



Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)

Draft Meeting Notes | November 9, 2020

Date + Time *November 9, 2020 | 6:00 PM*

Location *Zoom Webinar – Virtual Meeting*

- Meeting Objectives**
- *Provide an overview of community engagement activities since the last SAAG meeting and a preview of upcoming engagement events.*
 - *Provide an update on the Downtown West project, including interim insights on the Development Agreement.*
 - *Provide an overview of the Draft Amended Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP), the Draft Diridon Station Area Affordable Housing Implementation Plan, and related studies.*
 - *Take questions and feedback from the SAAG and public.*

AGENDA

- 1. Welcome and Introductions**
- 2. Meeting Minutes from SAAG Meeting on September 16, 2020**
- 3. General Process and Community Engagement Update**
- 4. Diridon Station Area Updates**
- 5. Downtown West Update**
- 6. Public Comment**

ATTENDANCE

SAAG Members: 25 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*
- Eric Eidlin – *Station Planning Manager*
- Jacky Morales-Ferrand – *Director of Housing*
- Rachel VanderVeen - Deputy Director, Housing Department
- Kristen Clements – *Housing Division Manager*

Consultant Team:

- Dave Javid - *Principal (Plan to Place)*
- Suhaila Sikand – *Outreach Specialist (Plan to Place)*
- Diana Benitez – *Outreach Specialist (Raimi + Associates)*

Public: There were approximately 61 members of the public present at the Zoom call, or via the local public broadcasting or Youtube Live.

SUMMARY

Kim Welsh welcomed everyone to the meeting. Dave Javid, from Plan to Place, followed with approval of the last SAAG meeting minutes (September 16, 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 and discussions. The full set of meeting materials, including the slideshows, video recording, and handouts, are available at: www.diridonsj.org/saag.

GENERAL PROCESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Dave reported back stats on community engagement since February 2018 and shared an updated timeline of the multiple planning processes affecting the Diridon Station area. He also shared the upcoming community engagement opportunities.

The following summarizes the SAAG comments following the presentation. Responses to questions are represented in *italics* below.

- Will we be receiving links to the upcoming meetings?
 - *Lori is sending them to SAAG members and the information is already available on the project website.*
- In terms of documents and timelines, where is the update on the analysis for economics for the community benefits plan? When will we be seeing this? I want to clarify that incentive zoning is separate from the Downtown West project. In December, Council asked for an informational memo on initial findings from HR&A on the financial value for policy decisions benefitting Google as part of the negotiations.
 - *We will speak about the incentive zoning analysis completed for the Diridon area and we will share what we have committed with council to get at your question about the negotiations. We do not have a complete analysis at this time. Council directed staff to bring the recommended development agreement to the SAAG before going to Council for consideration. The February meeting will be that opportunity to share feedback.*



DIRIDON STATION AREA UPDATES

Tim Rood, Nicolle Burnham, Eric Eidlin, Kristen Clements, and Kim Welsh provided updates on the Draft Amended Diridon Station Area Plan, Draft Diridon Station Area Affordable Housing Implementation Plan, and related planning efforts. The particular topics addressed were land use, building heights, parks and open space, public art, transportation, parking, environmental sustainability, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) approach, affordable housing, anti-displacement, incentive zoning analysis, small business, and community engagement for the Diridon Station Area.

The following summarizes the SAAG comments following the presentation. Responses to questions are represented in *italics* below.

- It is difficult to comment because there was so much information shared for an hour. Frustrated with the idea of a community center going into the Diridon area when the Gardner Community Center was only open for 4 years and has been closed for longer than it's been opened. The re-use program was a complete failure at Gardner. I feel that we are underserved and abused. We got the community center because 280 cut through our neighborhood. Now we are getting cut up again with the rail and need some community benefits out of this. Don't consider a new community center in the Diridon area until we get our center fully funded. The City needs to treat us with more respect.
 - *We hear you and would like to set up a time to talk for the Parks and Recreation department to speak with Gardner community members. The Community Center in Diridon Area was a goal in the 1992 Mid-town specific plan and the 2014 DSAP. The 1992 plan described a center and other city services. We believe it will be important and necessary, but also understand that long-term plan is not something we can fund immediately. We know that we have systemic challenges with how we fund our parks and recreation department and we will be working on this so we can provide our services.*
- Annoying to only have this opportunity to comment after hearing 3 presentations. Community input has listed priorities other than a community center. The Parks Commission did not ask for smaller parks, but exceptional quality parks. Consider the math: 12,000 new units, 2 people per unit, and the City's guideline for 3 acres per 1,000 residents – that's 72 acres of parks. Downtown West proposes 19 acres. How much of that is parkland versus cement plazas, or circulation? It seems like park fees always get cut first. The area is already underserved, and now you are adding more residents with less money for quality parks. Smaller parks for more people seems like a recipe for disaster.
- Regarding the slide on updated public art and street network, there is excitement about the primary pathway being mainly for bikes south of Diridon Station. Plant 51 is on the border of DSAP and has a major exit of their building on the southside. We are aware of the bottlenecking that currently occurs in that area. Plant 51 is currently looking at increasing facility features and would like to know if they should close the gate to make it safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.
 - *There are a lot of design options, but no proposal to close it to vehicular traffic at this time.*
- It seems like the Affordable Housing Implementation Plan is going in a good direction. We are concerned that some areas are targeted for housing goals with the highest potential heights and that whittling will occur and reduce the number of homes that will be build. There were 13,000 proposed



new homes that have gone down by 15%. We need to build high rises to reach these housing numbers and targeting specific areas will make it harder. Are projects under review or proposed in these areas with the modifications? Any comment on some of the height changes and how will it alter overall residency capacity?

- *There are a few active or proposed developments projects in DSAP. In areas where previously proposed height limits were reduced, we are not aware of any active projects at the moment. At our September SAAG meeting, we presented on the change in capacity on proposed height limits. This netted to a reduction of 1 million feet over the entire plan areas. Some of those sites are designated as employment or housing. It is a little difficult to say how many units because it depends on land use. The preferred land use scenario that was modeled had a 600-700 unit reduction and office could have been more than half a million.*
- I would like to clarify a few points. DANG sent in a letter on September 25 after the last SAAG meeting. We clarified how many units would be lost based on reduced heights that DANG is proposing. The ask was to defer any non-residential development in the DSAP (non-Downtown West) in residential areas until these DSAP plans are set. Please clearly identify how many units would be lost if a non-residential project gets approved. Housing goals in the report: there was talk about more housing units from urban villages into the DSAP – why? That feels like artificially increasing numbers in DSAP when the urban villages are spread throughout the city. One of the big ones is Berryessa BART Station (developing at 4 stories) - please look at increasing heights there to relieve pressure in the DSAP area. It does not have to be much. Do not move more away from urban villages into the DSAP. Get housing built next to transit right away. DANG is talking about 4% of the DSAP. If these housing numbers apply to the whole downtown area and not just DSAP, it is actually less than 4% of the area, true? The rest of Downtown area can absorb additional housing units.
 - *The City's zoning ordinance does not give staff permission to do that. Council could pass a moratorium. If a particular development is asking for a General Plan amendment, then City Council or Planning Commission can consider it. DSAP is targeted to go to Council in the Spring. Both Downtown West EIR and addendum to DSAP are allocating additional development capacity as a whole. That work is taking into account potential for development in all of downtown. The citywide team that does General Plan growth allocation continue to refine those values. The horizon urban villages and Coyote Valley are origin areas for additional capacity allocated to Downtown.*
- Create one fund instead of two for community benefits. It will focus the money, benefits, and promote equity and community ownership. The single fund will help preserve naturally affordable housing, community ownership (land trusts), workforce development, and much more. We need to focus on the needs.
- Appreciated the incentive zoning feasibility analysis. Encourage the City to use all resource available to explore this. It did not look like there was any quantitative analysis on that issue. There are opportunities for policies on non-Google and non-residential development. Concern of demographic and displacement-related metrics using the 5-year American Community Survey data. Why was the metric not set to how many units preserving like the Housing Accelerator fund in San Francisco? They wanted to preserve 1,500 units and have leveraged different funding sources and set there sites even higher. It would me great to see a similar metric or goal.



- *We did set a goal on the preservation of existing units that can be reviewed on the last page of the Affordable Housing Implementation Plan. Our preservation number is 1,641 units with a desire not to lose any deed restricted units in the area and build from there. The intent is to run a preservation pilot to get more restricted affordable housing in that area. It's a chicken and egg situation with the resources available. Regarding the dataset, five-year average provides smoother numbers and chose to use data that can be pulled directly from Census data.*
- City had community centers throughout city and has difficulty providing money for operation and management. We have a new community center that is underutilized, and it is within walking distance of DSAP.
- We should have more opportunity to comment between each presentation.
- I have been to so many meetings, public and private, to discuss the heights. The 290-295 foot heights abutting last single-family neighborhood in the area and a 75 degree view plain instead of the 45 degree site plain that was in General Plan is disconcerting. I have been involved with the GP since 2007. We tried to make sure all new development met good interfaces with existing neighborhoods, and this does not. The Delmas Park neighborhood was a part of my neighborhood before the 280 took one-third of the neighborhood.
- The City is only proposing 19 acres in this area instead of the 75 acres per their parkland ratio (3 acres per 1,000 units). This will create slums. People will not have the opportunity to recreate outside while living in these high-rises.
- Regarding the proposed changes to Downtown Crane Association, would this change the heights proposed in the area?
 - *When Council voted to increase the heights, they asked for an increased crane capacity. The problem is that the cranes need to go over the maximum heights for a developer to build to the maximum height.*
- We are in a housing crisis. Height is a necessary tool to combat it. DSAP is going to be one of the prime job centers. It is a moral and environmental issue. Displacement can be prevented if building densely. If it is 4% of parking lots vs prime building land, that is a large difference. 4% in San Jose is 7+ miles. Building densely right next to transit and jobs is important.
- When we describe value of parks it feels very soft but, since the pandemic it is easier to point to the feeling of confinement when stuck indoors. The fact that the days are shorter, and it is colder just shows why we need access to parks. Construction is expensive and if we want high rises, we would need parks to feel complete. Build a community that we aspire too with a combination of elements that allow people to intermix. We should not let the pendulum swing too greatly if we want a world class, sustainable, and healthy city. We need housing and parks. it is a disservice to put them against each other. Do not reduce park fees to promote development.
 - *We are not proposing any changes to park fees in DSAP. Any new development will need to pay in accordance with the park fee schedule.*

DOWNTOWN WEST UPDATE



Tim Rood, Nicolle Burnham, Jessica Zenk, David Keyon, and Nanci Klein presented updates on the development, environmental review, and Development Agreement processes. The topics addressed were the proposed Design Standards and Guidelines, parks and open space, mobility, parking, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), sustainability, district utilities, infrastructure, Development Agreement update and insights, and community engagement.

The following summarizes the SAAG comments following the presentation. Responses to questions are represented in *italics* below.

- Lots of information was just shared and it would have been helpful if the pages were numbered for us to follow along. Nicolle, privately owned public parks will represent about one-third of the 15 acres. Do you have examples of what a successful privately owned public park in San Jose or somewhere else looks like? Is the New York highline an example of this?
 - *We do not have many of these in San Jose. We tend to have private open space in a different program. This is a new concept for us. Other cities do this. It can be a bit controversial. We need to make sure people know where it is and make it accessible. That is why we are asking for conditions in these spaces. Some challenges in other cities include having them on rooftops, we will not have that. The New York Highline is not an example of a privately owned public park. We will get back to you on a good example.*
- I am excited about the idea of a protected bikeway along Bird Ave over 280. Let's make it a walkway for pedestrian access too. Access for pedestrians is precarious in that area.
- Nicolle, it looks like there are riparian areas included in park acreage. A lot of riparian areas are not useful for recreation and they should not be marked as such. A lot of those areas are used for runoff.
- How serious is everyone about housing? We had a zoning change case on an oversized double lot that could have been subdivided for 15 residential units and we lost that opportunity, and it was changed for commercial industrial. This is a dubious use for the neighborhood. Where were all the housing folks on that one?
 - *Regarding the zoning change, it had a General Plan land use designation that allowed that particular use. The City of San Jose is a charter city and recent changes to state law now require us to have our zoning align with the General Plan. The zoning did not conform with the General Plan that allowed the use.*
- Cultural resources have significant avoidable impacts in the Draft DEIR. This plan proposes to demolish 6 out of 9 historic resources in the area. On a smaller scale project, this would never happen. We are not thinking creatively about design guidelines. This company has 132 billion in liquid assets. Google should be required to go beyond the bare minimum.
- The DISC, DSAP, and Downtown West projects all have different fates for Diridon Station. The station that is on the national registry of historic resources.
- We need to be intentional around governance when we talk about the development of the community benefits fund. Ensure that community is leading the governance of the funds to verify that it is going to



stated community goals. The governance should also be representative of the community with low-income, community organizations, labor, direct services, community-based organizations, historically underfunded neighborhoods, affordable housing advocates, and youth. When we see plans in other places that are absent of this, they fall apart.

- Community and SAAG members have been clear that community benefits should consider displacement, affordable housing and jobs for residents. This is important for people. The development agreement should have one fund to address displacement concern for low-income communities of color.
- How can we get what we can out of funds for community benefits? Partnering with private philanthropy is a great way to get these benefits. The development will occur in transit-oriented neighborhoods that will impact other areas of the City. We have to think about community benefits fund in a wider geographic scope. What the definition is needs to be defined.
- It's important to have a community-oriented government structure for the community benefits fund. We need to ensure that it is reflective of the community. SAAG should take on this role and prioritize budget to make sure it addresses needs. Would love to learn more about governance structure and start to implement it.
- Good bike pathways included in this plan. Unfortunately, the bike parking was not addressed. Will there be bike parking in parks and open spaces? Will bike lockers be available for commercial areas?
- DANG sent a letter to the City that mentions Hanover Development and old Whole Foods sites where the Planning Department has noted as reducing heights from 195 feet to 95 feet. That should not be a reduction, but a reflection of current conditions. The DANG called out the area along Los Gatos Creek on Park Avenue. It is adjacent to a historic district and along the edge of the creek, and not proper to build a 290-ft building. A new building would shade both resources. I became really confused about high-rise housing development. Staff says that high-rise residential development is infeasible. If we were serious, then we would drop heights at the point where developers can build something and without reduction in fees and density to honestly address our housing crisis. I want to see the City think about what really can be built and especially in areas of concern around existing neighborhoods. This is a large city - why is everything being forced into this area? We are talking about a very limited area within the whole DSAP- a few blocks, the areas with old housing stock next to areas planned for high rises.
 - *Part of the excitement of building near Diridon is that transit trips are unparalleled. Diridon will command more renters in the long term. Over time, feasibility does change over time and the investment will come. The State is trending more and more into building more housing in the areas designed for housing. The challenge for affordable housing with taller buildings is how to make sure to do it on certain floors in bigger buildings. We are trying to do enough housing to meet housing crisis and help offset jobs we are creating. In figuring out what building to preserve, we are thinking about what will be around there in the future. A goal of the preservation pilot program is to be sensitive with preserving affordable housing and do what we can with the money available.*



- VTA is an invested partner working with City and DISC partners to maximize the relationship of land use and transportation to ensure the greatest amount of benefits for all people. Support the DSAP mobility plan and maximizing housing near transit. Thank you for naming the potential for displacement pressure in relation to transit improvements. We want to continue working closely with the City on holistic strategies to prevent displacement and address affordability.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Following the discussion by the SAAG, 8 members of the public provided comments on the agenda items via audio during the Zoom meeting, as summarized as follows:

1. When the idea of daylighting the creek was conceived, it was a great thing for nature and cyclists. It is apparent this will not happen. Now understand that this project will split the trail and have a direct link to the station along the corridor. This is a great idea to keep commuting cyclists outside the park. Instead of bringing the park to the grade of the rails, leave it where it is. It is also cheaper. I was expecting 2 minutes, I do not think getting 1 minute is appropriate.
2. I keep seeing stuff on how Google needs to make a profit on office buildings. Maybe instead of purchasing land they should lease it and that would work out better. I am disturbed with City selling land to Google. This was not agreed upon by residents of San Jose. It is our land not Sam Liccardo's.
3. I am not anti-development. Do not create public-private parks or the City will be sued. If they are going to have parks, Google tends to use astro turf. I hope they do not use that. Everything in these kinds of areas are narrow, small, and limited parking. What's next, artificial trees? When they phase out gas motors, that is not going to work. Buses work here. You cannot have mass transit that ends at 10:30 pm, that's not mass transit. You might want to reconsider housing and mass transit in the age of COVID – people will be working from home.
4. I have been a resident of San Jose since birth. I represent a local San Jose non-profit serving mental health needs for underserved community of all ages (Act for Mental Health). We are tenants in a Park Avenue building owned by the City and are able to provide basic services through this generous subsidy. Our services are so important especially right now with COVID, elections, work from home, and the holidays. There is a likelihood that our building will be sold. What is the City and Google considering to support non-profits like ours to continue to provide services and how can we participate in those efforts?
5. This whole process is going so fast and the Downtown Google West EIR is one-foot thick with feedback due in December. The DSAP is coming in January. We need more time. There are issues coming to our neighborhood, climate refugees, impact of buildings, and unprecedented extinction. We have opportunities to right this with food production, urban sustainability, car free infrastructure, rooftop gardens, community gardens, removing the bus depot, and use undeveloped land for agriculture.
6. CatalyzeSV reviewed the Downtown West project last December and gave Google a detailed feedback letter in February. They came back to us with an updated proposal that includes a lot of great transformational changes. A number of changes aligned with our suggestions. Thank you, Google, for reaching out and listening to community. A lot of effort on creating a vibrant place. We will add our comments onto the website.
7. The City needs to consider calming down building heights and needs to always talk to airport commission for heights. I hope you can be open to ideas such as Google doing National Security



technological work, more thoughts on East San Jose, SAP and BART Station, and a second train station in Fremont. Is Fremont planning for high speed rail? Hopefully, you can give us more time for public comment. The City should have Vietnamese translation available.

8. I agree with the comment about how we should be crossing the tracks at Park – this is also how we should be crossing the tracks at Santa Clara. We only get 1 minute for public comment. My recommendation is to send ABC packing all the way to Holland and goodbye DISC. Google has assembled a world class team that includes their architect who is the only viable option for Diridon Station. The architect is the designer of a station Rotterdam. The Diridon Station Area is the entrance for San Fernando. Downtown West project should include Diridon station and the historical landmark.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 pm.

DRAFT

