



## Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)

### Draft Meeting Notes | September 16, 2020

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**Date + Time**     *September 16, 2020 | 6:00 PM*

**Location**         *Zoom Webinar – Virtual Meeting*

- Meeting Objectives**
- *Provide updates on Google’s proposed project (Downtown West Mixed-use Plan), the City’s process to amend the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP), and the Draft Diridon Station Area Affordable Housing Implementation Plan.*
  - *Discuss the potential height limits under consideration as part of the DSAP Amendment process.*
  - *Share the key analytical findings and initial recommendations on strategies for affordable housing production, preservation, and renter protection in and around the Diridon Station Area.*
  - *Take questions and feedback from the SAAG and public.*

### AGENDA

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1. **Welcome and Introductions**
2. **Meeting Minutes from SAAG Meeting on June 17, 2019**
3. **Project and Community Engagement Update**
4. **Progress on the Draft Diridon Station Area Affordable Housing Implementation Plan**
5. **Public Comment**

### ATTENDANCE

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**SAAG Members:** 31 of the 38 SAAG members were present at the meeting (*please see the Meeting Minutes posted to the project website for the names of SAAG members that were present*)

**City Staff/Presenters:**

- Lori Severino – *Diridon Program Manager*
- Kim Welsh – *Deputy City Manager*
- Nanci Klein – *Director of Economic Development*
- Rosalynn Hughey – *Director of the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department*
- Robert Manford – *Deputy Director, Planning Building and Code Enforcement*
- Tim Rood – *Planning Division Manager*



- John Tu – *Planner IV, Planning Division*
- Jose Ruano – *Planner II, DSAP Project Manager*
- James Han – *Planner II, Planning Division*
- Nicole Burnham – *Deputy Director of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services*
- Jessica Zenk – *Transportation Deputy Director*
- Ramses Madou – *Transportation Division Manager*
- Jacky Morales-Ferrand – *Director of Housing*
- Kristen Clements – *Housing Division Manager*

**Consultant Team:**

- Sujata Srivastava – *Principal, Strategic Economics*
- Dave Javid - *Principal (Plan to Place)*
- Matt Raimi – *Principal (Raimi + Associates)*
- Suhaila Sikand – *Outreach Specialist (Plan to Place)*
- Diana Benitez – *Outreach Specialist (Raimi + Associates)*

**Public:** There were approximately 52 members of the public present at the Zoom call, or via the local public broadcasting or Youtube Live.

## SUMMARY

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The primary agenda items were to provide project and community engagement updates, and progress on the draft Diridon Station Area Affordable Housing Implementation Plan. The following notes summarize the presentation and discussion of these two agenda items. After a welcome and introduction by Kim Welsh, Dave Javid (from Plan to Place) followed with approval of the last SAAG meeting minutes (June 17, 2020 SAAG) and an overview of the SAAG Group Agreements and provided an update on other opportunities for the community to offer feedback.

The following sections summarize the main agenda items. The full set of meeting materials, including the presentation, video recording, and handouts, are available at: [www.diridonsj.org/saag](http://www.diridonsj.org/saag).

### PROJECT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Dave Javid provided an overview of the amount and types of community engagement activities since February 2018. Tim Rood then provided updates on Google’s proposed project (Downtown West Mixed-use Plan) and the City’s process to amend the Diridon Station Area plan. This included sharing the tentative timelines and upcoming community engagement opportunities. Jose Ruano shared the latest information about the Downtown Design Guidelines and Standards and the updated proposed Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP) building heights. SAAG responded to polling questions to share their initial preference. Following the presentation, the SAAG asked questions and provided comments.

The following summarizes the SAAG comments following the presentation. Responses by City staff to questions from members of the SAAG are represented in *italics* below.

### GOOGLE UPDATES (DOWNTOWN WEST MIXED USE)

- No comments

## DIRIDON STATION AREA PLAN AND HEIGHTS

- What is the expected timeline and perceived components of the plan, with particular interest in value (affordable housing, etc.) and an infrastructure finance plan?
  - *There is a specific direction from Council for staff to explore incentive zoning and come back to them before moving forward with DSAP. In November, there will be a height and capacity fees analysis. DSAP elements must be finalized to do an infrastructure financing plan. Preparation will begin in this phase and carry through the next.*
- Could not understand the context of the maps even though have seen height maps before. Please share maps and information presented before the meeting for review and to have open during discussions. Difficult toggle between polling questions and the slides. Was not able to share concerns on needing lower heights next to single family residential. Concern about quality of life because parks presentation has shared that there will only be 2 acres of parkland in non-Google area with lots of new residents.
- Disappointed that heights are being considered to be reduced after staff had already compromised, especially when we have to compete with other areas for ridership.
- What percentage of DSAP area are areas of concern (areas interfacing with existing areas)? It's better to focus in on those areas because these zones imply that neighbors are again heights and densities when that isn't always the case.
- It was hard to take the poll with toggling back and forth between survey and slides to try and get proper context. This online platform does not work well to get an honest idea of what it is that should be done. Concern that all new housing to be developed will be transitional housing for folks to live in a few years and then move on.
- Appreciate all the work that staff is doing. Polling is great. The reduction of housing in southern portion of DSAP is worrisome because it will mean a reduction in Affordable housing. The city has been doing studies to raise height limits and follow guidelines. Would be great to seeing a better understanding on units overall moving forward. This area is so important for the entire city.
- Nice job illustrating technical massing. Are there new ways to visualize and provide input on height such as 2D or isometric models? This would help to understand volumes in relation to other developments. What is the availability of resources to visualize this in another way?
  - *We did develop some for in house use. There are so many variables for project approved not build or vice versa. We have good 3D models for development opportunities, but not a model for existing city to plug in. And we do not have models for all approved and proposed projects. We tried to go 2D, because we don't have resources to produce 3D.*
- In favor of height limits. Understand supply and demand, but concern is that more market rate housing. Many projects have been low-income housing recently, but there is a lack of market rate housing so other housing gets more funding.
- More questions when answering survey. In global cities, there are historic districts right next to tall buildings. What matters is the design of these buildings and the open space that creates sunshine into these historic areas. Get creative with the design. Also really think about traffic flows.



## PROGRESS ON THE DRAFT DIRIDON STATION AREA AFFORDABLE HOUSING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Jacky Morales-Ferrand and Sujata Srivastava (a consultant from Strategic Economics who is working with the City on the Affordable Housing Implementation Plan), presented progress on the Draft Diridon Station Area Affordable Housing Implementation Plan. Sujata shared key analytical findings and initial recommendations related to affordable housing production, preservation, and protection strategies. SAAG responded to polling questions to gather their initial preference. Following the presentation, the SAAG asked questions and provided comments.

The following summarizes the SAAG comments following the presentation. Responses by City staff to questions from members of the SAAG are represented in *italics* below.

- How is the city defining affordable housing? Georgetown/Cahill are townhouses. How does the city know that people in low-income housing use Diridon train station? As a resident next to Laurel Grove realize that the residents don't use Diridon station.
  - *The city typically thinks about affordable housing income ranges from 30% Area Median Income (AMI) up to 120% AMI (moderate income). Affordable housing is when a household spends 30% of their income or less on housing. There are various studies that show that very low-income people are very good users of transit because it may be there only source of transit.*
- Appreciate starting by looking at housing production, preservation, and protection. It's arguable that development in DSAP will have a wider impact than a half mile radius. This is a good start but the city needs to think about displacement impacts beyond the immediate area and consider preservation and protection citywide. Consider linking the neighborhood stabilization fund with Downtown West project and link to larger anti-displacement plan. This could come in the form of a community linkage free or incentive zoning. Can this fund help with protection and preservation? In-lieu fees will be reduced significantly throughout the city and there was direction from council recently to potentially eliminate their contribution to include housing. How do those changes impact our ability to reach 25% affordable housing.
  - *Plan contemplates reduction of fees already proposed. The new inclusionary incentives reduce fees for developers. We can make it work with other subsidies like Measure A and state that will allow us to reach a much deeper income level. Long term, this will be an important question.*
- Appreciate the multi-pronged approach with 3P's and innovative ideas. We are looking forward to getting our hands on the report to do more thinking on the analysis. The city has a citywide anti-displacement item for council next week. Curious what the interaction is with that citywide work and the Diridon station area. How will they interact moving forward?
  - *Some of the tools in the Diridon Affordable Housing Implementation Plan are strategies highlighted in the Citywide Anti-displacement plan. This plan asks city to allow non-profits and tenants to acquire smaller building to preserve affordability. Both of these plans are interconnected.*
- Is it possible to get real data on usage for Diridon station from the current affordable housing community right next to Diridon. Please do so at some point in the future



- *Challenging now when many who normally use transit are not. We know that many affordable housing developers provide free or discounted transit passes.*
- How is the city calculating the number of housing units? Glad to see the 3 P's. The city is expecting a lot of jobs, but now all jobs are the same. How is the city balancing jobs and housing at different levels in the DSAP area?
  - *The goal is to continue to provide a range of housing. Inclusionary housing will focus on building on-site middle income. This shifts the requirements of building affordable by leveraging a financing tool the affordable developers know well. Preservation goal is to maintain the current balance of affordability levels.*
- How will the reduced fees for high rise residential development impact community benefits and future developments? Is there an easier financing path that create mid-ride housing immediately? Concerned that high rise will not be finished soon. The city should fill in the missing middle and develop between high rise and single family. It's a community building scale. The areas of concern for heights are only about 4% of DSAP area so neighbors are not anti-development.
  - *Financing and fee reductions are temporary due to economic situation. Ideally the city will bounce back and produce this type of housing near these transit sites to maximize usage. Higher density is needed to provide services like coffee, walking, retail. Those amenities will not occur in low dense housing areas.*
  - *City has had lots of meeting with community regarding building height. Important to recognize the more height constraints you place, the less flexibility. Not all parcels will be developed up to maximum height. Developers will build what is economically feasible. Small sites tend to pencil out at 80-100 feet. The initial staff proposal was a mix of units with understanding that not all site develop to full potential. A lot of individual parcels are not big enough for tall buildings. Parcels would need to be assembled to build up to maximum height.*

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Following the discussion by the SAAG, 5 members of the public provided comments on the agenda items via audio during the Zoom meeting. A summary of the public comments are outlined below:

1. Appreciation of opportunity for staff to meet with community organizations. New association is Garden Village association would like to meet with city. City needs to focus on climate change and destruction of native habitats. We can have regenerative agriculture site at 615 Stockton Avenue.
2. Development around transit will be a dead issue in the future. High density housing is why there were so many problems. Every time we try to do a development in San Jose, it never works. Where are you going to take transit to? It would have to be buses. Light rail and train don't work here.
3. This morning at 11:30 am VTA gave presentation of light rail station with a new station structure instead of historical building. There are no entrances on Arena side and a 3rd station of light rail that doesn't connect to anything. This is a waste of half a dozen acres between rail and station. Would prefer regular SAAG meetings.
4. It's very difficult to follow the discussion without materials in advance. Unable to remember letters of each zone during the heights discussion, but do know the area very well. An overview map with zones would have been helpful for SAAG to follow along. Concerned that SAAG members didn't fully



participate at the level they wanted. Housing Affordability and displacement are important. And will small groups make it hard for community to participate?

5. Hope the ideas from airport commission on high rise development can be considered if it hasn't been. They did really good work on high rise issue around airport. Need to consider equity, affordable housing, and mixed income housing in this process. Very Low-income and Extremely Low-Income should be considered as a framework.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.

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