

Proposed General Plan Update Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions



Urban Design – Downtown

Downtown Urban Design

- Goal UD-7: Realize Downtown’s full potential as a regional destination and diverse cultural, recreational, civic, and employment center through distinctive and high-quality design.**
- Policy UD-7.1 Recognize Downtown as the most vibrant urban area of San Jose and maximize development potential and overall density within the Downtown.
- Policy UD-7.2 Design new development with a scale, quality, and character to strengthen Downtown’s status as a major urban center.
- Policy UD-7.3 Design publicly-accessible areas to welcome the entire City, allow easy access and facilitate movement of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the Downtown, and provide strong physical and visual connections across potential barriers (i.e., roadways and creeks) Promote Downtown as a focal point for community activity (i.e., festivals, parades, etc.) for the entire City.
- Policy UD-7.4 Design quality publicly-accessible open spaces at appropriate locations that enhance the pedestrian experience and attract people to the Downtown. Use appropriate design, scale, and edge treatment to define, and create publicly-accessible spaces that positively contribute to the character of the area and provide public access to community gathering, recreational, artistic, cultural, or natural amenities.
- Policy UD-7.5 Promote iconic architecture and encourage and incorporate innovative, varied, and dynamic design features (i.e., appearance, function, sustainability aspects) into sites, buildings, art, streetscapes, landscapes, and signage to make Downtown visually exciting and to attract residents and visitors to come and enjoy Downtown.
- Policy UD-7.6 Promote development that contributes to a dramatic urban skyline. Encourage variations in building massing and form, especially for buildings taller than 75 feet, to create distinctive silhouettes for the Downtown skyline.

- Policy UD-7.7 Recognize Downtown’s unique character as the oldest part of the City, and leverage historic resources to create a unique urban environment for Downtown. Respect and respond to on-site and surrounding historic character in proposals for development.
- Policy UD-7.8 Recognize Downtown as the hub of the County’s transportation system and design buildings and public spaces to connect and maximize use of all types of transit. Design Downtown pedestrian and transit facilities to the highest quality standards to enhance the aesthetic environment and to promote walking, bicycling, and transit use. Design buildings to enhance the pedestrian environment by creating visual interest and by fostering active uses at the street level.
- Policy UD-7.9 Design buildings with site, façade, and rooftop locations and facilities to accommodate effective signage. Encourage Downtown businesses and organizations to invest in high quality signs, especially those that enliven the pedestrian experience or enhance the Downtown skyline.
- Policy UD-7.10 Maintain Downtown design guidelines and policies adopted by the City to guide development and ensure a high standard of architectural and site design in the City’s center.
- Policy UD-7.11 Design public sidewalks with ample width to be shared by large volumes of pedestrians and bicyclists, and plant and maintain street trees to provide a tree canopy for shade to enhance the visitor experience.
- Policy UD-7.12 Promote creative and experimental urban forms, activities and land uses that further the economic, environmental and social goals of this plan and reflect San Jose’s culture of innovation.