

# Proposed General Plan Update Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions



## Urban Design

### Attractive City

**Goal 1:** Create a well-designed, unique, and vibrant public realm with appropriate uses to maximize pedestrian activity; support community interaction; and attract residents, business, and visitors to San Jose.

Policy UD-1.1 Require the highest standards of architectural and site design, and continue to apply strong design controls for all development projects, both public and private, for the enhancement and development of community character and for the proper transition between areas with different types of land uses. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)

Policy UD-1.2 Include attractive landscaping, public art, civic landmarks, sidewalk cafés, gateways, water features, interpretive/way-finding signage, farmers markets, festivals, outdoor entertainment, pocket parks, street furniture, plazas, squares, or other amenities in the public realm. As resources are available, assign priority to the implementation of programs for the installation and maintenance of features in the public right-of-way. (San Jose 2002 General Plan, revised)

Policy UD-1.3 Further City Design Concepts of this Plan to focus growth in appropriate locations; design complete streets for people; promote Grand Boulevards, Main Streets, and Downtown; support transit; and foster a healthy community.

Policy UD-1.4 Create streets and public spaces that provide stimulating settings and promote pedestrian activity by following applicable goals and policies in the Vibrant Arts and Culture section of this Plan.

Policy UD-1.5 Encourage incorporation of public amenities, such as plazas or squares, into new and existing commercial and mixed-use developments.

### ***Pedestrian***

Policy UD-1.6 Provide pedestrian amenities along project frontages and in primary pedestrian areas such as trees, lighting, recycling and refuse containers, seating, awnings, or other amenities.

Policy UD-1.7 Create an attractive street presence with pedestrian-scale building elements that provide an engaging and diverse walking environment. Enhance pedestrian activity by incorporating appropriate building design techniques into private developments, particularly in Downtown, Villages, Corridors, Main Streets, Corridors, and other locations where appropriate.

- Policy UD-1.8 In Downtown, Villages, Corridors, and along Main Streets, commercial buildings should be placed at or near the front property line and parking areas avoided along street frontages to minimize breaks in the retail frontage and reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians on the public sidewalk.
- Policy UD-1.9 To create a more pleasing pedestrian environment, building frontages should include design elements with a human scale, varied and articulated facades, and entries oriented to public sidewalks or pedestrian pathways. Windows and/or entries should be provided along sidewalks and pathways, and blank walls that do not enhance the pedestrian experience should be avoided. (San Jose 2020 General Plan).

### *Architecture*

- Policy UD-1.11 Building design should exhibit a unique architectural approach that is complementary of the character and scale of existing or planned development in the surrounding area. “Franchise architecture” is strongly discouraged.
- Policy UD-1.12 Use design review to encourage creative, high-quality, innovative, and distinctive architecture that helps to create unique, vibrant places that are both desirable urban places to live, work, and play and that lead to competitive advantages over other regions
- Policy UD-1.13 Use the Village Plan process to identify a distinguishing Village architectural style to give each Village a unique, identifiable character.
- Policy UD-1.14 Encourage inviting and enticing façades and designs for commercial buildings, especially retail buildings. To welcome and entice the community and potential patrons into commercial and retail areas, strongly discourage gates and fences at the front of commercial properties.
- Policy UD-1.15 Provide aesthetically pleasing and visually interesting parking garages with clearly identified pedestrian entrances and walkways. Consider screening of parked vehicles and potential impact of headlights on adjacent buildings and land uses.
- Policy UD-1.16 Determine appropriate locations for signage at the development review stage to ensure that building designs can adequately accommodate signage, including pedestrian-oriented signage.
- Action UD-1.17 Consider development of an annual award program for the development community to recognize examples of best projects or practices, including best architecture, site design, or historical retrofit/renovation.

### *Landscape*

- Policy UD-1.18 Where other urban design policies do not take precedence, include adequate landscaped areas in private development and include provisions for ongoing landscape maintenance. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Policy UD-1.19 Further the Community Forest Goals and Policies in this Plan, and recognize the aesthetic, environmental, and shade benefits that trees provide to make

places more inviting. Require planting and maintenance of trees at appropriate locations on public and private property, particularly along project street frontages, for new development. Use trees to help soften the scale of building massing, and help provide appropriate transitions between land uses.

- Policy UD-1.20 New development projects should include preservation of ordinance-sized and other significant trees. Any adverse affect on the health and longevity of such trees should be avoided through appropriate design measures and construction practices. When tree preservation is not feasible, include appropriate tree replacements or alternative mitigation measures in the project. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)

***Other***

- Policy UD-1.21 Development adjacent to creekside areas should incorporate compatible design and landscaping, including appropriate setbacks and plant species which are native to the area or are compatible with native species. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised) Projects should be designed to maximize visual and physical access to creeks from the public right-of-way.

- Policy UD-1.22 Consider the Historic Preservation Goals and Policies of this plan when proposing changes to historic resources, or development nearby those historic resources.

- Policy UD-1.23 Locate public and private utilities to be as visually unintrusive as possible, with utilities located underground or incorporated into buildings. Convert exterior utility areas into a site amenity by use as pedestrian paths, public art, or by screening with landscaping.

- Policy UD-1.24 Require the undergrounding of distribution utility lines serving new development sites as well as proposed redevelopment sites. Encourage programs for undergrounding existing overhead distribution lines. Overhead lines providing electrical power to light rail transit vehicles and high tension electrical transmission lines are exempt from this policy. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)

- Policy UD-1.25 In order to maintain and protect the integrity, character and aesthetic environment of the streetscape in industrial, commercial, and residential neighborhoods, new billboards should be permitted only under Planned Development zoning and only where they do not create visual clutter and blight. The relocation of existing billboards from impacted areas to locations where they would have a less visually blighting effect should be encouraged. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)

**Function**

- Goal 2: Create integrated public and private areas and uses that work together to support businesses and to promote pedestrian activity and multi-modal transportation.**

- Policy UD-2.1 Promote the Circulation Goals and Policies in this Plan. Create streets that promote pedestrian and bicycle transportation by following applicable goals and policies in the Circulation section of this Plan. Design the street network for shared use of the road by pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles, and include elements to increase driver awareness. Incorporate features such as wider sidewalks, shade structures, street trees, reduced traffic speeds, pedestrian-oriented lighting, mid-block pedestrian crossings, pedestrian-activated crossing lights, bulbouts and curb extensions at intersections, and on-street parking to help buffer pedestrians from vehicles. Consider support for reduced parking requirements and Transportation Demand Management strategies to reduce area dedicated to parking and increase area dedicated to employment, housing, parks, public art, or other amenities.
- Policy UD-2.2 Recognize that different street types (e.g., expressways, arterials, Main Streets) generate different urban design expectations, with different priorities for alternative transportation modes and access by pedestrians, bicycles and vehicular traffic.
- Policy UD-2.3 Enhance pedestrian activity by incorporating appropriate site design techniques and regulating uses in private developments, particularly in Downtown, Villages, Corridors, Main Streets, and other locations where appropriate.
- a. Include attractive and interesting streetscape features such as street furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, pedestrian oriented signage, clocks, fountains, landscaping, and street trees that provide shade, with improvements to sidewalks and other pedestrian ways.
  - b. Strongly discourage commercial uses oriented to occupants of vehicles, such as drive-up services, in pedestrian-oriented areas. Uses that serve the vehicle, such as car washes and service stations, may be considered appropriate in these areas when they do not disrupt pedestrian flow, are not concentrated in one area, do not break up the building mass of the streetscape, are consistent with other policies in this Plan, and are compatible with the planned uses of the area.
  - c. Provide pedestrian connections as outlined in the Urban Design Connections Goal and Policies. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
  - d. Locate retail and other active uses at street levels
  - e. Create easily identifiable and accessible building entrances located on street frontages or paseos.
  - f. Integrate existing or proposed transit stops into project designs.
  - g. Discourage sidewalk elevators in areas of high pedestrian usage. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Policy UD-2.4 Incorporate public spaces (squares, plazas, etc.) into private developments, particularly when symbiotic relationships between businesses, residents, and visitors can flourish as a result.

- Policy UD-2.5 Integrate Green Building Goals and Policies of this Plan into site design. Consider factors such as shaded parking areas, pedestrian connections, minimization of impervious surfaces, incorporation of stormwater treatment measures, appropriate building orientations, etc.
- Policy UD-2.6 Design private streets to appear and function like public streets. Include street trees and sidewalks, and prohibit gated communities which restrict connectivity, unless extreme circumstances warrant separation of public and private space.
- Policy UD-2.7 All mixed-use development in commercial areas should be designed to provide sizes and configurations of commercial spaces that support and facilitate successful businesses. Ensure appropriate floor-to-floor heights, tenant square footages, window glazing, and infrastructure for restaurants and retail uses that provide long-term flexibility in accommodating a variety of commercial tenants. Retail uses should have primary entrances at the street and should be at sidewalk grade, particularly in Downtown, Villages, Corridors, and along Main Streets.
- Policy UD-2.8 Encourage adaptable space that can be used for multiple employment or public/quasi-public purposes (e.g., satellite office space, community meeting, and religious assembly uses accommodated in a single space). (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Policy UD-2.9 Recognize that finite land area exists for redevelopment and that density supports retail and transit ridership. Encourage maximum utilization of land planned for growth, particularly with residential projects, since residential uses typically redevelop less frequently than employment uses. Discourage residential product types that are inefficient land uses, such as small-lot, single-family detached products.
- Policy UD-2.10 Require new development in Downtown, Villages, or Corridors, whenever possible, to provide parking above or below buildings, or in a parking structure. In these areas, avoid the construction of surface parking lots, unless the surface parking is an interim condition that is expressly intended to redevelop into a more cohesive urban form in the future.

### **Connections**

**Goal 3: Provide pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections throughout existing and new development that promote pedestrian activity, multi-modal transit use, environmental sustainability, economic stability, and public health.**

- Policy UD-3.1 Promote development patterns that cause areas to function and provide connectivity as a whole rather than as individual developments.
- Policy UD-3.2. Create a pedestrian friendly environment by connecting the internal components of all new development with safe, convenient, accessible, and

pleasant pedestrian facilities and by requiring pedestrian connections between building entrances and other site features in new development and adjacent public streets. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)

- Policy UD-3.3 Encourage pedestrian cross-access connections between adjacent commercial properties and require appropriate pedestrian and bicycle connections to public streets and other public areas, with particular attention and priority given to providing convenient access to transit facilities. Provide pedestrian and vehicular connections with cross-access easements within and between new and existing developments to encourage walking and minimize interruptions by parking areas and curb cuts. Encourage shared parking arrangements to maximize parking efficiency and consider parking reductions when uses are suitable for shared parking. Use design techniques such as small city blocks, multiple building entrances, and pedestrian paseos to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections. Minimize driveway entrances to enhance pedestrian safety and decrease the area of paved surfaces.
- Policy UD-3.4 Residential developments should maximize pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections to adjacent existing and planned neighborhoods. Use cul-de-sacs only when no options exist to connect one area to another, or if such design would help preclude development from extending to areas where it is not planned.
- Policy UD-3.5 Residential developments which are adjacent to parks or open spaces should provide direct access to, and common open space contiguous to, such areas. (San Jose 2002 General Plan)
- Policy UD-3.6 Encourage shared vehicular access points that serve multiple uses and/or parcels, including shared access for commercial and residential uses.
- Policy UD-3.7 New development should increase neighborhood connectivity by providing access across natural barriers (e.g., rivers) and man-made barriers (e.g., freeways). (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy UD-3.8 Encourage new development to connect with the surrounding community and continue the existing street grid wherever possible.

### **Compatibility**

**Goal 4: Provide aesthetically pleasing streetscapes and buildings that establish an identifiable character for an area and respect desirable elements of existing community character and context.**

- Policy UD-4.1. Maintain and update design guidelines adopted by the City Council, and follow applicable design guidelines in the design of development projects, unless alternative policies take precedence. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Policy UD-4.2 Develop policies for City Council or Planning Commission approval when specific land uses, structures, development types, or other urban design factors

necessitate more specific criteria than those identified in this Plan to follow in the development review process, as appropriate.

- Policy UD-4.3 Promote consistent development patterns along streets, particularly in how buildings relate to the street, to provide visual order and preserve and enhance unique or desirable characteristics of an area. Build on existing strengths of the neighborhood.
- Policy UD-4.4 Approach development in each of San Jose's diverse areas differently, as appropriate:
- a. In non-growth areas, new development and subdivisions should reflect the character of predominant existing development of the same type and in the surrounding area through the regulation of lot size/street frontage, height, scale, siting/setbacks, structure orientation, or other standards.
  - b. In transition areas between identified growth areas and non-growth areas, development should use a combination of building setbacks, building step-backs, materials, building orientation, landscaping, and other design techniques to provide a consistent streetscape that buffers lower-intensity non-growth areas from higher-intensity growth areas.
  - c. Support cohesive and interesting urban development along Grand Boulevards, and include such design elements as enhanced landscaping; attractive lighting; wide, comfortable sidewalks; area identification banners; and harmonious building scale, setbacks, and other design features.
  - d. Along Main Streets, support pedestrian-oriented development that facilitates interaction among community members and conveys a unique identity that reflects the character of the surrounding area.
  - e. Include development standards in Village Plans that establish streetscape consistency in terms of street sections, street-level massing, setbacks, heights, and other design criteria.
- Policy UD-4.5 Consider the character of existing and planned context (including but not limited to scale, materials, and relationship to the street) and the neighborhood fabric in the surrounding area when designing new or revitalizing existing structures.
- Policy UD-4.6 When development is proposed adjacent to existing or planned parks or along park chains, the development should include frontage roads along the public park in order to maximize access to park lands, to provide a reasonable separation between urban land uses and park lands without the use of "back-up" design, and to maximize public exposure and view of park lands for scenic and security purposes. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Policy UD-4.7 To the extent feasible, sound attenuation for development along City streets should be accomplished through the use of setback and building design rather than the use of sound attenuation walls. Along public streets, sound attenuation

walls should only be deemed necessary along expressways or freeways, and when necessary, landscaping, public art, and/or an aesthetically pleasing and visually interesting design should be used to minimize visual impact. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)

- Policy UD-4.8 For structures, other than buildings, where substantial height is intrinsic to the function of the structures, consider heights above those established for structures in the area. Locate such structures to minimize public visibility and avoid significant adverse effects on adjacent properties. Incorporate visual amenities, such as landscaping, to offset potential visual impacts. (San Jose 2020 General Plan, revised)
- Action UD-4.9 Review and revise height limitations in the Zoning Ordinance to identify maximum heights in various zoning districts, as appropriate.
- Action UD-4.10: Develop specific urban design standards for each individual Grand Boulevard and Main Street.

### **Community Health, Safety, & Wellness**

**Goal 5: Create great places where the built environment provides a safe and healthy setting, fosters interaction between residents, and improves quality of life.**

- Policy UD-5.1 Design areas to facilitate interaction between residents, employees, and visitors to strengthen the sense of community.
- Policy UD-5.2 Promote crime prevention through site and building designs that facilitate natural surveillance or self-policing of communities by putting “eyes on the street.” Design sites to promote visual and physical access from public and private rights-of-ways to public parks and private common open space areas.
- Policy UD-5.3 Promote the Vibrant, Attractive, and Complete Neighborhoods Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions in this Plan.
- Policy UD-5.4 Consider design solutions during the development review process which address security, aesthetics and public safety. Public safety issues include, but are not limited to, minimum clearances around buildings, fire protection measures such as peak load water requirements, construction techniques, and minimum road widths and other standards set forth in relevant City Codes. All development projects should comply with the safety standards established in these referenced codes. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Policy UD-5.5 Design lighting locations and levels to enhance the public realm, promote safety and comfort and create engaging public spaces. Seek to reduce energy use of outdoor lighting and consider the City’s Outdoor Lighting Policy in development review processes.
- Policy UD-5.6 Consider the long-term maintenance needs in the design of private streets and other private infrastructure improvements. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)

- Policy UD-5.7 Comply with applicable Federal Aviation Administration regulations identifying maximum heights for obstructions to promote air safety.
- Policy UD-5.8 To promote safety and to minimize noise impacts in residential and working environments, development which is proposed adjacent to railroad lines should be designed to provide the maximum separation between the rail line and dwelling units, yards or common open space areas, offices and other job locations, facilities for the storage of toxic or explosive materials and the like. To the extent possible, areas of development closest to an adjacent railroad line should be devoted to parking lots, public streets, peripheral landscaping, the storage of non-hazardous materials and so forth. In industrial facilities, where the primary function is the production, processing or storage of hazardous materials, development should follow the setback guidelines and other protective measures called for in the City's Industrial Design Guidelines when such facilities are to be located adjacent to or near a main railroad line. (San Jose 2020 General Plan)
- Goal UD-6: Create thriving, interesting, and attractive Villages and Corridors that reflect unique urban characteristics of an area and provide complete neighborhoods for residents, workers, and visitors.**
- Policy UD-6.1 Designated Villages and Corridors should not be intensified with residential development until a Village Plan has been completed. Residential development that is purely incidental to a primary employment use, such as penthouse residences in an office building, may be considered in advance of a Village Plan.
- Policy UD-6.2 Identify a vision for a consistent urban design character with appropriate development standards, including building scale, setbacks, and other criteria, as part of the Village planning process. Accommodate all planned job and housing growth capacity within each Village and consider projected job growth demand by industry in each respective Village Plan.
- Policy UD-6.3 Minor modifications to Village and Corridor boundaries can be made through the Village Plan process, if these modifications are made to reflect existing or planned development patterns or other physical or functional characteristics of the area.
- Policy UD-6.4 Incorporate a full range of uses in each Village Plan to address daily needs of residents, businesses, and visitors in the area. Consider retail, parks, school, day care, entertainment, plazas, public gathering space, and other uses as part of the Village planning process. Encourage multi-use spaces wherever possible to increase flexibility and responsiveness to community needs over time.
- Policy UD-6.5 Recognize the urban nature of Village areas. Incorporate spaces for and support outdoor uses and limited 24-hour uses, so long as significant adverse impacts do not occur.

Action UD-6.6    Develop a Village Plan in cooperation with the affected community and obtain City Council approval of that plan prior to any residential development in Villages and Corridors that is not purely incidental to a primary employment use.

*Note: Urban Design Goals, Policies, & Actions related to Downtown, hillsides, and scenic views will be forwarded to the Task Force at a later date.*