

SAN JOSE DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
POSITION PAPER

NORTH SAN JOSE POLICY UPDATE

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Two of the top goals in the City of San Jose's Economic Development Strategy focus on Downtown and revising City policies to better capitalize on smart growth principles – such as higher density and mixed uses along transit corridors. These two goals are inextricably coupled, and the Association applauds the recent direction of the City to formalize this natural link by looking at new land use and transportation policies for North San Jose through the lens of: “Downtown, North San Jose and Transit Corridors; City of San Jose Economic Development Strategy and Getting Families Back to Work Initiative.”

The underlying premise of revising and updating policies for Downtown and North San Jose is to position the City for continued long-term economic growth.

To understand our support of the overall concept to dramatically increase densities, housing and commercial development in North San Jose, it is important to first understand the City's commitment to its Downtown Strategy Plan. Adopted by the City Council in 2001, the Downtown Strategy Plan clearly envisions Downtown San Jose as the great urban center of Silicon Valley. This vision was reinforced again with the adoption of the citywide Economic Development Strategy in 2003 that further emphasized downtown's identity as the region's “unique creative and cultural center.” The strategies trumpet Downtown's competitive position with the valley's highest development densities, best transportation options and concentration of public amenities, especially with arts, culture and entertainment. The Downtown Strategy also calls out for dramatically increased higher density development to the tune of 10,000 additional housing units and another 10 million square feet of office space.

In context to the City's commitment to Downtown's expansion and growth, is the parallel track for the future of North San Jose. Faced with outdated land use policies, it is time to bring North San Jose's potential forward with a plan that addresses the same good planning principles embraced in the Downtown Strategy: appropriate densities, increased mixture of housing and jobs, transportation options and development goals that create memorable, walkable, vital communities. The assets and amenities of Downtown should not be duplicated in North San Jose: its employees and residents will be just a light rail ride from the city center.

In developing the plan for North San Jose, it will be necessary to adopt specific criteria in the zoning code and define the type of neighborhood serving commercial uses appropriate for that area while assuring the focus on Downtown as the heart of the City is protected.

It is important today to plan for the economic future of the city. Like Downtown, North San Jose is critical to the long-term success and health of the city. We support the concept of the dramatic recasting of North San Jose, and welcome this effort in concert with realizing the Downtown Strategy goals. By ensuring the policies complement one another and are implemented contemporaneously, the City is more apt to realize its vision in both areas.