

Draft Community Engagement Strategy for the Diridon Station Area Program (Fall 2019 – Fall 2020)

Background

Diridon Station Area Plan

The City of San José adopted the [Diridon Station Area Plan](#) (DSAP) in 2014 to guide development of the Diridon Station Area, a 250-acre district surrounding San Jose Diridon Station on the western edge of downtown. The DSAP envisions the transformation of the station area into a dynamic mixed-use urban neighborhood anchored by a world-class transportation hub and the SAP Center. Since adoption of the DSAP, several key planning assumptions have changed, including the following:

- The City adopted Downtown Design Guidelines and Climate Smart San José, and the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan and Downtown Transportation Plan processes are underway.
- A major league baseball ballpark is no longer planned.
- Google is pursuing a large-scale, mixed-use development in the station area.
- The City recently adopted a policy that will enable taller building height limits in the Diridon area, compared to the current limits under the DSAP and zoning code.

The City is preparing to amend the plan to: adapt to current circumstances, align the DSAP with the other adopted and ongoing plans, and support DSAP implementation through private development and public investments. The City is not expecting to make major changes to the primary objectives of the DSAP. Rather, the anticipated changes include adding development capacity and updating the sections on land use, design, transportation, and public spaces. This includes consideration of increased height limits. In addition, the City will prepare district-wide studies or implementation plans related to parking, infrastructure financing, and affordable housing. Amending the plan will require completion of an environmental analysis as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Google Project

In 2017, Google expressed interest in being the master developer to implement key aspects of the Diridon Station Area Plan. On December 4, 2018, the City Council adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Google, based largely on community input gathered in 2018. The MOU sets forth the guiding principles for collaboration between the City and Google and shared goals for future mixed-use, transit-oriented development, consistent with the DSAP vision.

On October 10, Google submitted an application for development review to the City's Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department. The review process will involve environmental review and negotiation of a Development Agreement, including a Community Benefits Plan. For project information, please refer to the City's website: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/googleproject>.

Comprehensive Planning Process (2019-2020)

The City is reviewing Google's application for a mixed-use development concurrently with the DSAP amendment process. The City Council will consider approval of the DSAP amendments, Google project, and all associated environmental documents and legislative changes as part of the comprehensive planning process. The DSAP amendment and Google project review process is officially beginning this fall and is expected to be completed by the end of 2020.

Community Engagement

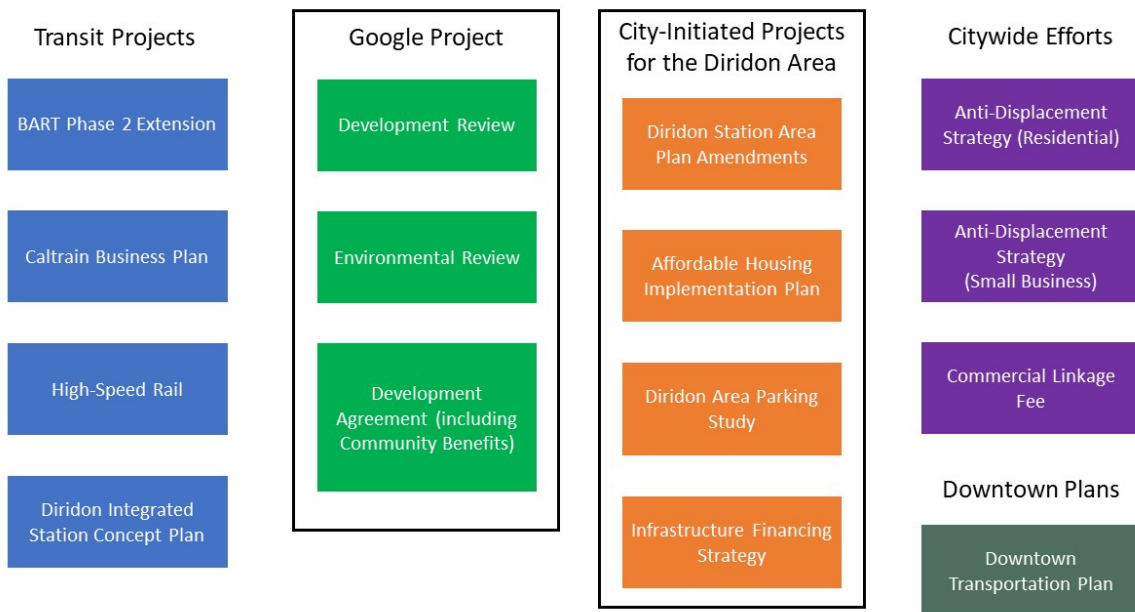
The City adopted the DSAP after years of public involvement. In 2018, the City conducted an extensive community engagement process to get input on the future of the Diridon Station Area, given the changing conditions described above. The input is summarized in the [Diridon Station Area Civic Engagement Report](#) and the Archive section of the project website: www.diridonsj.org. In addition, Google has conducted their own engagement in 2018 and 2019 to inform development of their application for a mixed-use development. Concurrently, the City and its transit agency partners have conducted four rounds of public outreach on the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan since October 2018.

The community input collected to date is serving as a foundation to guide work moving forward. The City will conduct additional engagement as part of the upcoming comprehensive planning process, as set forth in this Strategy. The engagement strategy includes and builds upon legal requirements for public meetings and noticing for development projects and City plans. It is the product of much reflection following the 2018 engagement process.

Summary of Scope

For purposes of the community engagement strategy, the Diridon Station Area program includes the projects outlined in black Figure 1 below. The engagement process will also involve coordination with other separate but related planning processes, such as the Concept Plan, Downtown Transportation Plan, and Citywide Anti-Displacement Strategy.

Figure 1: Scope of the Diridon Station Area Program



Roles in the Planning Process

- The San José City Council and board of the VTA, Caltrain, and California High-Speed Rail Authority have decision-making authority over the Concept Plan.

- The San José City Council has the final decision-making authority over the other projects within the Diridon Station Area program (outlined in black above).
 - The Planning Commission will make a recommendation on the Google Project and the City-initiated Amendments to the DSAP prior to going to City Council for consideration.
 - The City may engage other City Commissions and advisory bodies as needed throughout the process.

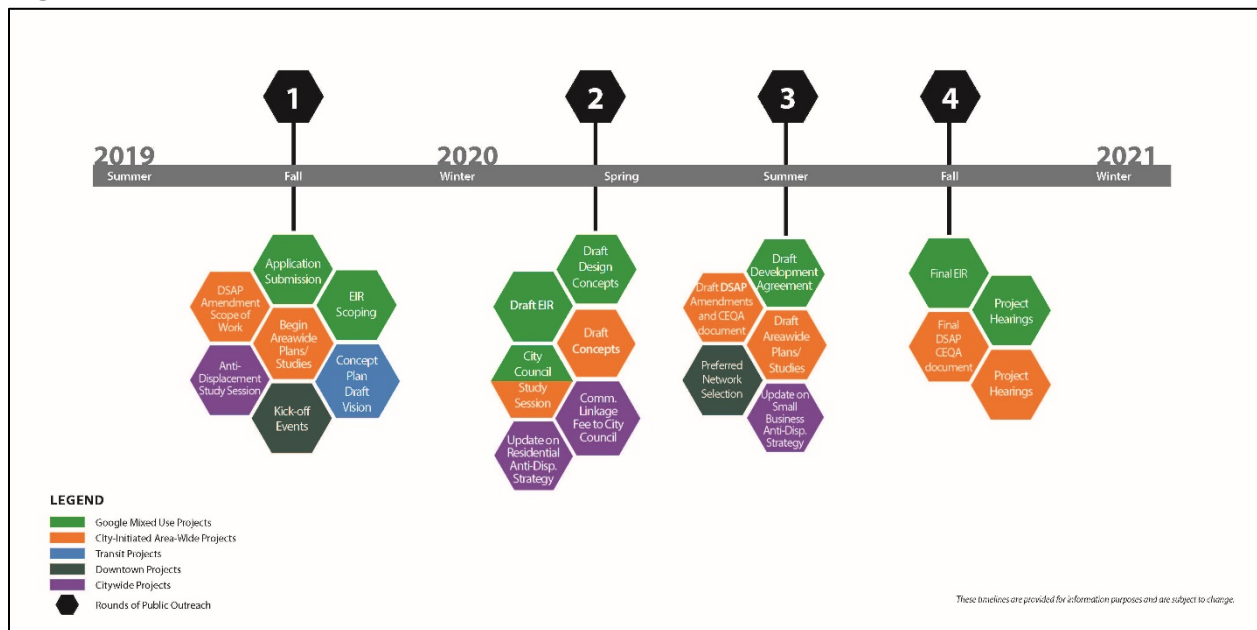
- The City will share information with the general public and gather input throughout comprehensive planning process. The City (including staff, appointed and elected officials, and its consultants) will seek to understand the range of values, priorities, and ideas raised by community members, and consider this input when making decisions. Given that there is a foundation of robust community input to work from, the primary purpose of ongoing engagement will be to seek reactions to the specific work products as they develop. This includes seeking specific ideas for realizing the vision for the Diridon Station Area and for addressing impacts and concerns. The City will consider this feedback to help inform the final products.

- The City will continue to convene meetings with the Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG), which includes 38 member organizations appointed by the City Council in 2018. The purpose of the SAAG is to provide input on the Google project and other planning efforts affecting the Diridon Station Area. They have no official decision-making authority, but are an important group for representing a range of stakeholder interests. In addition to providing feedback, the SAAG members assist with outreach by sharing information and opportunities to get involved with their networks.

Tentative Milestones

The City anticipates conducting the four rounds of community engagement, corresponding to key milestones in the comprehensive planning process. Refer to Figure 2 for the anticipated timing and content of each round of engagement.

Figure 2: Anticipated Milestones and Outreach Rounds



This diagram is subject to change as the process evolves. See the project website for the latest information.

Community Engagement Objectives

Throughout the community engagement process, the City aims to:

1. Keep the public informed and educate them about:
 - a. the vision for the Diridon Station Area,
 - b. the purpose of each of the work products making up the Diridon Station Area program,
 - c. the relationship between work products and separate but related processes,
 - d. applicable City policies,
 - e. the potential benefits and impacts under consideration,
 - f. the decision-making process, and
 - g. the role of the community in influencing decisions.

2. Encourage active public participation by a broad range of the community.
 - a. Provide multiple opportunities and use a variety of methods for community members to engage with the process.
 - b. Actively seek meaningful participation of segments of the populations that are often under-represented in planning processes.
 - c. Avoid fatigue and confusion associated with having a lot of meetings on different topics within a short amount of time.

3. Listen to, acknowledge, and consider the full range of community perspectives.
 - a. Ask clear questions that generate meaningful feedback to the process.
 - b. Incorporate community input into the work products to the extent possible, recognizing there will be trade-offs between competing priorities and it will not be possible to incorporate all input.
 - c. Report back on how community input influenced the process.

4. Build community capacity to participate in planning and community development processes over the long-term.
 - a. Foster transparency and accountability in the process.
 - b. Build trust between the City and community members.

5. Evaluate the effectiveness of the community engagement strategy and adapt throughout the process.
 - a. Request feedback from participants to understand how the process is working for them.
 - b. Request demographic information to evaluate representation in the process across population groups.
 - c. Reflect on the process and identify ways to improve it.

Target Populations:

- a) Residents and businesses in the Diridon Station Area and the surrounding neighborhoods
- b) Under-represented populations such as people of color, lower-income households, renters, people with limited English proficiency, youth, young adults, and people with disabilities
- c) Transit riders that currently use or may use Diridon Station
- d) Visitors to the Diridon Station Area
- e) General public (recognizing that the subject projects are of citywide interest)

Engagement Activities

The City will conduct a range of coordinated engagement activities to inform the public and gather feedback. Events and tools may include the following:

- a) Meetings with the City's Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)
- b) Community Meetings (presentations, workshops, or open houses for the general public)
- c) Online/Mobile Feedback Tools
- d) Pop-up Booths (informational tables at community events or venues such as libraries)
- e) Office Hours (project team members would be available for a couple hours at a community venue or City Hall for members of the public to drop in and have informal conversations about the project)
- f) Presentations and discussions with community organizations and other City Commissions

Each round of engagement may involve a different mix of activities, although it is anticipated that each round will include, at a minimum, a SAAG meeting and a Community Meeting. The second round is anticipated to be the most extensive due to the content available for feedback during that timeframe.

As part of the Community Meetings, there will be specific feedback mechanisms to gather community input, such as small group discussions, open house stations, and ranking exercises. Community members may also submit written comments by email or mail throughout the process.

Outreach Methods

The City set up a project website (www.diridonsj.org) in early 2018 to share information and post event agendas and summaries. Since that time 2018, the City has also collected email addresses through sign-up sheets at public meetings and the project website, and by people requesting to be added to the email list. The City sends occasional email updates to this Diridon Station Area Civic Engagement list.

Moving forward, the City will continue to utilize these and other mechanisms to provide information and meeting notices. The anticipated mechanisms include:

- a) Project Website: www.diridonsj.org
- b) Email lists (including the Diridon Station Area Civic Engagement list, as well as Partner Agency lists, and others maintained by the City)
- c) Social Media and Digital Ads
- d) Press Releases and Traditional Media
- e) Assistance from Elected Officials, Advisory Groups, and Community Leaders
- f) Fliers, mailers, and door hangers in and around the project area and at community venues

Practices

The City will strive to adhere to best practices to encourage broad representation of the community in the engagement process and support meaningful involvement, such as the following:

1. Schedule Community Meetings in the evenings or on the weekends at transit accessible locations.
 - a. Avoid conflicts with other public meetings and cultural events, if possible.
2. Translate meeting notices, surveys, powerpoints, and key project information into Spanish and Vietnamese.
 - a. Offer live interpretation for these languages at one or more Community Meetings per engagement round.
 - b. Accommodate requests for information in other languages.
3. Provide at least two weeks advanced notice of each Community Meeting.

- a. Use a variety of outreach methods to maximize awareness of the event.
4. Design meetings and online tools to be welcoming, enjoyable, and accessible.
 - a. Offer light refreshments and activities for children at each Community Meeting.
 - b. Design the meetings for accessibility (including physical and visual).
 - c. Design meetings to be interesting, fun, and engaging (encourage dialogue).
 - d. Seek to reimburse for transit costs, in addition to parking validation (if applicable).
 - e. Provide opportunities for people to engage remotely using online tools in accessible ways.
5. Practice thoughtful communication that supports meaningful participation and builds trust.
 - a. Ensure project information is easy to find and understand.
 - b. Set clear expectations about the purpose of engagement.
 - c. Be clear about how input has been or will be used to influence the process (transparent feedback loop).
 - d. Link the input to concrete action when possible.
 - e. Foster a safe, respectful environment for community members to openly share their thoughts and feelings.
 - f. Use trained facilitators that can ask questions and actively listen in the spirit of curiosity and learning.
 - g. Use facilitation techniques that support all voices in a fair, balanced way.
 - h. Respond to questions, feedback, and requests for information and assistance in a timely manner.

Community Partnerships

The City has established a small grant program to provide up to \$10,000 to several community organizations to support implementation of the Community Engagement Strategy and achieve its objectives. Specifically, the project team is seeking partners to help reach and engage segments of the population that are often underrepresented in City planning and development processes. The main

role of the partner organizations is to assist City staff with conducting outreach for City-hosted events and/or organizing engagement activities in partnership with the City. The application is available on the project website here: <https://www.diridonsj.org/partnershipgrant>. The target for final selection of grant recipients is mid-December 2019.

Documentation

- a) The City will prepare summaries of each SAAG and community meeting or online survey and post them to the project website within approximately two weeks of the event.
- b) The project team will post any public comments received outside of formal engagement activities to the project website in advance of SAAG meetings.
- c) The City will prepare a summary report that documents the public outreach process and the feedback received through community engagement efforts.
- d) The summary report will be provided to the SAAG, Planning Commission, City Council, and the City staff working on the project.