



Loma Prieta Chapter serving San Mateo, Santa Clara & San Benito Counties

March 18, 2013

Honorable Members of the City Council
City of Mountain View Via e-mail

Re: San Antonio Area off-site infrastructure and public benefits

Dear Members of the Mountain View City Council,

San Antonio Village Center presents a unique opportunity to transform one of Mountain View’s largest opportunity sites into a vibrant, mixed use, transit-connected, economically-resilient neighborhood.

For this reason, Sierra Club recommends that the City wait for the completion of the Precise Plan in order to realize the long-term community goals for San Antonio Village Center. A precise plan overlay will ensure that the vision for this entire area is articulated in clearer and more useful detail than the General Plan overview vision. This action will allow the community and the City to set clear goals, policies and design guidelines that all developers and their architects can conform to, thus ensuring the best outcome for this new neighborhood.

MG Gatekeeper Project: If the new MG gatekeeper project cannot wait, we suggest the city at least define some intermediary steps in the planning process, to ensure the project results in positive impacts on the community.

The Sierra Club has developed [Guidelines](#) for evaluating Station Area Plans (SAP) and TODs, with a focus on 5 areas:

1. **Compact Development** to use valuable land more efficiently at a major transit hub
2. **Community and Economic Benefits** to assure a vibrant neighborhood with a sense of identity
3. **Pedestrian Priority** as the primary mode of transportation within the SAP
4. **Transportation Plan** to provide realistic options for people and decrease automobile usage
5. **Energy / Resource Efficiency** targets for buildings and streets to meet high sustainability goals

Using our [Guidelines](#), we offer the following **FRAMEWORK** for consideration of the issues of infrastructure, public benefits and implementation strategies:

1. Jobs-Housing Balance

To maximize use of infrastructure investments, a goal for a jobs-housing balance of 1.5: 1 for the area and ½ mile radius around the train station will ensure that infrastructure gets used efficiently.

All underground and above-ground utilities, streets, parks, transit, etc. get used 24/7, rather than just part of the day, as when uses are not in balance.

It is important for maximizing efficiency of infrastructure investment to establish measurable goals. A goal of achieving a jobs-housing balance will guide several of the issues that follow and plan infrastructure more efficiently.

- Every 100,000 sf office space at 250 sf/employee generates 400 jobs
- Every 100 jobs requires 67 housing units for a balance at a ratio of 1.5: 1
- Mixed use –a mix of housing, offices and retail – uses public transit more effectively by creating lively, vibrant, 24/7 neighborhoods
- Retail, including neighborhood retail and local business, is more viable in denser areas that are actively used 24/7 and has positive health impacts¹
- Incentivize development for diversity of lifestyles and new demographics

2. Affordable Housing Goal

TOD and affordable housing have a symbiotic relationship - residents of moderate and low-income households support public transit more and car ownership is lower than average

Establishing goals early for affordable housing in the Change Area, for workforce needed to support our high-tech industry jobs, ensures that this gets high priority. It is recommended that a minimum goal of 15% affordable units within ½ mile of the station area be established.

Include affordable housing as a Public Benefit as part of any zoning change that the City grants, in addition to the normal existing housing impact fees.

3. Traffic: Multi-modal Goals

*A shift to safe multi-modal travel is the **critical element** for success of a TOD*

Planning at every phase should start with pedestrian convenience followed by bicycles.

MG developments should meet multi-modal design standards developed for the entire change area – the Center as well as the linkages to surrounding neighborhoods

Consider expediting a traffic study for the Change Area to study multi-modal traffic needs generated by MG Phase I & II, as well as at full build-out, for cumulative impacts. MG proposal site should incorporate needed elements. The study should include:

- Traffic in **adjacent neighborhood** streets as well as arterials, not for volume and capacity but, rather, **for safety and multi-modality**.
 - Use **pedestrian “level-of-service”**- convenience, connectivity, safety, time to cross traffic routes safely, aesthetics, shortest routes.
 - **Connected bicycle paths reaching out to a 5-mile radius** as people will bike 5 miles if there is a safe, pleasant, connected network.
 - Traffic flow on **major arterials**, including LOS and, importantly,
 - **Eliminate LOS²** for auto traffic within the Change Area & neighborhoods
- Monitoring progress of mode-share goals is the best route to success.

4. A Sense of Place

*The imagery of streetscape within the Precise Plan area is possibly the **single unifying design element** available for a creating a Sense of Place³.*

Streetscape features, such as street lights, sidewalk treatment, trees, planters, landscaping and street furniture can contribute to the unique character of a block or entire neighborhood

Establish a unifying streetscape design vocabulary to create a Sense of Place.

Circulation should be clearly classified into at least these three categories:

- **Pedestrian Priority Street**, with traffic moving very slowly, **5mph to 15mph max.**, all retail frontage, wide pedestrian sidewalks, sidewalk cafes, unified sidewalk details/furniture. Portions of these streets can be closed off on weekends for events to create pedestrian malls
- **Mixed Traffic:** pedestrians, bikes and cars with max speed of **15mph** - fatalities increase exponentially above that speed –through complex
- **Auto Priority Street** for thru traffic at **25mph** max. – California Street, Showers Drive, etc.

A Signature “Station to El Camino greenway”: A bike and pedestrian pathway connecting from Central Expressway, via an underpass, to El Camino Real should be a unique and signature experience through Change Area.

Pedestrian network: Make walking more convenient, faster and fun

- A pedestrian grid is 200’
- Reduce width of roadways at crosswalks, with bulb-outs, to make it faster to cross
- Mid-block crosswalks at any block longer than 200’⁴
- Automatically activated crosswalk signals at high pedestrian traffic areas within the area for pedestrian priority zones
- Create psychology of pedestrian environment with wide crosswalks, wide sidewalks, pedestrian oriented street furniture, like potted plants, no curbs, special road surfaces to slow traffic, interesting design

Bicycle network should be provided from station and throughout the change area with convenient, gender-safe bike parking given high priority. Extending a safe, convenient, pleasant bicycle network to a 5 mile radius around the station will improve bicycle usage.

5. Parking Strategies

Reduced parking is critical to the success of a transit area plan. Over-parking undermines a TOD and creates Transit-Adjacent Development with traffic congestion and undercuts transit

A Transportation Management Association (TMA) will share costs among multiple employers and

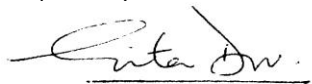
We recommend making Transportation Demand Management (TDM) mandatory and consideration of all strategies immediately to avoid over-parking the new MG gateway project:

- Unbundled parking - combined with a Residential Permit parking program as needed to protect surrounding residential neighbors. Construction cost savings from reduced parking should be paid into a Community Benefits or Infrastructure benefits program
- Paid parking, Congestion priced parking
- Shared parking between daytime office and evening retail and housing
- Parking “Cash-Out” per State Air Resources Board program

<p><i>residential developments.</i></p> <p><i>A TMA can aggregate discount transit passes and manage paid parking garages, shared parking, shuttles, parking meters, car-share, bike-share and other community benefits that are paid from revenues collected</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Robust shuttle service</u> • <u>Improved transit</u> – more options and transit passes • <u>Bike lanes</u> designed for speed, safety and connectivity for a 5 mile radius around the train station • <u>Attractive pedestrian experience</u> so people are pleased to walk • <u>Senior housing</u> which needs fewer cars and access to transit • <u>Affordable Housing</u> where households often have one or no car
<p>6. Neighborhood Park, Open Space</p> <p><i>At full build-out, the area will add 10,000 people, both workers and residents, and require a new park or open space for public health.</i></p> <p><i>Open Space should be designed to be usable by the community and not just a landscaped visual amenity</i></p>	<p>With careful and imaginative design, the linear SFPUC Hetch Hetchy greenway can be incorporated into a usable neighborhood open space and a green linear park⁵ while keeping SFPUC constraints in mind. However, this open space should be carefully designed to be usable by and useful for the community and the entire neighborhood, rather than simply a visual amenity.</p> <p>It is critical to emphasize</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving the community in the design of this space so that it will really serve the neighborhood needs to the best of its ability, given constraints • for a usable park, rather than just a visual landscaped area, traffic needs to be kept away to allow children to run and play safely • a neighborhood park is a public benefit that is important for public health¹
<p>7. Community and Economic Benefits</p> <p><i>Establish a Community Benefit District (CBD) to ensure ongoing funding for public amenities and allocate project fees and taxes to shared public and community benefits</i></p>	<p>Consider win-win strategies to create a sense of community using a Community Benefits District (CBD)⁶:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and beautification of streets, sidewalks, plantings and parks as well as Economic Development and Marketing outreach programs • Ensure local and family businesses are given high priority as businesses turn over by using the CBD to promote them⁷ • Create neighborhood amenities- community center, day care, etc. - that can benefit from access to the Hetch-Hetchy right-of-way open space
<p>8. Impact on Schools</p> <p><i>Location of schools has traffic impacts</i></p>	<p>Consider whether the planned build-out has an impact on need for added school facilities. “Safe route to schools” route(s), planned early, can take significant traffic off streets if children can walk or bike to school safely.</p>
<p>9. Utilities infrastructure and resource conservation</p> <p><i>Put in place impact fees dedicated to change area to install upgrades of infrastructure for full build-out</i></p>	<p>Each phase of utility infrastructure upgrade should work towards full build-out. Put in place standards that incentivize Low Impact Development (LID)⁸, local energy generation, strive for zero waste and plan for efficient water usage, sewage disposal and energy use, working with local water and sewage agencies and public utilities to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts.</p>

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important design effort for the City of Mountain View. We look forward to continued involvement in the San Antonio Village Center Plan.

Respectfully submitted:



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Endnotes:

¹ **Access to shops and parks:** <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/03/130307124427.htm> The study found that for every local shop, residents' physical activity increased an extra 5-6 minutes of walking per week. For every recreational facility available such as a park or beach, residents' physical activity increased by an extra 21 minutes per week. These findings inform public health and urban design policy demonstrating that people respond to an environment supportive of physical activity.

² **Eliminate LOS:** Redwood City has eliminated LOS within its Downtown Specific Plan area. CalTrans now recognizes that LOS should not be the criteria for traffic within Priority Development Areas (PDA).

³ **A Sense of Place:** Castro Street uses high quality streetscape design with pedestrian priority to create a unified sense of place.

⁴ **Mid-block crosswalks and passageways:** This is because walking around a 400' block is well over a quarter of a mile. Therefore, mid block pathways are critical for pedestrian convenience in getting around (e.g. the pedestrian "paseos" on Castro Street in Mountain View are mid-block shortcuts connected with mid-block crosswalks)

⁵ **Linear Park:** A linear park is a park that is substantially longer than it is wide. It is often formed as a part of a rails-to-trails conversion of railroad beds to [rail trail](#) recreational use. Other linear parks make use of strips of public land next to canals, streams, electrical lines, highways and shorelines. The [High-Line Park](#) in New York City is an unusual famous recent example on an abandoned elevated streetcar line. Another famous example of a linear park is the [Berlin Mauerpark](#), which was built on a part of the former [Berlin Wall](#) area and its adjacent death strip.



High Line Park New York, NY

In cities where the terrain is such that rivers and brooks have significant [flood plains](#), the land cannot sensibly be used for urban development and so can be set aside as a civic amenity. [Houston's bayous](#) are lined with linear parks and Los Angeles river park is a developing project.

⁶ **Community Benefit District (CBD):** The CBD program strives to improve the overall quality of life in targeted commercial districts and mixed-use neighborhoods through a partnership between the City and local communities. Once an area has voted to establish a CBD, local property owners are levied a special assessment to fund improvements to their neighborhood. The funds are administered by a non-profit organization established by the neighborhood. San Francisco has over [10 CBDs](#).

⁷ **Preserving Local Independent Businesses:** As an example, [Sunnyvale Downtown Specific Plan](#) includes the following for Preserving Local Independent Businesses:

- Consider programs which could include short-term rent subsidies paid by the developer or through tax increment
- Evaluate programs which include relocation assistance, tax-sharing agreements, business counseling.
- Consider the subdivision of retail space into condominium ownership by tenants

Also: Promote local businesses through a CBD's regular marketing and outreach

⁸ **Low Impact Development (LID)** is sustainable practices that benefit water supply and contribute to water quality protection through storm water and waste water management