

Proposed General Plan Update Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions



Urban Design – Hillside & Rural Areas

The Hillside and Rural Areas are natural resources that provide a valuable scenic backdrop for much of the City and serve as habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. The goals and policies in this section seek to preserve and protect the Hillside and Rural Areas as positive contributors to the City, while also protecting the public from the natural hazards, such as landslides or fires, that can occur in these areas.

Goal HS-1 Preserve the valuable natural resources of the hillsides, and protect their aesthetic and habitat amenities to enhance the rural character of these areas.

Policy HS-1.1 Allow development in Hillside and Rural Residential Areas consistent with or below existing or planned densities in these areas to maximize resource conservation. Support development only when it is compatible with the character and pattern of the surrounding area, even if below the maximum potential residential density as designated on the Land Use/Transportation Diagram.

Policy HS-1.2 Apply strong architectural, site, and grading design controls through a discretionary development review process of all types of Hillside and Rural Residential development that require significant grading activities in order to protect the hillsides and to minimize potential adverse visual and environmental impacts. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)

Policy HS-1.3 Minimize grading on hillsides and design any necessary grading or recontouring to preserve the natural character of the hills and to minimize the removal of significant vegetation, especially native trees such as Valley Oaks. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)

Policy HS-1.4 Apply the following guidelines for development in Hillside and Rural Residential areas in order to preserve and enhance the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the natural terrain:

- a. Design development in a sensitive manner to highlight and compliment the natural environment.
- b. Use large lot sizes and varying setbacks in order to respect and preserve natural features of the land.
- c. Adapt construction techniques and housing types to variable terrains. Use split pads and stepped foundations where

- appropriate, especially to minimize required grading, and discourage conventional, single flat-pad housing designs.
- d. Consider privacy, livability, solar orientation and wind conditions when siting residential dwellings. Dwelling unit sites should take advantage of scenic views but should be located below hilltops to protect the aesthetics and ridgeline silhouette viewed from below, from public places, and from the valley floor.
 - e. Encourage preservation of existing trees, rock outcroppings and other significant features.
 - f. When grading or recontouring of the terrain is proposed, preserve the natural character of the hills and blend the alterations into the natural terrain wherever possible.
 - g. Design streets to provide access and connectivity for area residents, and consider potential viewshed opportunity in siting development. Consider and encourage reduced width and modified street sections to design streets for utility and to minimize grading. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)

- Policy HS-1.5 Apply the following guidelines to the design and construction of public and private right-of-way improvements in order to preserve and enhance the scenic and aesthetic qualities of rural areas designated as Hillside or Rural Residential:
- a. Design streets in consideration of the natural topography and the landscape. Consider use of divided streets and grade separations.
 - b. Encourage use of crushed gravel walks and vegetation lined swales, and only construct concrete sidewalks, curbs, and gutters when required by the topography or other regulations.
 - c. Limit street lighting to intersections, and use low-intensity lighting appropriate for these areas.
 - d. Use finishes or colors that blend man-made materials within the public right-of-way with the natural surroundings. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Policy HS-1.6 Avoid development along ridges and other major hillside areas that surround the valley floor to minimize visibility of development on these aesthetic resources.
- Policy HS-1.7 Consider habitat conservation objectives as part of hillside development proposals.
- Policy HS-1.8 Encourage the preservation of hillside vegetation and require appropriate revegetation and planting for projects in hillside areas, if existing vegetation must be removed. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)

- Policy HS-1.9 Maintain design guidelines and policies adopted by the City to guide hillside development to promote aesthetics and enhance the rural character of hillside areas.
- Goal HS-2 Minimize exposure of the public to potential environmental hazards associated with development on the hillsides.**
- Policy HS-2.1 Allow development in hillside areas only if potential danger to the health, safety, and welfare of the residents, due to landslides, fire, or other environmental hazards, can be mitigated to an acceptable level. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy HS-2.2 Design development to minimize exposure of the public to environmental hazards, such as landslides and fires. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy HS-2.3 Require soils and geologic review of hillside development proposals to assess such potential hazards as seismic hazards, surface ruptures, liquefaction, landsliding, mudsliding, erosion and sedimentation in order to determine if these hazards are present and can be adequately mitigated. Use geotechnical studies of hillside development proposals to determine the full extent of seismic and other hazards, the optimum locations for structures, the advisability of special structural requirements, and the feasibility and desirability of a proposed structure in a specified location. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy HS- 2.4 Incorporate mitigation measures identified through geotechnical and other studies necessary to protect public safety and the natural environment. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy HS-2.4 Design hillside development within areas of potential geological hazards to avoid being endangered by, or contributing to, the hazardous conditions on the site or on adjoining properties. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy HS-2.5 Discourage locating public improvements, communication facilities, and utilities in hillside areas with identified soils and/or geologic hazards to avoid any extraordinary maintenance and operating expenses. When the location of public improvements, communication facilities, and utilities in such areas cannot be avoided, implement effective mitigation measures to maximize their potential to remain functional during and after a seismic event. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)

- Policy HS-2.6 Require appropriate erosion control measures in conjunction with proposed development on hillside areas susceptible to erosion. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy HS-2.7 When reviewing hillside development proposals, consider the potential for any extraordinary expenditures of public resources to provide emergency services in the event of a man-made or natural disaster. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)