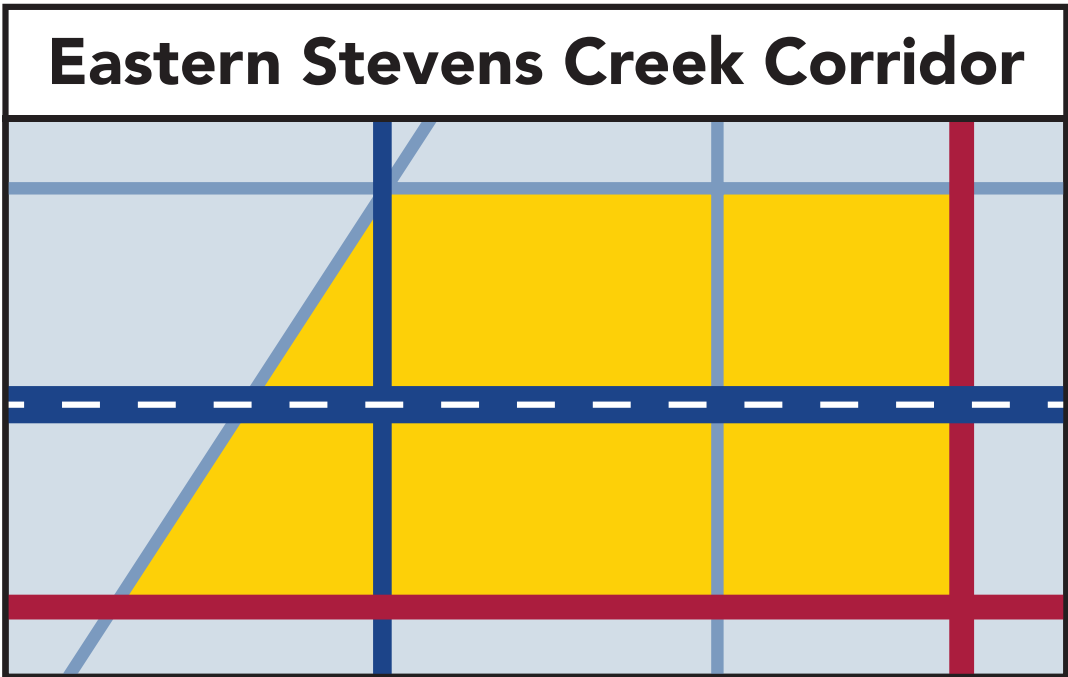


**GOALS TO GUIDE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ALONG THE EASTERN STEVENS CREEK CORRIDOR
IN SANTA CLARA AND SAN JOSE**



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Overall Goals

Big Changes Are Coming to Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County will be experiencing major changes in its growth and development in the relatively near-term future.

By the year 2030 (less than 15 years from now), the county's population is projected to grow by roughly 300,000 more people (equal to two more Sunnyvales).

Also, due largely to the aging of the county's large, existing, under 65 population of Baby Boomers Generation over the next 15 years, about 2/3 of that growth is likely to end up occurring in the county's senior population. By 2030, 1/4 of Santa Clara County's adult population is likely to be over age 65 – the largest percentage of seniors in our County's history.

And, in addition, because there is very little flat, readily-developable, vacant land in the remainder of the county, most of our future growth and development will be taking place through the redevelopment of already developed lands within the area from San Jose to Palo Alto to Milpitas.

And, finally, due to the high cost of land, most of this future development will be occurring at higher densities and in the form of somewhat taller buildings.

All together, these and other forces will bring major changes to Santa Clara County, generally in the form of making it a more urban place, with islands of higher density occurring within what will otherwise remain a predominantly suburban valley.

Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor Will Be an Epicenter of Change

Although proposals for major growth and development in Mountain View's North Bayshore area, in downtown San Jose, and northern Santa Clara have garnered most of the recent public attention, one of the other places likely to experience some of the most dramatic changes is the area along Stevens Creek Boulevard in Santa Clara and San Jose, roughly between Highway 880 and Saratoga Avenue – hereafter referred to as the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor.

Major redevelopment projects already underway (e.g., at Valley Fair and Santana Row), together with large-scale development proposals in the corridor currently working their ways through the development approval process, and other large projects still on the drawing boards will, cumulatively, result in big changes in the character of the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor in Santa Clara and San Jose – within the near-term future.

Coming Changes – Boon or Bain?

Given the cumulative scale and potential impacts of all the new development that is likely to take place within this Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor, there are legitimate reasons to be

concerned regarding whether or not the potential benefits of this future development (including increased sales tax and property tax revenues to the cities) will outweigh the potential negative impacts on existing and future nearby residents and businesses (such as additional traffic in an area that already experiences significant traffic congestion).

Fragmented Ownership, Planning and Decision Making

An ideal, fantasy situation for a positive future for the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor would be if all of the individual current and future development proposals were consistent with a coordinated, detailed, well thought-out, and responsibly-reviewed master plan – owned by a single owner and presented as a single development proposal within a single jurisdiction.

However, for a variety of reasons, the conditions necessary to achieve that do not now exist – and never will.

The reality is that many of these proposed developments are likely to be approved in a piecemeal basis – essentially as proposed or in some modified form – with relatively little attention to whether all the individual pieces will eventually fit together and lead to the creation of a coherent and more livable urban “neighborhood” along the Corridor that contributes to meeting current and future social, economic, and environmental needs in ways that outweigh the likely negative impacts of the additional growth and development in the area.

Among the significant obstacles to achieving a positive outcome such as that include the facts that:

1. Land ownership within the area is fragmented among a number of both large and small landowners, so the development proposals will be coming before local government decision makers for piecemeal, parcel-by-parcel approval
2. Land use planning and development approval authority over the corridor is divided between two cities and their separate city councils – Santa Clara and San Jose
3. There is no single, overall specific plan for guiding development within the entire corridor
4. It would likely take a great amount of time and effort to try to prepare a joint, inter-jurisdictional plan for the corridor – and overcome the political obstacles associated with its preparation, adoption, and implementation
5. Responsibility for addressing transportation and mobility needs in the corridor are divided among the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), and the public works departments of the two cities
6. Existing residents of nearby neighborhoods may focus their attention more on trying to stop the approval of new development, rather than looking for ways that the new development – much of which may be approved, despite their objections – could provide benefits to their neighborhoods

One Possible Solution: Shared Overall Goals

The existence of all these complexities and obstacles raises the question of whether there is anything that can be done to help assure that all the individual current and future developments that take place within this Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor will someday result in

the creation of a unique and special place that can serve as a model for responsible and innovative placemaking and community building for other areas.

One possibility might involve the formulation of a set of informal, overall planning and development goals that – if observed voluntarily by landowners, developers, cities and other agencies – could result in the making the redeveloped Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor a truly special, livable place.

These overall goals could be used not only to guide future planning and development, but also as a “checklist” for evaluating individual development proposals as they come forward for approval. The more goals a proposed project contributed to achieving, the greater its likelihood of gaining community support for approval.

An Initial Rough Draft

This document is an initial rough draft presenting an example of the potential scope and format for potential planning and development goals for the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor.

They are presented mainly as a starting point for stakeholder review and discussion.

Overall Goals:

Future development should:

1. Be guided by an overall vision that responsibly and creatively addresses both current and future needs
2. Create a unique, vibrant, and livable mixed use urban neighborhood that provides housing and mobility choices for all ages, incomes, household types, and physical capabilities
3. Respect and benefit existing nearby residential neighborhoods

Housing

Santa Clara County is facing an enormous housing affordability challenge that has significant negative consequences for our current and future social, economic, and environmental well-being.

It is a challenge we cannot afford to ignore, nor seek to resolve through undersized, inadequate actions. Our solutions, therefore, must be big, bold, and imaginative. And they must simultaneously seek to address other major challenges we face, such as increasing traffic congestion, a rapidly aging population, and the growing impacts of climate change.

To address all of these challenges simultaneously, we need to think and plan carefully about how and where we house our future population.

We need to begin by realizing that our “future population” includes, among others:

- Young people who were raised here and now have reached adulthood and want to move out of their parents’ homes to housing of their own
- Workers who work within our County but, due to the high cost of housing here, must commute for hours every day to get to and from their jobs and relatively more affordable housing many miles away – and suffer the consequences that such long-distance commuting has on their personal quality of life and their ability to spend time with their families and contribute to the life of their communities
- Older, longtime residents of Santa Clara County who, as they age, may prefer to downsize and move to smaller housing in more walkable, transit-accessible, urban neighborhoods where they can continue to live active and independent lives – without having to drive or own an automobile
- Millennial Generation members (ages late teens to mid-30s) – who are essential to the health of our local economy – but may prefer to live in vibrant, urban neighborhoods where they can avoid the need to drive or own an automobile, or maintain a house and yard
- The new workers that our local economy will depend on as Baby Boom Generation workers retire
- The significantly larger number of relatively low paid health and eldercare workers that our rapidly aging population will need
- Other relatively low paid workers who perform critical functions and provide important services that contribute to our local economy and our quality of life, but cannot currently afford to live here

In order to meet the housing needs, preferences, and incomes of all these different groups – while responsibly addressing other concerns such as minimizing traffic congestion, adapting to the changing needs and preferences of an aging population, reducing climate change consequences, and preserving farmlands to feed current and future generations – we need to plan to accommodate most of our future housing growth within existing developed areas.

But, within these existing developed areas, it is important that the new housing not just take the form of individual housing developments, scattered randomly throughout our communities. They need to occur in well-planned, appropriately-located, vibrant, urban neighborhoods that provide a good quality of life that includes convenient access to the goods, services and transportation alternatives that can reduce their residents' dependency on the use of the automobile for meeting all of their mobility needs.

Current and future development within the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor has the potential to help meet our housing needs by creating such neighborhoods – if landowners, developers, planners, and local government decision makers choose to do so and make it a priority.

Goals for Housing:

Future development should:

1. Provide housing for all ages and incomes, include housing that is affordable to low and very low-income households.

Transportation and Mobility

Traffic congestion and lack of mobility options are one of the biggest challenges facing Santa Clara County (along with housing affordability). And, with our population projected to grow by more than 300,000 people over the next 15 years, they are problems that have the potential to become even worse.

With the county's quality of life, social well-being, and long term economic vitality at stake, it is critical that effective actions be taken to address these challenges.

Doing so, however, may be complicated by the somewhat dizzying array of uncertainties and future transportation projects and developments that dot the transportation and mobility landscape, including:

- New technologies, such as autonomous vehicles that, depending on the information source, may either increase or decrease future traffic
- New transportation projects on the horizon, such as the extension of BART to San Jose, the construction of the high-speed rail system, etc.
- Ride sharing services that supplement – and in some instances, may compete with – public transit service
- Evolution and expansion of employer-sponsored transportation services
- Electrification of the CalTrain system, which would enable it to accommodate more passengers and shorten commute times
- Development of higher density, urban neighborhoods that could facilitate walking, bicycling, and public transit usage as alternatives to driving automobiles for a growing number of county residents
- Vehicle sharing services
- Bicycle sharing services
- Unmanned land and aerial package delivery services that could affect the number of vehicle trips and vehicle miles travelled
- The aging of our population – which is likely to impact the number of adults who are able to drive, prefer not to drive, cut back on their driving, are able to schedule their travel trips during non-peak commute hours, and/or take advantage of other mobility options
- The Millennial Generation's significant preference for not driving an automobile
- Scattered, somewhat haphazard residential and office development that is currently being approved and constructed that could make our traffic problems worse
- Proposals for major new developments in places like City Place in Santa Clara, downtown San Jose, and the North Bayshore area of Mountain View
- Etc.

Making sense of all these developments and uncertainties, and forming them into a coherent, overall mobility strategy for Santa Clara County will not be easy. And, in the meantime, land use and other decisions are continuing to be made that may impact – for better or for worse – current and future traffic congestion problems and mobility options.

In the absence of a clear, comprehensive, coherent mobility plan for Santa Clara County, it may be wise to follow a few basic principles when making planning and land use decisions.

Perhaps the most important of these may be: “Focus on trips, not just traffic.”

It is common to assume that growth – whether it be population growth or job growth – creates more traffic. But, it’s not that simple. To deal more effectively with traffic congestion problems, it’s important to distinguish between “traffic” and “trips.”

“Trips” refers to the number of times that people need to get from one place to another, whereas “traffic” relates to how many of those trips are taken on our roadways via motor vehicles.

Commute and errand trips, it should be remembered, have the potential to take place via several different modes, including:

- Private automobiles
- Public transit
- Private transit
- Walking
- Bicycling
- A combination of two or more of the above
- Etc.

The distribution of future, growth-related trips among these different mobility modes depends to a large extent on how and where that future growth takes place.

The trips, for example, generated by new, low density, suburban residential development, located away from employment centers and places providing necessary goods and services are likely to be mainly trips via private automobile.

Whereas, the trips generated by higher density residential development, housing the same number of people, located in an urban, mixed use neighborhood, along a major transit corridor would likely be distributed among several different modes – thus creating fewer automobile trips and less additional traffic congestion.

It is important, therefore, to review proposed development not in terms of how much traffic it may generate – with the implicit assumption that all new trips will take place via private automobile. Instead, new development should be evaluated in terms of what mobility modes the new trips it generates are likely to take.

In addition, it should be noted that two identical, higher density developments, located in different places within the same city may generate significantly different amounts of traffic. The one that is located closer to existing employment centers, goods and services, public and

private transportation opportunities, and cultural and recreational amenities may generate much less additional traffic than its twin located in another part of town where these trip destinations and mobility options are not readily available.

Goals for Transportation and Mobility:

Future development should:

1. Support current and future public transportation.
2. Promote current and future mobility needs with current and future technology.
3. Contribute to meeting our current and future mobility needs, looking beyond the automobile.
4. Create a “Transportation Planning Goals” document that looks at the future of ride share, electric bike, standard 2 and 3 wheeled bikes, ZipCars, and other services.

Parks and Open Space

Parks and open spaces are important to the quality of life and health of a community, especially within areas destined to become denser and more urban, such as the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor.

Consequently, provision of convenient, comfortable, and safe outdoor spaces for relaxation, recreation, socializing, and experiencing nature needs to be an important consideration in the planning of evolving urban neighborhoods along the Corridor.

Decades ago, when the suburbs were being created – generally from tracts of farmland – there was ample “vacant” land that could be set aside for large parks and sports fields. Today, however, as most of our growth is accommodated through redevelopment within existing developed areas, the opportunities to create new, large parks and sports fields are quite rare, and high land prices generally make such acquisitions prohibitive.

As a result, we will need to be more creative and resourceful in the ways we meet the need for parks and open space within denser, more urban settings. In most cases, we will need to think on a smaller, but more numerous scale.

And, with an aging population, there may be little growth in demand for the kinds of larger areas required for team sports, such as soccer and baseball. (About 2/3 of Santa Clara County’s population growth over the next 15 years is projected to occur within the 65+ age category, as the Baby Boom Generation continues to enter its senior years.)

So, we need to be thinking of ways to build numerous, smaller open spaces into the evolving urban fabric, including:

- Pocket parks, vest pocket parks, or mini-parks
- Parklets that provide seating and/or public art, often on small extensions of the sidewalk into one or more parking spaces
- Small scale urban agriculture. Rooftop gardens, for example, can already be found in numerous cities around the United States

Goals for Parks and Open Space:

Future development should:

1. Include provisions for public parks and open space. The spaces should look at different sizes, scales, purposes/needs of an increasingly more urban area.
2. Meet the needs of an aging population with a variety of activities.
3. Integrate urban agriculture into the fabric of all open spaces whenever possible, creating gathering spaces and opportunities to learn and utilize agriculture on site and to learn about how to better utilize personal land for urban agriculture via professional support.

Urban Design

The “look and feel” of the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor is likely to change significantly in the relatively near-term future, as a result of development already under construction, major development proposals currently in the approval “pipeline”, and other big projects being discussed at the conceptual or “drawing board” stage.

Future developments in this area will very likely be denser and taller than the development they will be replacing. As a result, the “look and feel” of the corridor will become more “urban.”

The corridor will also become more mixed-use in character, as higher density residential, office, and other uses are added to the commercial development that has historically defined the Stevens Creek Boulevard corridor and its major intersections.

Based on these coming changes, a critical question regarding the future of the corridor is “Will all the new development contribute to making it a unique and special urban place within predominantly suburban Santa Clara County?” Or “Will it simply become a denser and more congested area?”

Either outcome is possible.

In order to help assure that the corridor becomes a unique and special place, it may be necessary to think of it in a different way than has historically been the case.

Future planning, development and decision making will need to be guided by thinking of the corridor as an evolving vibrant, livable, mixed-use, urban neighborhood – not just as a predominantly commercial shopping and office district.

That distinction in how the corridor is conceptualized has major implications for planning and decision making.

It would influence, for example, whether sufficient attention is paid to creating a safe, convenient, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood that is attractive to residents, workers, shoppers, and other visitors – or whether the focus will be primarily on moving traffic into and out of the area in the most efficient manner, which has been a predominant consideration in the past.

Achieving this kind of special, mixed-use, urban neighborhood will require looking at the area as a whole, not just by reviewing individual projects, one-by-one. And, it will require greater attention to urban design, the design and uses within the “public realm,” and the pedestrian experience within the area.

In short, it will require greater emphasis on placemaking, not just planning. Whereas, planning tends to focus mainly on how the uses within an area relate to one another, placemaking focuses on how human beings will use and derive convenience, utility, satisfaction, and even joy from experiencing and using – primarily as pedestrians – the built environment that gets created.

Goals for Urban Design:

Future development should:

1. Provide attractive and diverse pedestrian experiences that contribute to the livability that is sensitive to human scale and provides for a positive pedestrian experience.

Benefits to Surrounding Neighborhoods

The Eastern Stevens Creek Boulevard Corridor is not an isolated island; nor does it exist in a vacuum. Thousands of residents currently live in existing residential neighborhoods in close proximity to the Corridor.

Future redevelopment in the corridor will inevitably have impacts on these neighborhoods and their residents. Some of these impacts are likely to be negative, while others could be positive – particularly if residents proactively identify potentially beneficial impacts before individual development proposals get approved.

In other words, there are opportunities for tradeoffs between the potential negative impacts of new developments and the potential neighborhood improvements that could be provided in conjunction with new development.

Among the potential negative impacts of the new development are likely to be:

- Increased traffic in the area
- Need for additional parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the larger future population
- Noise and inconvenience during construction
- Loss of privacy from having taller buildings in the area

Among the potential positive impacts of future development could be:

- Convenient pedestrian access to a wider array of goods and services
- Additional urban parks and open spaces to meet the needs of current and future residents
- Improved transit service and more mobility options for Corridor residents
- Increased property values, if the Corridor becomes an attractive place to live, work, and enjoy the benefits a pedestrian-oriented urban lifestyle

The earlier in the planning and development process that the potential benefits are identified, the easier it may be to get them incorporated into proposed developments.

Goals for Benefits to Surrounding Neighborhoods:

Future development should:

1. Enhance livability, improve pedestrian access, create visual buffers, and provide public spaces.
2. Contribute to current and future needs.
3. Be innovative and create new forms of parks and open spaces.
4. Create more urban-based public space.
5. Enhance livability for an aging population.
6. Minimize long-term traffic impacts.

Environment

Our land use patterns and how we design our neighborhoods can have significant impacts on our natural environment – which, in turn, can have impacts on us. It is important, therefore, that current and future development within the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor be done in ways that take into account potential environmental impacts – both positive and negative.

Not all development has the same impact on the environment. In fact, two different neighborhoods with the same populations can have very different impacts on the environment.

For example, denser urban neighborhoods with a mix of uses are more environmentally sustainable than lower density suburban neighborhoods with segregated land uses.

Compared to suburban residents, urban residents, on a per capita basis:

- Use less water
- Generate less waste
- Consume less energy
- Consume fewer resources
- Own fewer automobiles
- Drive fewer miles
- Consume less gasoline
- Produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions

So, from an environmental standpoint, it is generally better for us to accommodate our future growth within compact urban neighborhoods than sprawling suburban neighborhoods – with two caveats.

Urban neighborhoods have historically had two negative impacts on the environment that should be taken into account and mitigated in future urban development. One is the “heat island effect” and the other is the preponderance of impervious surfaces.

The larger amount of dark, asphalt roads, parking lots, and rooftops typically found in urban areas tend to absorb sunlight and heat the air around them which, overall, makes urban areas warmer than surrounding non-urban areas. This is known as the heat island effect.

In recent years, as awareness of the heat island effect and its contributions to climate change has increased, many communities have adopted measures to reduce it by planting trees and vegetation, installing “green” roofs (i.e. roofs with vegetation on them) and/or promoting the installation of lighter colored roofs that reflect, rather than absorb, sunlight.

Another environmental impact of denser urban areas (and suburban areas, as well) that has received more attention in recent years has been the amount of impervious surface created by roads, buildings, and parking lots. Such surfaces can:

- Prevent rainwater infiltration and groundwater recharge
- Accelerate storm water runoff that can contribute to flooding

- Facilitate the runoff of pollutants (e.g. oil that drips from motor vehicles) into nearby streams and other water bodies

Public education and regulations in recent years to encourage “best management practices” for storm water runoff have resulted in greater use of porous materials for roads, parking lots, and driveways that allow rainwater to soak through, as well as use of structural measures, such as small catchment or detention basins adjacent to roads and parking lots to slow and/or promote groundwater infiltration of storm waters.

Future urban density development along the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor has the potential to be a more sustainable way of accommodating our growing population – provided that impacts such as the urban heat island and increased storm water runoff are mitigated.

Goals for the Environment:

Future development should:

1. Be energy efficient, water efficient, reduce greenhouse gases, reduce urban heat island effects, incorporate nature into the urban design, minimize CO2 emissions, and minimize waste.

Veteran Services

The Santa Clara County Office of Veterans Services, located on N. Winchester Boulevard, is an essential facility for the provision of assistance to veterans, military personnel, and their families in obtaining federal, state, and local benefits accrued through active duty military service.

As development and redevelopment occurs along the Eastern Stevens Creek Corridor, there may be opportunities to improve the Veterans Services Office's existing facility in its current location, or in some other nearby location.

Goals for Veterans Services:

Future development should:

1. Accommodate current services for the Santa Clara County Office of Veteran Services
2. Help meet the needs of veterans, including such things as:
 - a. Community room
 - b. Expanded offices
 - c. Therapy programs
 - d. Housing for all ages

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