



# Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)

## Draft Meeting Notes | June 17, 2020

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**Date + Time**    *June 17, 2020 | 6:00 PM*

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

- Meeting Objectives**
- *Planning Update on Diridon Station Area Plan and Google Mixed-Use Plan*
  - *Updated Civic Engagement Plan*
  - *Overview of results from Spring 2020 Online Outreach and Survey*

## AGENDA

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- 1. Welcome and Introductions**
- 2. Meeting Minutes from SAAG Meeting on January 16, 2019**
- 3. Planning Update – Engagement Plan, Diridon Station Area Plan, and Google Mixed-Use**
- 4. Overview of Spring 2020 Outreach and Online Survey Input**
- 5. Public Comment**

## ATTENDANCE

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**SAAG Members:** 29 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:**

- Kim Welsh – *Deputy City Manager*
- Nanci Klein – *Assistant Director of Economic Development/Director of Real Estate*
- 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:

- 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 200 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 review updates on DSAP, Google’s Downtown West Mixed-use Plan, Civic Engagement Plan, and Spring survey results. The following notes summarize the presentation and discussion of these two agenda items. Kim Walesh, the Deputy City Manager/Director of Economic Development, acknowledged that the COVID pandemic and murder of George Floyd and other unarmed Black people has shone a light on the inequities in the community, particularly for low-income residents and communities of color. These both have heightened awareness of systemic racism and the impacts to communities of color and her commitment to change in her work. Kim also spoke of San Jose’s emergency response to COVID and virtual engagement. Dave Javid, from Plan to Place, followed with approval of the last SAAG meeting minutes (January 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. The full set of meeting materials, including the slideshows, video recording, and handouts, are available at: [www.diridonsj.org/saag](http://www.diridonsj.org/saag).

## PLANNING UPDATE – ENGAGEMENT PLAN, DIRIDON STATION AREA PLAN, AND GOOGLE MIXED-USE

Tim Rood, Planning Division Manager provided a brief planning update and next steps regarding the Diridon Station Area Plan and Downtown West proposal engagement and study sessions. Nanci Klein, Assistant Director of Economic Development/Director of Real Estate provided an update on Development Agreement and community benefits framework.

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

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

- Since the DSAP schedule is being extended, is that delay going to have an impact on development projects that have been submitted or that are in the initial review phase?
  - *Any development currently being reviewed must comply with existing plans and policies. Applicants can also wait to submit after the DSAP plan is approved in the Spring.*

## DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT



- What's the update on the info memo answering financial questions followed by the late April Council Study Session?
  - *Yes, we are planning to have this in September.*
- The Community Benefits need to take the impacts to the Gardner Community into consideration. This includes looking at the Gardner Community Center and 280 highway safety.

## OVERVIEW OF SPRING 2020 OUTREACH AND ONLINE SURVEY INPUT

Matt Raimi shared summaries of each presentation as well as the survey results. After each topic was presented, staff responded to questions and comments from SAAG members.

The following summarizes the SAAG comments following each topic of the presentation: Outreach and Demographic, Amending the DSAP, Transportation, and Community Benefits. Responses to questions and comments are represented in *italics* below.

### GENERAL SURVEY

- Upset and appalled that only 13 SAAG members responded. The City can't force responses, but encourage SAAG members to respond to represent the community in this process.
  - *Agree, thank you for the note*
- Notes about the language being used: underrepresented minority is the majority. The City needs to align with the community and improve outreach with different tools. The City cannot be satisfied with not contacting the community. The City needs to be more creative/imaginative of how to reach them because this panel isn't representing who is actually being impacted and who could be displaced.
  - *Any ideas you have would be appreciated.*
- It may be that we are reaching out to people in a way that white folks like to communicate, but we are missing the boat. We are not reaching the neighborhood here at all. This is a digital divide and maybe we need another consultant on board who knows how to engage with these communities.
  - *Any ideas you have would be appreciated.*
- Who did you use to do outreach? Did you hire any companies to do that?
  - *The City spoke with the Community Partners to help with engagement particularly when it came to reaching diverse audiences. Those groups were supposed to be doing pop ups and smaller meetings in the Spring, but when COVID hit, we had to shift. We've been working with them, but the in-person meetings were what was contracted to happen, and those cannot occur now.*
- There were 3 zip codes that were very passionate and those are the neighborhoods directly affected by it. This shows the importance of having a working group. Share a breakdown of the building heights (residential and commercial) in relation to who responded by zip code.
  - *We will follow up on this.*



- Agreed. The City needs to parse out different stats by zip code. It would be helpful to understand how close they are to the project. I think building heights are fine provided there is protection of residential and historic district. I am concerned about break down by race and ethnicity because the Hispanic, Black, and Asian respondents are insufficient during this latest round for online SAAG process. There was no Spanish outreach.
  - *Great point, we are extending the survey to provide for more inclusive participation. We will continue to work with community partners especially given access issues. And we did provide outreach in Spanish with the survey and video presentations.*

## DSAP AMENDMENT

- Concern about bringing a large number of housing units into area without a full EIR. The height limits were raised considerably from the plan approved last year and we need more than just an addendum to DSAP. The DANG group feels like they have not been heard. DSAP needs a robust community engagement process and a working group of community leaders in the immediate area to work on this through implementation phase.
  - *We will do better as we move forward.*
- Since last SAAG meeting, the city decided that it would be okay to put rail through neighborhoods. This is unfortunate as it has been 80% Latino for a long time and has been subjected to many transit infrastructure changes that affects quality of life. Railroad will go through neighborhood AGAIN.
- DSAP addendum needs a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) with a working group and sub-committee. Updates to historic preservation need to be in place before Downtown West and DSAP are finalized. This makes it far too easy to lose historic landmarks.
  - *Surveys are being conducted for historic preservation. In regards to DSAP, the boundary is almost entirely within the downtown and the Downtown Strategy 2040 EIR was completed just over a year ago. With an adopted planning document, we will be able to look at each individual proposed project and determine impact.*
- Need to do an EIR to study impacts to Delmas Park Neighborhood. This neighborhood is now in downtown and has lost OEI protections that kept building below 8 stories. An addendum without community input is not fair. The City needs to work with neighborhood partners affected by changes. The City staff need to find other ways to engage beyond posting a video online. The community wants to be a partner in the design process.
  - *The City fully understands this.*
- An addendum can be overlooked. We want to be a partner in this process. The transportation video shows a bike plan that ends right before entering an adjacent neighborhood. Why does it stop? We need more information.
- The DSAP update needs a working group. Residents have to live with these results forever. Once there's a building of an increased height, it will shift the environment forever.
- There was more of a community input process for the Arena than the latest iteration of DSAP. There has to be a working group and committee comprised of community groups moving forward. This is the largest project San Jose has taken. We have worked very well with the city before on other projects.



- Back in 2004, the City was proposing a GPU amendment to extend Downtown from highway 87 to the rail line. This brought Delmas Park into downtown. A promise was made back then to Delmas Park neighborhood. The City should carry forward with that promise.
- The DANG sent several pages of comments for all presentations. This included an update to a preliminary heights map that added single family homes next to the Diridon Station Area in blue. When planning looks at height, we want you to look at surrounding neighborhoods and keep higher buildings away from single family homes. We are not anti-development, we do agree with density applied to appropriate locations.
  - *DANG comments and map were sent to SAAG members and included on the website. We appreciate all the comments on how the residents want to work on partnership with city. We understand that neighbors are most directly impacted. We reached out to DANG and look forward to more conversations. In the time that we find ourselves in, we understand that we need to be leading with people and not with projects, buildings and how things look. Our work is for the people.*

## TRANSPORTATION

- City needs a better way to get children safely across 280 to Gardner Academy. There was a 2-hour discussion on getting kids over the 880 to Charcot Avenue. This station is supposed to be a landmark and iconic. There are problems when we do not include surrounding neighborhoods.
  - *Safer pedestrian/bicycle crossing over 280 at Bird is crucial for us. It was popular in the survey. We have heard it in our discussions with Gardner neighborhood too.*
- Closing 87 off-ramp would have a negative response for the community.
  - *We are taking in all this feedback and any neighborhood meetings and smaller group meetings. There was not enough context on why we would consider such an idea. We were trying to think about balance of people entering and exiting the area and how it would flow the best. We want to recognize Sharks for giving us constructive input.*
- Surprised that the data shows that people are excited about the light rail upgrades when the presentation was not very clear on what those upgrades would be. We agreed to spend 5 billion for a 2-mile extension to East Ridge. What else? One building alone will add 2,500 cars per day to the 87/ Santa Clara intersection.
  - *We are in a period of exploration trying to understand what would make a meaningful difference in light rail travel times between the core of downtown, to Campbell and to North San Jose. A challenge to address is that today it is faster to bike from Diridon station to downtown light rail than it is to take light rail. We are exploring with VTA what it could look like and what cost it would entail to take light rail on a different path that is less circuitous at grade or on-ground. We are open to considering other low-cost ways to speed up light rail. The aspiration is for it to be faster.*
- Appreciated the videos and having time to consider them. However, some information in those presentations got a viscerally negative reaction from the public. It seems like the City got ahead of itself. The public prefers for you to complete the study and use the data to then make proposals.
- Will you take the current pandemic and work from home impacts into consideration as you develop the transportation plan? Some companies may not want to go back to working in offices.

- *If we knew the answer, we would be ahead of the world. It is one of the things we are considering in terms of scenarios. The studies/ environmental work will be conservative because we do not know how the numbers will change. We all need to take this as a potential and profound change especially for telecommuting and the environment. We welcome further thoughts on this.*
- A lot of these companies are rethinking space for their employees. Does the City have a contingency for Google and all the projected projects to shift from office space to housing space. Businesses are starting to no longer want as much office space.
  - *One way we are approaching this is a land use concept that has greater flexibility for sites to develop as either office or housing.*
- Some businesses are also increasing the amount of office space to maintain physical distance among employees. Commercial space may become even more valuable.
- DANG members had a meeting with the Department of Transportation and their main concern is with the Google area. When the Sharks are in session, there is no way for people drive down Autumn and go to Whole Foods on Santa Clara. The City needs to make sure that people can make their way through the downtown and into Willow Glen as we add 15,000-22,000 residents and jobs in downtown.
- The video was well done. Curious what the San Fernando Pathway will look like?
  - *Good questions and opportunity to integrate it to Cahill Street. The raising of the track brings the opportunity for increase bike and pedestrian access.*
- Concern - DISC and Downtown West proposal not being compatible with the historic Diridon Station Dept. DISC presentation has the station but Google proposal has a plaza. How are these interacting?
  - *This was brought up in the DANG meeting. The station needs to work today all the way through to when there is an expanding station that can serve more people. The detailed design of a future station is very far from complete and the urban design team is working on getting more details. We all share a real appreciation for today's station, and the DISC work to date that has led to the belief that it needs to be moved or repurposed comes from the additional train tracks. The work on how to reintegrate the historic depot into either the future station or surrounding area is work we expect to take on during Phase 2 of the DISC process.*
- Appreciate the city's responses to comments regarding transportation. DANG has had good conversations with the department. DANG is very concerned on the extension of San Fernando Street. There are a lot of details that need to get worked out.

## PARKS/OPEN SPACES AND FACILITIES

- A Community Center is going up in downtown. The Gardner Center has not gotten funding to support it. Before we build a new one, Gardner should be open full time.
- The survey didn't talk about open space and this is an important part of the Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) department. A new community center does not sound like a good replacement for parks in the area. In the past, the city spent \$6M on Gardner and then ran out of money for maintenance. We need open space, especially during COVID. The Midtown Specific Plan promised us a large park at the abandoned fire training center. The city told us if we build them high and dense it would leave space for parks.



- *We did not include open space in survey because we assume it is a given that there would be open space/parks and it would be an urban in form. The city is looking at 10-minute walkshed as a measure for parks in this area. The presentation asked generally about Community Centers because of future need in terms of equitable services. Park fees would not pay for this, but we have several options. The programs would be flexible based on demographics.*
- According to the survey, 40% want an art center. The Gardner Community Center has a closed down art and ceramic room. The pool can also be shared with the downtown neighborhood. This center is rarely open. There is no point in having a room for 200 people when Google and SAP can open up one of their rooms for meetings and events.
  - *We are willing to talk about and explore. The City can't offer Google's space without discussion.*
- What about Google as a community space? Adobe space has had community events. In addition to that, there is a Google map that shows park space over an acre in the northern portion of DSAP while residential is located at south end. Why would the park space be situated adjacent to a commercial building instead of near residential? This is also where the trail is super wide for Guadalupe. The City can rebuild roads and use that area for park space.
  - *This map is probably from the Google application. The SAP area is mixed-use and it is near Julian Street. I also think there is a need for park space near office space. The balance of parks is a great point and something to keep in mind. We should talk offline.*
- The water building is an opportunity for community space with a public/private partnership. The issue is capital expenditures, but getting the city to maintain the funding for it.
  - *Thank you for your comment.*
- The park presentation did not make good connections between Los Gatos Creek trail and the Guadalupe River trail. The city should build something parallel that is on the street because it's currently not safe.

## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- Appreciate the survey approach during COVID. Unfortunately, we didn't see as wide a participation to the survey. The results show a priority for the community benefits to focus on anti-displacement, housing, and jobs. A fund is interesting but it raises questions like how, for what, and how decisions get made. What is your initial thinking on this?
  - *There has been discussion about community benefits and the uses that are prioritized like some for development, preservation, and activities. Actual uses are to be determined later on. The only idea on the table at this time is to see if we could narrow down scope. We were not trying to be specific. We would still need to scope this out more. It is the process that has been done in other cities.*
- What is the best way for us to follow the process on Community Stabilization Fund and for community leaders to provide input on that? How would this potential fund work with other policies/programs that are ongoing?
  - *On the first question, we are happy to meet with organizations and individuals with more thoughts and ideas on the fund.*



- *We have multiple documents like the Anti-Displacement plan coming out in August, affordable housing plan for this area and we will be listening to policy issues. This is another place for input. We are meeting with people who would want to continue expressing concerns and interest.*
- Be aware of the racial divide, people who took this survey are not the ones who will be impacted the most by DSAP changes. There needs to be a deliberate effort to reach these people. The community stabilization fund needs to have more outreach. Will share thoughts on how to improve outreach.
  - *I agree with you, we must find better ways to engage people who don't participate via online surveys. During this DSAP process, the housing department will take into consideration the engagement we have been conducting in multiple initiatives. We did extensive outreach for anti-displacement work beyond standard meetings to reach renter communities who did not have time or were not connected to the city.*
- Any thinking on the timing of housing strategy for DSAP? Appreciated that the staff is thinking big on affordable housing and prioritization of funding. If the city can create more housing outside the station area, that is great. Downtown area and the rest of the city need housing.
  - *The Affordable Housing strategy is coming out in September. We will begin community outreach on the plan.*
- Has the city asked Google how many support workers they will have and where they will be housed? Where is San Jose going to have extremely low income, very low income, and low-income housing? How to integrate with market rate housing so the city does not end up with communities like Pruitt-Igoe and Cabrini Green. They were torn down.

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

Following the discussion by the SAAG, 12 members of the public provided comments on the agenda items via audio during the Zoom meeting. A summary of the public comments are below:

1. I am with the Affordable Housing Network. I want to comment that in the last week or two we have been in a revolution with Black and brown lives matter. One thousand people gave comment at city council and asked for defunding of the police department. We need to look at equity impacts. Survey respondents were 2% African American and less than 4% Latino.<sup>1</sup> I didn't hear it on the general discussion I have talked about housing and homelessness and safety. We can't call police on homeless people. We need an equity plan for this entire project.
2. I live just west of Diridon. This process isn't about capturing my perspective as a white guy in the middle class. Thank you for trying to reach underrepresented stakeholders. Of the seven groups displayed earlier, we are one of those groups. We are designing workshops with other partners to expand our reach of the Vietnamese community. We welcome SAAG's ideas on how to do engagement specifically during COVID.
3. With the MTC now involved I hope San Jose is open to the California High Speed Rail from Tracy to East Bay and public transit connections in between. This could lead to less Bay Area displacement. We need to address digital inclusion and equity in San Jose with good open public policies to give people a better seat at the table with broadband internet. We should ask groups like the United Nations and the World Health Organization for their best practices on digital inclusion. We need to consider long term health and sustainability.

<sup>1</sup> The survey results had 8% Latino respondents.



4. DSAP would require an addendum EIR so future projects would require supplemental analysis. Would the future projects be carried out in the downtown strategy? The EIR should also consider the significant closures of parks during COVID. Outreach to minorities. Bilingual and bi-cultural planners are effective.
5. I'm with YIMBY South Bay and a former member of the North San Jose Task Force. I'm a little curious about what you are REALLY committed to. You say 25% affordable housing, but I don't think so. Developers can pay an extra fee and not even build affordable housing. How come you can't just tell Google you need to build 25% affordable housing or you can't come to San Jose?
6. We are making things harder on low income people. I live in Gardner. Our neighborhood isn't low income or renters. We shouldn't be thinking about higher rents near Diridon because people are moving of their own accord. And can you be more transparent on your proposed building heights?
7. I am concerned because according to yesterday's Supervisor meeting, this project has been changed to cut the housing project out on the south end. Why are we cutting housing from the project? It would be replaced with office space, why? The remaining housing will be market rate housing.
8. We put the shelter in place to good use and worked fulltime on the station. We resolved issues in the north in the April timeframe. Now working on the South of station. Nothing will happen to the historic dept station building. We believe that the cars will continue to go through. People can walk right to the park without interference with traffic. We will have a fully working station in the South before going north.
9. I am interested in the Los Gatos Creek. When will it be feasible? What's the issue? The alignment of Los Gatos creek is jaggy, how can trail users follow it with ease and not like Guadalupe. With Arena Green, how much land will be left for the public after this?
10. Member of DANG and North Willow Brook. A new trail was introduced. Originally, the railroad bridge was built lower than expected and would have flooded trail. The proposed trail is moot. The elevated station platform will remove the railroad bridge. We need a 2-pronged approach. In the short term, make a safe connection of Auzerais Ave to confluence with a bike lane/sidewalk. We already have a safe connection from Auzerais Ave to Dupont and Laurel Grove Lane. City should plan for a trail on west side of the creek. Trail should go under Park Avenue when approaching from Montgomery. The City should provide safe bike and pedestrian access. Make Meridian and Lincoln accessible to Los Gatos Creek Trail.
11. I'm with the San Jose Parks advocates. The survey was very misleading by focusing exclusively on a community center. How do city plans and Downtown West Google proposal connect? Will we have access to public space? What are urban form parks? International COVID studies show that park uses have changed and so should designs. The Gardener Center is not currently staffed and the city is proposing a new community center. Both neighborhoods are within the same school enrollment catchment area. The City should explore joint partnerships with Google space. There was not adequate outreach for a diverse audience. A working group should take charge on community benefits that include affordable housing, livable, and open spaces.
12. You say you really care but you don't. Climate Activist Greta quote at the United Nations Climate Action Summit, "We will be watching you. This is all wrong for so many reasons. I shouldn't be up here. I should be in school on other side of the ocean. You have stolen my dreams and childhood." I think this process is baloney. You are not dealing with climate change. How dare you close the highway? We have a lot of things to change. You put us at the end of the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

