

**NOTICE OF PREPARATION
OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE
SANTA CLARA DOWNTOWN PRECISE PLAN**

Date of Distribution: January 19, 2022

As the Lead Agency, the City of Santa Clara will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the above-referenced project and would like your views regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be addressed in the EIR. This EIR may be used by your agency when considering approvals for this project.

The project description, location, and probable environmental effects which will be analyzed in the EIR for the project are identified in the attached materials.

According to State law, the deadline for your response is 30 days after receipt of this notice; however, we would appreciate an earlier response, if possible.

To respond in writing, agencies should identify a contact person. Please send your response to:

City of Santa Clara
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Andrew Crabtree



Director of Community Development

Date: January 19, 2022

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Introduction

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a proposed project that an agency may implement or approve. The EIR process is intended to provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment; to examine methods of reducing adverse impacts; and to consider alternatives to the project.

The EIR for the proposed project will be prepared and processed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended. In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, the EIR will include the following:

- A summary of the project;
- A project description;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures for the project;
- Alternatives to the project as proposed; and
- Environmental consequences, including (a) any significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources; (c) the growth inducing impacts of the proposed project; and (d) cumulative impacts.

Project Location

The project area is 25 acres in size and is bounded by Lafayette Street to the east, Homestead Road to the south, Madison Street to the west, and Benton Street to the north (see Figures 1 and 2). The Santa Clara Downtown Precise Plan (SCDPP) area is adjacent to Santa Clara University (SCU) and the Caltrain corridor. The SCDPP area includes up to 44 parcels and is currently developed with residential, office, and commercial uses, as well as a SCU educational center.

Project Background

Development within the Downtown Core is currently comprised of approximately 350,000 square feet retail and office space and 190 residential units. The City of Santa Clara 2010-2035 General Plan, adopted November 2010, envisions revitalizing the Downtown Core with a mix of residential and commercial development. The foundation of the SCDPP has been laid through the completion of a series of planning workshops between October 2015 and November 2017 by all interested community members.

Over the course of the SCDPP planning process thus far, the planning team has gotten feedback from community members and stakeholders in the following ways:

- 24 Downtown Community Task Force (DCTF) meetings. Details of each meeting, including meeting materials and summaries can be found under the Task Force page of the SCDPP website.
- A virtual workshop on streets, public spaces, buildings, programming, art and culture on October 12, 2021.
- Two online surveys on the topics of Land Use Concepts during May 2020 and Placemaking in October 2021.
- Two “Meeting in a Box” activities distributed to the community in January/February 2020 and June 2020.
- A lunchtime student engagement workshop at Santa Clara University on January 29, 2020.
- Downtown Retail 101 Community Workshop on January 16, 2020.
- Meetings with stakeholders and technical advisors from January through March 2020.

Summaries of all the community engagement activities can be found on the SCDPP website at: <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/downtown>

Project Description

The purpose of the SCDPP is to provide guidance for new development within the Downtown (as identified in the City’s General Plan) and to meet the needs of the community. The proposed land use alternative selected by the City to be studied includes approximately 1,317,600 square feet of housing (up to 1,326 residential units), 669,500 square feet of office/hotel, 197,900 square feet of retail/retail ready/and entertainment, and 44,300 square feet of public space. Buildings in the SCDPP area would range from three stories (approximately 33 feet) to nine stories (approximately 124 feet). The SCDPP would maintain the existing roadway network and vehicular connections from the surrounding streets and re-establish the street grid with distinct experiences for different street types.

The SCDPP area consists of three General Plan designations (e.g., Community Mixed-Use, Downtown Core, and Low-Density Residential) and five zoning districts (e.g., Downtown Commercial, Community Commercial, Public of Quasi Public, Planned Development, and General Office). A General Plan Amendment and rezoning are proposed.

Potential Environmental Impacts of the Project

The EIR will identify the significant environmental effects anticipated to result from build out of the proposed SCDPP. The EIR is intended to be a program-level document that will analyze the broad environmental effects of the project. No specific development projects are being considered. Rather, the analysis will focus on the reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect physical environmental effects that could result from implementation of the land use and policies envisioned for the SCDPP. The EIR will include the following specific environmental categories as related to the proposed project:

1. Aesthetics

Visual issues resulting from implementation of the proposed project would include any significant adverse impacts resulting from building mass, height, lighting, and possible glare to adjacent land uses. The EIR will describe the existing visual setting of the project area and the visual changes that are anticipated to occur as a result of the proposed project. The EIR will also discuss possible light and glare issues from the proposed development. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

2. Air Quality

The EIR will address the regional air quality conditions in the Bay Area and discuss the proposed project's impacts to local and regional air quality according to the 2017 Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) guidelines and thresholds.

3. Biological Resources

Habitats in the project area are low in species diversity and include predominately urban adapted birds and animals. The EIR will discuss the project's impacts to trees and impacts to birds that may be nesting in trees on or adjacent to the plan area during future construction of individual parcels. Mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts will be identified, as appropriate.

4. Cultural Resources

There are seven potentially eligible historic structures located within the boundaries of the SCDPP area which include 945 Madison Street, 1059 Madison Street, 1075 Madison Street, 1390 Madison Street, 1200 Franklin Mall, 906 Monroe Street, and 930 Monroe Street.¹ The EIR will include a discussion of potential impacts to cultural and archaeological resources that could result from implementation of the SCDPP. Appropriate mitigation measures will be identified and implemented, in the event cultural resources, including subsurface resources, are encountered during future construction of individual parcels within the plan area.

5. Energy

Future development under the SCDPP would likely result in an increased demand for energy on-site. The Draft EIR will examine whether energy use would be wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary, or would conflict with an applicable plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency.

6. Geology and Soils

The project site is located within the most seismically active region in the United States. The EIR will discuss possible geological impacts associated with seismic activity and the existing soil condition on-site. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

¹ City of Santa Clara. "8.9 Historic Preservation and Resource Inventory." Accessed December 15, 2021. <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=3743>.

7. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Future development under the SCDPP would contribute to regional and global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). This analysis will evaluate whether or not emissions would conflict with emissions reduction goals and plans.

8. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

The EIR will summarize hazardous materials conditions within and adjacent to the SCDPP area and identify any potential contamination that could impact construction workers and/or future site users. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted.

9. Hydrology and Water Quality

According to the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM),² the entire plan area is located in Flood Zone X which is designated as areas of 0.2 percent annual chance flood, areas of one percent annual chance flood with average depths of less than one foot or with drainage areas of less than one square mile, and areas protected by levees from one percent annual chance floods. There are no City floodplain requirements for Flood Zone X.

The EIR will address the possible flooding issues within the plan area as well as the effectiveness of the storm drainage system and the potential water quality impacts of redevelopment activities in the project area under the SCDPP consistent with the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The EIR will also discuss the preliminary stormwater management plan for the SCDPP area.

10. Land Use

The project site is located in an urbanized area surrounded by residential, retail, and office land uses, as well as a SCU educational center. The EIR will describe the existing land uses within, and in the vicinity of, the proposed SCDPP area, and will discuss the project's conformance with relevant land use plans, policies, and regulations.

11. Noise

The primary noise source in the area is vehicular traffic. The EIR will discuss the plans effect on ambient noise levels from full build out of the plan as well as potential construction noise impacts on nearby sensitive receptors and the project's compliance with the City code and General Plan.

12. Population and Housing

This section will analyze the potential for future development under the SCDPP to displace existing people or housing, and whether implementation of the SCDPP would lead to unplanned population growth.

² Federal Emergency Management Agency. "FEMA Flood Map Service Center." Accessed December 14, 2021. <https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search?AddressQuery>.

13. Public Services

Implementation of the SCDPP would likely increase the daytime employee and resident population of the City compared to existing conditions. The increase in daytime employees and City population could result in an increased demand on public services, including police and fire protection and recreational facilities. The EIR will address the availability of public facilities and service systems and the potential for the project to require the construction of new facilities.

14. Transportation and Circulation

Based on the City of Santa Clara's requirements, the Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) will focus on the operations of key intersections and freeway segments in the vicinity of the plan area. The study will include an analysis of AM and PM peak hour traffic conditions using the City's significance criteria as well as the criteria used by other jurisdictions for that agency's facilities. The project's impact on pedestrian, bicycle, and transit services and the potential for the project to reduce vehicles miles travelled (VMT) will also be discussed in the EIR.

15. Utilities

Implementation of the SCDPP would result in an increased demand on utilities and public facilities compared to existing conditions. The EIR will examine the impacts of the project on public facilities, including utilities such as sanitary and storm drains, water supply, and solid waste management.

16. Alternatives

The EIR will examine alternatives to the proposed plan including a “No Project” alternative and one or more alternative plan scenarios depending on the impacts identified. Other alternatives that may be discussed could include reduced development alternatives (e.g., smaller project site or reduced density alternatives). Alternatives discussed will be chosen based on their ability to reduce or avoid identified significant impacts of the proposed plan while achieving most of the identified objectives.

17. Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The EIR will identify those significant impacts that cannot be avoided, if the plan is implemented as proposed.

18. Cumulative Impacts

The EIR will include a Cumulative Impacts section that will address the potentially significant cumulative impacts of the plan when considered with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area.

19. Other Required Analyses

In conformance with the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR will also include the following sections: 1) consistency with local and regional plans and policies, 2) growth inducing impacts, 3) significant

irreversible environmental changes, 4) references and organizations/persons consulted, and 5) EIR authors.