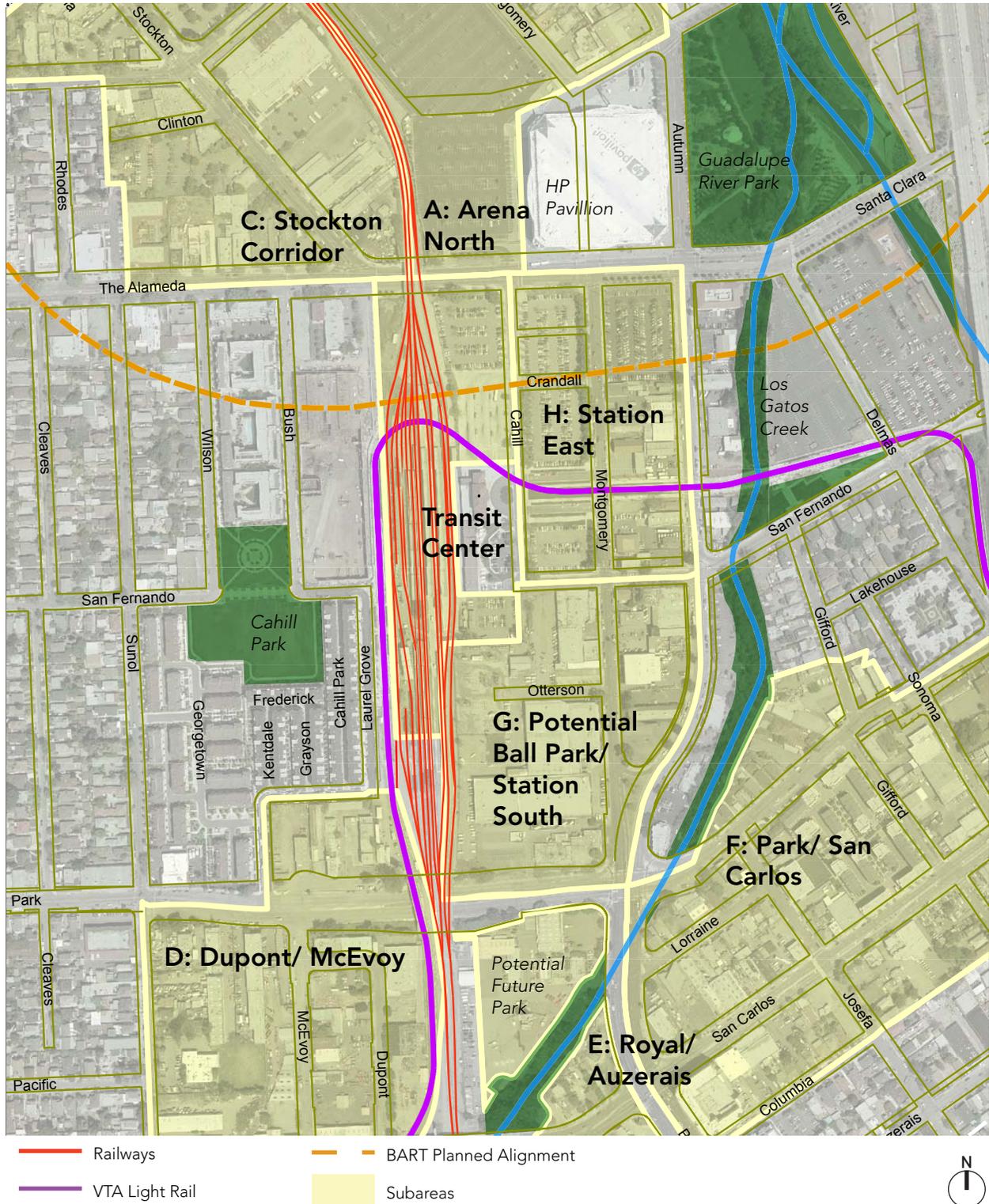
The primary project objectives are to:

- establish a land use plan and policy framework that will guide future development and redevelopment toward land uses that support transit ridership and economic development and create a world-class cultural destination;
- improve pedestrian, bicycle, motorized and transit connectivity between the station site and existing adjacent commercial and residential areas;
- develop and implement urban design standards that promote walkable, livable, and business supportive environments within the Diridon Station Area;
- provide a variety of commercial and mixed-use development opportunities, ranging from large-scale corporate or institutional sites to smaller infill development sites;
- create a highly active and lively pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment with excellent connectivity to downtown destinations and regional transit;
- expand Diridon Station to create a well-integrated center of architectural and functional significance;
- enhance the existing neighborhoods and add high-density residential-commercial mixed-use development within the study area and to act as a catalyst for similar developments in surrounding areas;
- prepare a program-level environmental clearance document which anticipates the maximum build out to facilitate subsequent project-level environmental review, possible changes to existing policy/regulatory documents, capital improvement projects, and private development proposals;
- educate and inform the public about the area planning process and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) concepts;
- create a great place in the City of San José that is a local and regional destination.

**The Diridon Station Transit Center is located along the Union Pacific/Caltrain/Amtrak/Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) right-of-way.**

**The Transit Center, already a major transit hub, will emerge as one of the premier multimodal stations in the Bay Area as a station of the proposed BART extension to Silicon Valley and the proposed California High Speed Rail (HSR) to San Francisco to the north and Los Angeles to the south.**

FIGURE I-2-2: DIRIDON STATION AREA



## 1.3 Planning Process and Schedule

The Diridon Station Area planning process was initiated on June 2, 2009, upon the San José City Council's action to accept an MTC Station Area Planning Grant and approve a consultant contract for a two-year process to be completed by July 2011. The City of San José is the lead agency for completing the primary project objectives (described on page 1-5), and has agreed to coordinate the planning effort with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). Throughout the study, extensive efforts have been made to engage members of the business and development community, as well as residents within the immediate area and surrounding long-established neighborhoods. The surrounding areas have neighborhood associations with a history of active participation in both City and private development proposals and activities. Many of these associations have been supportive of improving transit and pedestrian access and circulation, but remain focused on ensuring that future new development within their neighborhoods will enhance the area's amenities and will not detract from the quality of life.

Between July 2009 and February 2010, the design team assembled and published an Existing Conditions Report which was used as a foundation for establishing the constraints, opportunities, emerging themes and specific goals for the project.

Between February and July 2010 the design team developed three project alternatives which were presented to the public for comment and feedback at a second community workshop. This feedback, along with input from City and Agency staff, stakeholders and transit operators was incorporated into the evolving design and helped to guide the design team towards the selection and refinement of the preferred plan which is described in this report.

Upon completion of this phase of the project, the design team will begin the environmental analysis of the preferred plan. This is scheduled to commence in June 2011 and be complete by June 2012.

The final Diridon Station Area Plan is anticipated to be heard at a public hearing by the San José City Council in the Summer 2012. Once the City Council adopts the final Station Area Plan, City staff and the consultant team will prepare any necessary General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments to provide a policy framework for implementation. This will enable the City and the Redevelopment Agency to market the redevelopment of the Diridon Station Area. Zoning Ordinance amendments (not included in this project scope of work) may incorporate form-based zoning concepts as needed to regulate physical form related to standards for building envelopes, architecture, and streets in a clearly written plan.

Key agency stakeholders who were invited to participate in the development of the preferred plan were:

- City of San José Department of Transportation
- City of San José Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
- City of San José Redevelopment Agency
- City of San José Department of Housing
- City of San José Office of Cultural Affairs
- Association of Bay Area Governments
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain)

## 1.4 Emerging themes and goals

The project team discussed the set of ‘emerging themes’ at the beginning of the design process, based on the collective input received during the Existing Conditions Report phase of the project, to gain consensus on the primary goals and objectives for the development of the preferred plan.

The emerging themes embody the overall spirit and characteristics the community has indicated are important to include as the preferred plan developed. They can also be used as a basis for ongoing evaluation of subsequent detailed planning projects, a framework for Station Area Plan policies and for planning applications for individual projects as they come forward. These themes are listed below.

### OVERALL THEMES

- Establish the Station and surrounding area as the local, citywide, and regional destination where residents and visitors alike can live, work, and play.
- Foster a vibrant public realm throughout the Station area that supports pedestrian activity and integrates public spaces into development with new plazas, parks, and public spaces.
- Reflect the Silicon Valley spirit of innovation and San José’s rich history of transformation and progress through iconic, world-class architecture, distinctive civic spaces, and dynamic built environments.
- Create a strong sense of place for the Diridon area, and an identifier for San José as the center of Silicon Valley and the technological capital of the world.

### SPECIFIC GOALS

- **Urban Form and Structure.** Create a high-intensity *urban district* next to the Station with taller buildings at the core. The Station Area would accommodate a mix of uses including commercial, office, entertainment, and residential development.

- **Connectivity.** Establish and strengthen connections to surrounding districts and within the planning area for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, with emphasis on east-west connectivity across SR-87 and the rail corridor.
- **Transportation.** Prioritize *pedestrian circulation and transit*. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connection to Guadalupe River from the area.
- **Compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.** Ensure *sensitive transitions* in scale and design to surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- **Land Use.** Provide a range of commercial and residential uses. Commercial uses would include *neighborhood services* for surrounding residential areas, and a *synergistic mix* of entertainment, hotels, shopping, restaurants, and offices.
- **Open Space.** Enhance and expand *recreational opportunities* in the Station area, and establish an open space system integrated with Los Gatos Creek and Guadalupe River Park.
- **Art.** *Activate the streets, parks, and Station with art* that engages visitors and residents alike. Integrate art into infrastructure to humanize and enliven standard features.
- **Parking.** *Disperse parking* in different locations in the planning area and beyond to ensure easy walking access to destinations

## 1.5 Constraints and assumptions

Two very significant variables - the City's proposal to locate a new baseball park within the study area and the status of the State of California proposed high speed rail project - have had an important influence on the evolution of the preferred station concept and land use plan and are discussed below.

### **NEW BASEBALL PARK**

The City of San José is currently working to attract the Oakland A's to a new purpose built state-of-the-art ballpark in San José, and is waiting for a decision by the Major League Baseball (MLB) on whether this territorial change is permissible and whether the Oakland A's are able to agree on a set of terms and conditions for their relocation to San José. The identified site for a future baseball stadium is within the Diridon Station study boundary. Conceptual plans have been developed and a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) has been certified which demonstrate how a 32,000 - 36,000 seat stadium can be located within project sub-area G. Although the MLB decision has not been reached by the time of writing this report, the City of San José is confident that the A's will eventually be able to relocate and has instructed the design team to include the new ballpark stadium in the preferred plan.

### **HIGH SPEED RAIL ALIGNMENTS**

The California High Speed Rail Authority's (CHSRA) currently preferred alignment through the Diridon Station Area is along an elevated structure above the existing surface Amtrak/Caltrain/ACE tracks to the north of the station and at the station itself. To the south, CHSRA has adopted The City's preferred elevated alignment which curves round to the east as it leaves the station heading south, and follows the Interstate 280 and State Route 87 alignments. The tracks climb high enough as they leave the southern end of the station to rise above the freeways and then follow their route until the tracks pass into the Monterey Corridor section of the CHSRA route to the south. Figure 2-2-3 shows the

elevated route as it passes through the project area. However, The City of San José is also urging the CHSRA to continue to study an alternative underground alignment through to the conclusion of their Alternatives Analysis Phase, and this diagonal below-grade route is shown as an alternative alignment on several diagrams in Chapter 2 (Figures 2-1-1, 2-2-1, 2-2-2, and 2-6-10). The underground alternative will have no impact on the overall build-out and circulation plan but will require an underground connection between the high speed train platforms and the new station building (see Figure 2-5-8).

## **OTHER CONSTRAINTS**

A number of other constraints and goals were either set at the beginning of the design process or evolved during the design review meetings with the client group and are listed below.

### ***Realignment of Autumn Parkway:***

The proposed realignment of Autumn Parkway to connect Coleman Avenue in the north with I-280 in the south. Drawings of this revised road network were given to the design team and this new alignment was recognized in the preferred plan.

### ***Completion of the Los Gatos Creek Master Plan:***

Making the final connection between the northern and southern sections of the creekside park and trails by completing the section between Santa Clara Street and Park Avenue is a high priority for the City and the community. The preferred plan show this final piece in place as part of the approach to the distribution and connection of public open space.

### ***Protection of employment based zones:***

City and Agency staff directed the design team to minimize the conversion of lands currently designated for employment uses to residential uses. This direction is consistent with the Envision San José 2040 goal to preserve existing and create new jobs to make

San José a regional employment center. This direction is also consistent with this Plan's goal to transform the Diridon Station Area into a destination, with transit supportive employment uses focused within walking distance of the station. Given these goals, the Preferred Plan looks at ways of intensifying the employment opportunities on land currently used for employment.

***New community park at the existing Fire Department training yard:***

The existing facility, bounded by Park Avenue, South Montgomery Street, West San Carlos Street and the railroad tracks has been identified by The City as an opportunity site for a new public park if the fire training station chooses to relocate elsewhere within San José. This area is shown as a large new public park with the Los Gatos creek running through it in the preferred plan.

## 1.6 Report Organization

This report contains a description of the preferred plan for the Diridon Station Area and some general design guidelines to assist The City with subsequent projects and eventual implementation.

Chapter 2 includes a general description of multiple aspects of the preferred plan arranged into specific categories which generally follow the same format as used in the previous alternatives analysis report.

Chapter 3 contains some general design guidelines for size, shape and location of major built elements and public open spaces, including some general streetscape and landscaping guidelines.

Chapter 4 includes a detailed description of two specific aspects of the preferred plan which required actual counts and calculations - the maximum build-out potential of the entire project area and the size, distribution and availability of parking supply to meet the predicted cumulative demand.

Chapter 5 describes how this report fits within the overall project framework and how the next steps in the process will be environmental analysis and clearance.

Appendix A illustrates and summarizes the information presented at Community Workshop #3, which was an integral part of the design process for the preferred plan, and includes a summary report of community feedback received during the event.

Appendix B includes all references used in this report.

