



**NORTH VENTURA COORDINATED AREA PLAN
WORKING GROUP MEETING
AGENDA**

Tuesday, January 7, 2020

City Hall - Community Meeting Room
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301
5:30 PM TO 8:30 PM

Call to Order: 5:30 PM

1. Welcome and Housekeeping: 5:30 PM -5:45 PM
2. Oral Communications: 5:45 PM-6:00 PM

Discussion Items: 6:00 – 8: 15 PM*

1. Discussion on general planning principles, housing and real estate development and transportation.

Oral Communications: 8:15 PM

Wrap Up & Adjournment: 8:30 PM

Future Meeting/Workshops:

*Listed times are estimates.

To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan Working Group Members
From: Rachael Tanner, Assistant Director of Planning & Development Services; in collaboration with Della Costa and Allan Calder of Rincon Consulting
Date: December 31, 2019
Subject: Planning 101 Overview

Planning 101 Overview

On January 7, 2020, the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) Working Group will convene to participate in a “Planning 101.” The three-hour session will include a mix of content and interactive exercises designed to explore, discuss, and understand a few key principles important to “citizen planners”—such as the Working Group members--as well as professional planners. This session is held at the request of many Working Group members.

While the three hours will provide an opportunity for rich discussion, the duration is insufficient to cover all topics of interest. The City asked Rincon consultants to assist in the preparation of the Planning 101 workshop and in the preparation of this report. This report covers a number of topics that will both prepare participants for Planning 101 and provide supplemental materials for topics of interest that may not be discussed during the meeting. The preparers of this report (City staff and consultants) relied on several sources, including journal articles, technical reports, videos, and official city documents, to provide a variety of resources and perspectives.

A wide variety of topics are covered, and some may be of more interest than others to each individual reader. While all the presented topics are important and interconnected, it is understood that not everyone will thoroughly explore each resource provided. This report guides the reader by providing a brief summary of the provided materials so that each reader can more easily prioritize resources based on interest or perceived importance.

To conserve paper, hyperlinks are provided whenever possible.

Readers may find additional resources they wish to share with the Working Group. Please send those via email to Chitra.Moitra@CityofPaloAlto.org.

General Plan

A comprehensive plan, sometimes known as a general plan, is “a practical vision of the future capable of shifts in detail and arrangement over time as available resources and public preferences change.”¹ The State of California Government Code (state law) mandates nearly all cities and counties in California adopt and maintain a general plan, and that certain topics, or “elements” be addressed within it. The mandatory elements for all jurisdictions are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The state, through the Office of Planning

¹ Lauyrence C. Gerckens, C is for Comprehensive Plan <http://plannersweb.com/2007/10/c-comprehensive-plan/>

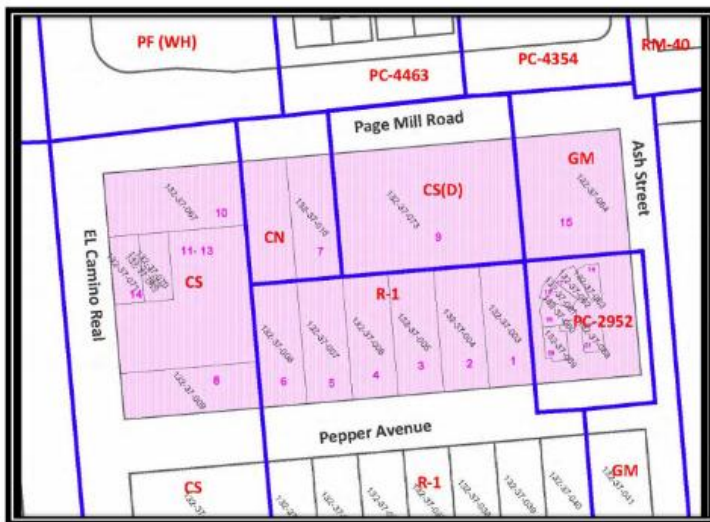
and Research establishes guidelines for the production and conformance of general plans. Guidelines can be reviewed [online](#).²

Land Use & Zoning

[Zoning Basics](#), by Greg Dale and Michael Chandler, succinctly explains the purpose and function of zoning, including a guide to reading and interpreting the text of a zoning code.³ The primary function of municipal planning departments is the administration of the planning and zoning codes to land contained within the municipality. Key in this function is ensuring that the uses proposed on different parcels of land conform to the zoning code in order to maintain the overall health and welfare of the community. The zoning code prescribes what types of uses are allowed within a specified zone, often grouping compatible uses together and separating incompatible uses.

[CityLab University](#): Zoning Codes, by Benjamin Schneider, provides a high-level overview of the history of zoning codes. The “university” also features a glossary containing definitions of common terms used by planners, such as Floor Area Ratio, Overlay, and Setback.⁴

Block 1 Zoning Map



Palo Alto Zoning

The [Palo Alto Zoning Ordinance](#)⁵ categorizes parcels of land into different zones. These designations are visually summarized in the [zoning map](#).⁶ The NVCAP area contains land zoned with several different zoning designations. The [Parcel Catalog](#) identifies the zoning designations for each parcel in the NVCAP area. Within each zone, certain uses may be permitted, permitted after obtaining a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), or permitted with some restrictions. The [use table](#) helps identify what uses can occur within which zones; this table summarizes information elaborated

on in the zoning ordinance.⁷

² Office of Planning and Research Comprehensive Plan Guidelines: <http://plannersweb.com/2007/10/c-comprehensive-plan/>

³ Zoning Basics: <http://plannersweb.com/2001/04/zoning-basics/>

⁴ CityLab University: <https://www.citylab.com/design/2019/08/zoning-ordinance-definition-history-explained-city-laws/594913/>

⁵ Palo Alto Zoning Code: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/pln/current/guidelines/default.asp>

⁶ Zoning Map: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/8188>

⁷ Use table: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/6513>

APPLY IT! Looking at the block in the figure shown above and the use table linked above, can you identify:

- (a) The zoning designation on parcel 9?
- (b) The permitted uses on the parcel?
- (c) The uses requiring a CUP on the parcel?
- (d) According to the zoning ordinance in the municipal code section 18.16.040, is housing allowed in CS zone?⁸

If you are curious... A Form Based Code is another approach to zoning explained in a [four-part series](#) by Mary Madden and Joel Russell.⁹ They write that “a form-based code (FBC) is a way to regulate development that controls building form first and building use second, with the purpose of achieving a particular type of “place” or built environment based on a community vision.”

Area Plans & Specific Plans

The North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan is known as a coordinated area plan; also known in other California communities as a specific plan or an area plan. A specific plan “...is a tool for the systematic implementation of the general plan. It effectively establishes a link between implementing policies of the general plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area.”¹⁰

MULTI-NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

California Avenue

Policy L-4.10

Maintain the existing scale, character and function of the California Avenue business district as a shopping, service and office center intermediate in function and scale between Downtown and the smaller neighborhood business areas.

PROGRAM L4.10.1 Prepare a coordinated area plan for the North Ventura area and surrounding California Avenue area. The plan should describe a vision for the future of the North Ventura area as a walkable neighborhood with multi-family housing, ground floor retail, a public park, creek improvements and an interconnected street grid. It should guide the development of the California Avenue area as a well-designed mixed use district with diverse land uses and a network of pedestrian-oriented streets.

PROGRAM L4.10.2 Create regulations for the California Avenue area that encourage the retention or rehabilitation of smaller buildings to provide spaces for existing retail, particularly local, small



Figure 1 Screen capture from Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan.

Coordinated area plans vary in nature from one community to the next, or from one plan to the next. The Planner’s Guide to Specific Plans notes that “A specific plan may be as general as setting forth

⁸ Municipal Code Section 18.16.040:

[http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/California/paloalto_ca/title18zoning*/chapter1816neighborhoodcommunityandservi?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:paloalto_ca\\$anc=JD_18.16.040](http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/California/paloalto_ca/title18zoning*/chapter1816neighborhoodcommunityandservi?f=templates$fn=default.htm$3.0$vid=amlegal:paloalto_ca$anc=JD_18.16.040)

⁹ Form Based Code: <http://plannersweb.com/2014/12/fbc1/>

¹⁰ The Planner’s Guide to Specific Plans: <https://californiare!Figure Error! Main Document Only.eaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/OPR-A-Planners-Guide-to-Specific-Plans.pdf>

broad policy concepts, or as detailed as providing direction to every facet of development from the type, location and intensity of uses to the design and capacity of infrastructure; from the resources used to finance public improvements to the design guidelines of a subdivision.”

The City Council, through adoption of the [Comprehensive Plan](#), approved preparation of a coordinated area plan in the North Ventura area. The NVCAP will refine goals established in the Comprehensive Plan and apply them in this area with greater specificity in order to achieve the City Council’s [established goals](#).

APPLY IT! In 2000 and 2003, the Palo Alto City Council adopted the South of Forest Area Coordinated Area Plan Phases 1 and 2. Pages 24 – 27 describe the overall land use policies that are the foundation of [SOFA I](#).¹¹ Can you identify any similarities between these policies and programs and the City Council-established goals for the NVCAP?

Additional Resources

If your curiosity about general planning terms, principles, and concepts has been piqued, please consider the following resources:

- [California Planning Guide: An Introduction to Planning in California](#)¹²
- [Planning ABC’s by Laurence C. Gerckens](#)¹³

Land Development

The comprehensive plan, zoning, and other ordinances identify the permitted uses in given locations and describe development standards such as height, the amount of space a building can occupy, and other aspects important to the building’s owners, users, and neighbors.

Approximately 61% of land in the United States is privately owned.¹⁴ Private landowners are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their property. The landowners must also decide to invest resources into their land to construct buildings or establish uses that conform to the local regulations. Thus, while the local community, through laws passed by local government, can establish a vision and accompanying restrictions for land within its jurisdiction, the community must partner with landowners for these visions to be realized.

For many landowners and real estate developers, understanding the costs and revenues from developing land is the beginning point for decisions regarding development. Generally speaking, landowners want to ensure that the revenues generated through the lease or sale of a developed property will exceed the costs of developing the land.

¹¹ South of Forest Area Phase 1: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/25608>

¹² California Planning Guide: https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/resources_California_Planning_Guide_2005.pdf

¹³ Planning ABC’s: <http://plannersweb.com/2007/10/a-is-for-automobile/>

¹⁴ State of the Land from the Land Conservation Assistance Network <https://www.landcan.org/pdfs/stateoftheland.pdf>

[Pro-Forma 101](#), by Wayne Lemmon, is a 4-part series that describes the dollars and cents of real estate development.¹⁵ Lemmon said, “The proforma is the basic financial analysis that developers do in deciding whether to move forward with a project. A proforma analysis looks at the financial return that a proposed real estate development is likely to create. It begins by describing the proposed project in quantifiable terms, then estimates revenues likely to be obtained, costs that will have to be incurred, and the net financial return the developer expects to achieve.”¹⁶

Be sure to read [Part 2](#)¹⁷, [Part 3](#)¹⁸, and [Part 4](#)¹⁹ for a more complete picture of why developers build what, when, and where they build.

Housing

Housing Development

Housing, like other real estate development projects, relies primarily on potential revenues for housing sales or rents to exceed the costs of constructing the housing. Thus, the principles of Pro-Forma 101 apply to housing development. For more about the specifics of housing development, see [“Making It Pencil: The Math Behind Housing Development”](#) by David Garcia. The article provides insight into market-rate housing development in California via a prototypical housing proforma.²⁰ The report’s publisher, [the Turner Center at the University of California at Berkeley](#), “leverages applied research and best practices to inform and advance innovation in the planning, financing, design and development of the built environment.”²¹ See the Turner Center website for more reports and information.

Housing Affordability

The causes of the housing affordability crisis in the state of California are numerous. A [2015 report from the Legislative Analyst’s Office](#) provides a summary and analysis of some of the causes and consequences of California’s high housing costs, summarized in this [infographic](#).²² One of the leading causes is that the number of new housing units constructed has not kept pace with California’s population growth. This “underbuilding” has been happening in coastal cities since the 1970s. The report also cites the high cost of land, labor and construction. While some of the

¹⁵ Pro-Forma 101: Part 1 – Getting Familiar With a Basic Tool of Real Estate Analysis:

<http://plannersweb.com/2013/12/proforma-101-getting-familiar-with-a-basic-tool-of-real-estate-analysis/>

¹⁶ Interview with Wayne Lemmon: <http://plannersweb.com/2007/02/talking-with-wayne-lemmon-about-his-article-proforma-101/>

¹⁷ Pro-Forma 101: Part 2 – What Will It Cost to Build the Project? <http://plannersweb.com/2013/12/pro-forma-101-what-will-it-cost/>

¹⁸ Pro-Forma 101: Part 3 – How Much Money Will the Project Make for the Developer? <http://plannersweb.com/2013/12/pro-forma-101-how-much-money/>

¹⁹ Pro-Forma 101: Part 4 – Looking at Alternative Scenarios: <http://plannersweb.com/2013/12/pro-forma-101-alternative-scenarios/>

²⁰ Making It Pencil: The Math Behind Housing Development:

https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/events_pdfs/The%20Math%20Behind%20Housing%20Development.pdf

²¹ Website, About Section, <http://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/about>

²² Infographic: <https://lao.ca.gov/Infographics/californias-high-housing-costs>

specific data cited is dated, the overall factors contributing to the housing crisis remain the same, and the severity has increased since the report's publication.

Cost Burden

The Federal government, through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), considers housing that requires 30% or less of a household's income as affordable to that household. Once a household pays more than 30% of their income for rent or a mortgage, the household is defined as "cost burdened." Although there is [debate](#) about the appropriateness of 30% as the measurement, the proportion of households spending more or less than 30% of their income on rent is one measure of affordability of in a city or region.²³

The Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University [produces maps](#) that show cost burden across the nation.²⁴ In 2017, the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), 36% of households were cost burdened, with 17% experiencing severe cost burden. This is similar to the 37% and 18% experienced by households in the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward MSA.

APPLY IT! Using the [interactive online maps](#) produced by the Joint Center for Housing Studies:

- (a) Can you identify the cost burden for renters and owners in the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara area?
- (b) Can you identify the cost burden for renters and for owners in the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward area?

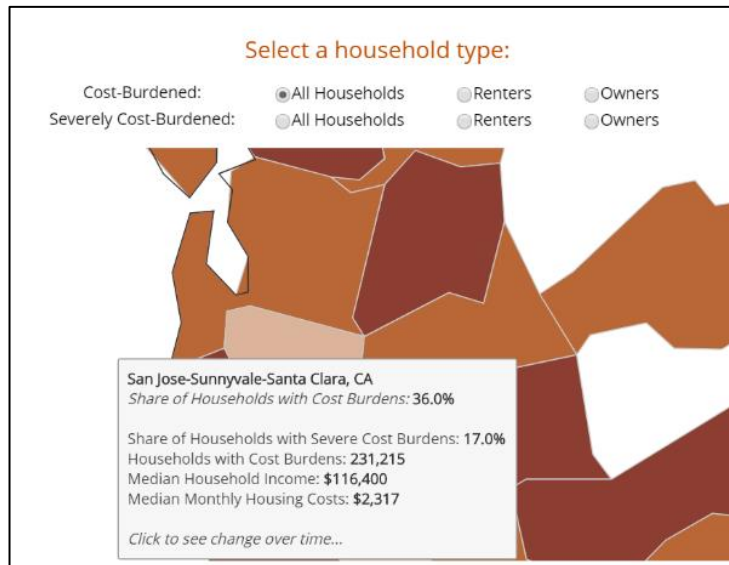


Figure 2 Screen capture from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

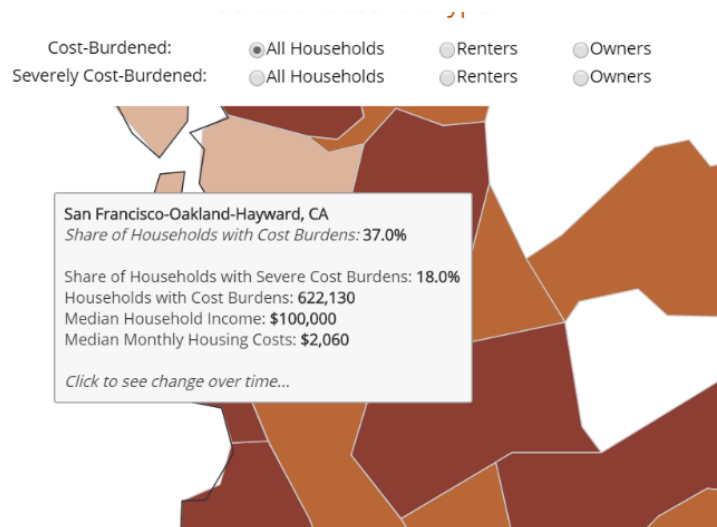


Figure 3 Screen capture from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

²³ Rental Burdens: Rethinking Affordability Measures

https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_featd_article_092214.html

²⁴ Cost Burden Maps by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University: <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/son-2019-cost-burdens-map>

(c) What differences do you notice between renters and homeowners?

The solutions to the housing affordability crisis are many. One solution is to construct or otherwise make available housing units that a household can afford by paying 30% of their income for the rent or mortgage. Often referred to as “below-market rate” units—or BMR units—these homes can be for rent or sale. The units can be “inclusionary units” that are included within a market rate building, or all the units in a building can be BMR. The funding to support the BMR unit construction can come from a number of sources including grants, tax credits, loans, municipal bonds, or fees paid by developers.

INCOME LIMIT CATEGORY	EXTREMELY LOW (30% OF AMI)	VERY LOW (50% OF AMI)	LOW (80% OF AMI)
1 PERSON	\$30,750	\$51,250	\$72,750
2 PERSONS	\$35,150	\$58,550	\$83,150
3 PERSONS	\$39,550	\$65,850	\$93,550
4 PERSONS	\$43,900	\$73,150	\$103,900
5 PERSONS	\$47,450	\$79,050	\$112,250
6 PERSONS	\$50,950	\$84,900	\$120,550
7 PERSONS	\$54,450	\$90,750	\$128,850
8 PERSONS	\$57,950	\$96,600	\$137,150

Income Limits effective as of April 24, 2019.

Figure 4 Table produced by the Santa Clara County Housing Authority:
<https://www.schousingauthority.org/section-8-housing-programs/waiting-lists-applicants/income-limits/>

Different housing units and different programs serve households of varying incomes. The incomes are measured against the “area median income” or AMI. The AMI varies by region throughout the United States to reflect the differing housing costs across the nation. HUD uses a [set methodology](#) to calculate the incomes and publishes an [AMI table](#) that defines the incomes for households of different sizes. Due to the high cost of housing, some cities create subsidized housing

programs to serve higher income limits, or “moderate” and “middle” income households. These households might earn 100% or 120% of the area median income yet still not be able to afford market-rate housing.

Gentrification & Displacement

Gentrification of neighborhoods and displacement of residents are two consequences of California’s housing crisis, the sustained economic boom following the Great Recession, and the renaissance and growing economic importance of cities. The [San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank](#) teamed up with the [Urban Displacement Project](#)²⁵ at UC Berkeley and The San Francisco Foundation to explore research and identify strategies to prevent displacement.

The media produced from this initiative are located on [Federal Reserve Bank website and](#) include the videos “Gentrification Explained” (7 minutes) and “Pushed Out” (5 minutes).²⁶

²⁵ Urban Displacement Project: <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/initiatives/gentrification-and-displacement/>

²⁶ Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Community Development: <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/initiatives/gentrification-and-displacement/>

Addressing Housing Affordability

Among housing experts, advocates, and practitioners, a framework to address housing affordability has emerged. This framework identifies the “3 P’s” for housing: Produce, Preserve, Protect. These 3 P’s are part of the Committee to House the Bay Area’s [Compact](#)²⁷ published in 2019. The Compact, while not universally embraced by leaders in all communities, is impacting housing policy in the Bay Area.

Given the need to produce more housing, many planners and researchers have proposed policies to facilitate increased housing construction in the Bay Area. Proposals include [right-pricing impact fees](#)²⁸, adjusting development standards to decrease the costs of construction, changing zoning, raising public and private funds to support housing construction, and building housing on publicly owned land, among others. Recently, several communities have [abolished single-family zoning](#)²⁹ in an effort to facilitate more housing development and to create more affordable housing. This wouldn’t prohibit the building of single-family homes, but rather would allow the building of medium-density housing such as duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes on residentially zoned sites.

Addressing housing affordability requires a long-term response from elected officials, public agencies, private companies, and non-profit organizations. Policies enacted today may not yield results for several years. In addition, no single community can do enough to address all of the needs in the region – all the communities must do their part to contribute to the solutions.

Elements of Successful Cities & Neighborhoods

This section offers resources that discuss elements and principles for designing livable, walkable, and successful cities, neighborhoods, and public places. The topics below highlight a variety of approaches and perspectives to city planning.

General Principles

Designing Cities for People - In [5 Principles for a Great City](#) by Diana Budds, renowned urbanist [Jan Gehl](#)³⁰ outlines his 5 key principles:

- (1) Stop building architecture for “cheap gasoline”;
- (2) Make public life the driver for urban design;
- (3) Design for multisensory experiences;
- (4) Make transportation more equitable;
- (5) Ban cars.

²⁷ Committee to House the Bay Area Compact: https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/CASA_Compact.pdf

²⁸ It All Adds Up: The Growing Costs that Prevent New Housing in California: <https://www.spur.org/news/2018-05-09/it-all-adds-growing-costs-prevent-new-housing-california>

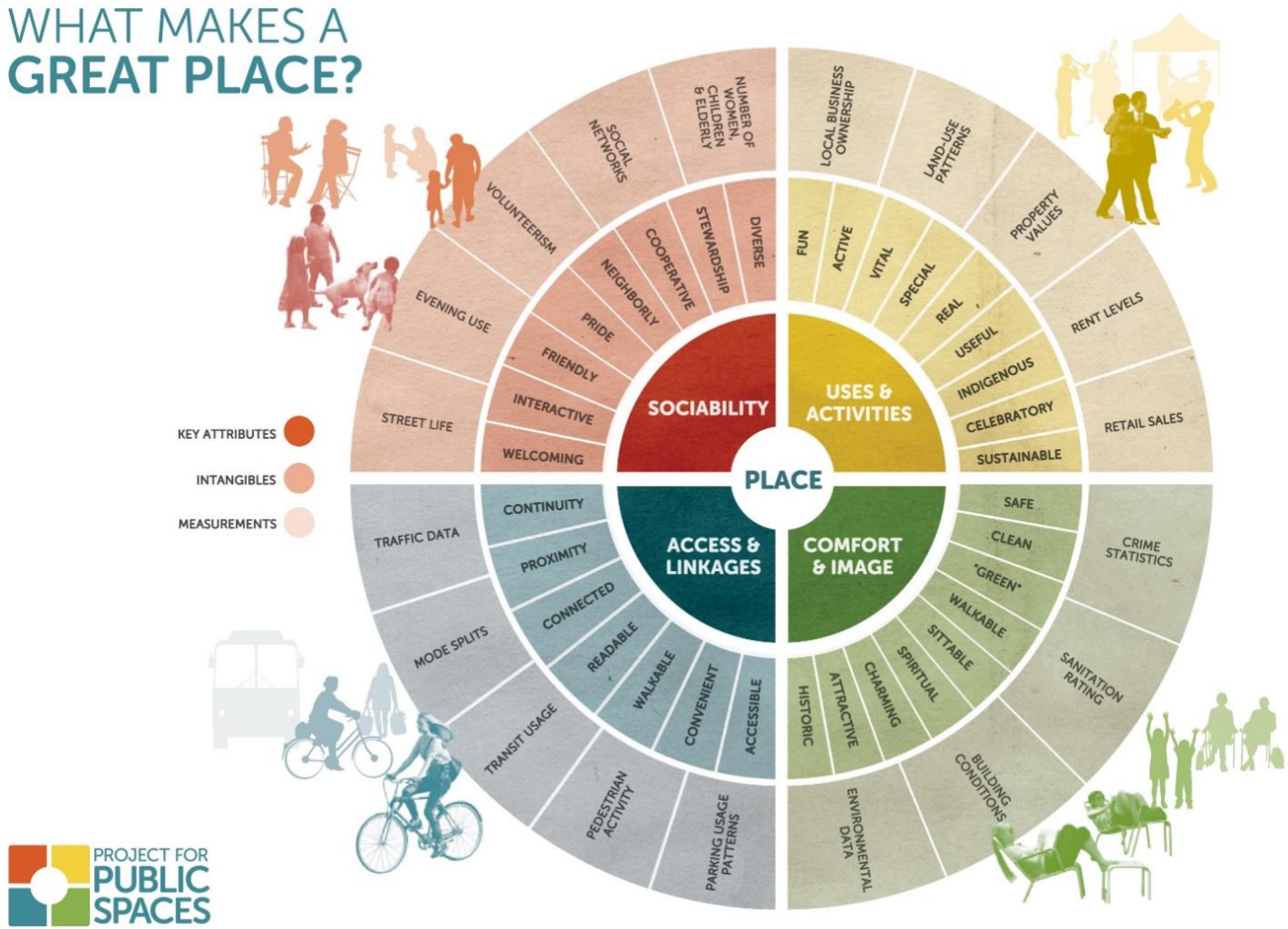
²⁹ Opinion: To solve the problem of unaffordable entry-level housing, abolish single-family zoning <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/to-solve-the-problem-of-unaffordable-entry-level-housing-abolish-single-family-zoning-2019-12-10>

³⁰ <https://gehlpeople.com/>

In this [20-minute talk](#), he talks about designing cities for people and the Danish revolution in city design and its impacts.³¹

Great Places - Each year for the past 12 years, the American Planning Association has [awarded great places in America](#)³², including great neighborhoods, great public spaces, and great streets. See what they have in common and what Palo Alto might consider borrowing.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



The Perfect City - Fast Company offers a series of short articles that pose principles for [building the perfect city](#).³³

³¹ Jan Gehl Designing Cities for People: <https://vimeo.com/143074810>

³² Great Places in America: <https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/>

³³ Fast Company How to Build the Perfect City: <https://www.fastcompany.com/section/how-to-build-the-perfect-city>

Walkable Neighborhoods

Walkable Communities – In this 15-minute TED Talk, Jeff Speck describes the many [benefits of a walkable city](#). Planners estimate that most individuals will willingly walk approximately 15 – 20 minutes, which is often a quarter-mile or perhaps as far as a half-mile. Planners often measure the “walk radius” in order to understand what destinations are within walking distance of a neighborhood, property, or other subject area. The company [Walk Score](#) calculates walkability in an effort to promote walkable neighborhoods.³⁴ Their scores often appear on real estate listings or other areas in order to help consumers determine how walkable an area is. The company also rates the Bike Score of locations as well.

APPLY IT! Can you determine the Walk Score and Bike Score of your home? Of your work? Of another favorite destination?

Walkable, bikeable, and transit friendly neighborhoods rely on a critical mass of destinations — including homes, retail, services, workplaces, and amenities—to be located in close proximity to each other so that residents, visitors, and workers can walk or take short bike and transit trips to their destinations. These neighborhoods rely on [mixed-use zoning and development](#)³⁵.

20 Minute Neighborhood – The 20 Minute Neighborhood is the concept that focuses on creating walkable neighborhoods where people can live locally and access their daily needs within a 20-minute walk, bike ride, or transit trip from home. Cities such as [Eugene, Oregon](#)³⁶, [Melbourne, Australia](#)³⁷, and [Portland, Oregon](#)³⁸ have adopted this framework for neighborhood and city planning.

High Quality Housing Design & Density - Award-winning architect David Baker believes [dense housing must be and can be well designed](#) so that it is livable.³⁹ [This video](#) explains his approach.⁴⁰ He also asserts that density is best measured as people per square mile—not the typical planning measure of “dwelling units per acre.” He believes this humanizes density and helps create attainable and measurable goals for planning and design.

³⁴ Walk Score: <https://www.walkscore.com/>

³⁵ Don't Get Mixed Up on Mixed-Use: <http://www.placemakers.com/2013/04/04/mixed-up-on-mixed-use/>

³⁶ Eugene, Oregon 20-Minute Neighborhood Webpage: <https://www.eugene-or.gov/1216/What-is-a-20-Minute-Neighborhood>

³⁷ Melbourne, Australia 20-Minute Neighborhoods: <https://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/current-projects/20-minute-neighbourhoods>

³⁸ The People in Your Neighborhood by Lisa Camner: <https://www.theatlantic.com/personal/archive/2010/05/the-people-in-your-neighborhood/56527/>

³⁹ <https://www.citylab.com/design/2011/10/designing-for-density-doesnt-have-to-be-ugly/376/>

⁴⁰ David Baker Video Better Living Through Density: <https://vimeo.com/6479637>

Retail

While communities might define retail slightly differently, retail activities generally include buying and selling of goods or services. This often includes uses such as restaurants, grocery stores, hair salons, clothing stores, coffee shops, banks, and other similar shops and stores.

Retail is changing. Americans are changing the ways they sell, buy, and receive goods and services. The Urban Land Institute identified three trends that are “[shaping retail’s great transformation](#).”⁴¹ [Synchrony](#) describes some of the major trends in retail as the world becomes more urban.⁴² The proliferation of online shopping and [just-in-time delivery](#) is also changing the nature of selling, buying, and receiving goods.⁴³ Additionally, [generational changes](#) mean the consumer base and their preferences are changing.⁴⁴

Neighborhood Retail & Retail Districts - Despite these changes, brick and mortar shops and services are still important for consumers and for neighborhoods. The Urban Land Institute offers [10 Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail](#).⁴⁵ While the principles were established in response to declining urban shopping areas, the principles are applicable to a number of neighborhood retail environments.

Neighborhood retail districts that emphasize place and attract shoppers through convenience, a desire to “see and be seen”, and a mix of uses can sustain the changing nature of retail and be vibrant parts of their local communities.

Ground Floor Use - In retail districts, the uses on the ground floor contribute most directly to the pedestrian environment. SPUR offers a succinct summary of some of the [key elements](#)⁴⁶ for successful retail districts, emphasizing the importance of the ground floor. Many municipal codes

Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail

- 1 **Great Streets Need Great Champions**
- 2 **It Takes a Vision**
- 3 **Think Residential**
- 4 **Honor the Pedestrian**
- 5 **Parking Is Power**
- 6 **Merchandise and Lease Proactively**
- 7 **Make It Happen**
- 8 **Be Clean, Safe, and Friendly**
- 9 **Extend Day into Night**
- 10 **Manage for Change**

⁴¹ Three Trends Shaping Retail’s Great Transformation by Diane Hoskins: <https://urbanland.uli.org/economy-markets-trends/three-trends-shaping-retails-great-transformation/>

⁴² Brick and Mortar Reborn: <https://www.synchrony.com/Synchrony%20Financial%20-%20Brick%20and%20Mortar%20Reborn%20-%20August%202016.pdf>

⁴³ <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2018/03/a-ticking-time-bomb-for-suburban-retail/554882/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.siliconvalleyonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Generation-Nation-Introduction.pdf>

⁴⁵ 10 Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail: http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/TP_NeighborhoodRetail.ashx .pdf

⁴⁶ Designing at the Ground Level by Benjamin Grant: <https://www.spur.org/publications/urbanist-article/2014-06-03/designing-ground-level>

permit or require retail on the ground floor to promote “active ground floors.” Some non-retail uses can also create an active and inviting ground floor though, such as workout facilities, childcare centers, and public facilities such as libraries or community centers.

Walkable Retail Districts – A critical mass of shoppers—which can include residents, workers, or visitors—is necessary for neighborhood retail and service districts to thrive. The Urban Land Institute estimates that successful neighborhood retail needs a trade area of 3,000 – 40,000 people within 1.5 miles, with the actual number of people needed dependent on the type of retail. The range needs to narrow in relation to the specific characteristics of the area. To emphasize walking as the primary mode that patrons use to access the area, housing and work places need to be located within an even smaller radius. If bike facilities are safe and accessible, the biking radius can be larger than the walking radius.

Promoting walkable neighborhoods relies on destinations like retail, services, work places, and other amenities being located in close proximity. These walkable neighborhoods are [good for people and good for retailers](#)⁴⁷. [In their paper](#), Gregory Easton and John Owen describe demographic and physical characteristics needed to support local retail services and to create walkable neighborhood business districts.⁴⁸

Streets & Parking

Parking - Designing neighborhoods and cities that prioritize provision of parking spaces for private motor vehicles can have negative consequences for communities and the environment. The 6-minute video produced by Vox, [the High Cost of Free Parking](#), summarizes work of urbanist and UCLA Urban Planning Professor Donald Shoup and the impact that designing cities for cars has on local communities and the environment.⁴⁹ Local zoning requirements that require certain amounts of parking per land use are common and increase the cost of development, can lead to less dense development—which threatens walkability—and can increase driving.

According to the [City Observatory.org](#)⁵⁰ “The cost of constructing all of this parking is considerable. Surface parking spaces cost about 5,000 to \$10,000 to construct (including the value of the land they occupy). Structured parking costs between \$25,000 and \$50,000 per space. And while expensive to build, the actual users of these parking spaces are seldom charged a price for using them.”

⁴⁷https://activelivingresearch.org/sites/activelivingresearch.sdsc.edu/files/BusinessPerformanceWalkableShoppingAreas_Nov2013.pdf

⁴⁸ Creating Walkable Neighborhood Business Districts by Gregory Easton and John Own: http://www.makersarch.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating_Walkable_Neighborhood_Districts_2009.pdf

⁴⁹ The High Cost of Free Parking: https://youtu.be/Akm7ik-H_7U

⁵⁰ The price of Parking by Joe Cortwright <http://cityobservatory.org/the-price-of-parking/>

In the City of Palo Alto, off-street parking requirements are located in [Chapter 18.52](#)⁵¹ of the Palo Alto Municipal Code and are based on the zoning and use of the lot. For instance, a multiple family residential building requires one parking space per one-bedroom unit and two parking spaces per two-bedroom or larger unit. Shopping centers require one parking space per 275 sf of gross floor area, plus one bicycle parking space per 2,750 sf of gross floor area. Some areas of the city are called Parking Assessment Districts and have special parking requirements because there is a particular need to manage parking in those areas. There are also a number of ways developers can request to alter their parking requirements if they meet certain criteria.

Safer Streets - [Complete Streets](#)⁵² and [Vision Zero](#)⁵³ describe movements to change the way we design streets and other movement corridors throughout our cities in order to reduce fatalities and injuries, as well as increase the livability of communities. Read [case studies](#) regarding communities implementing complete streets interventions.⁵⁴

Open Space & Public Spaces

Two leading organizations advocating for and helping American cities realize quality public and outdoor places are the [Project for Public Spaces](#)⁵⁵ and the [Trust for Public Land](#).

Five essential ingredients of great public spaces⁵⁶ according to plaza perspectives.com are:

1. It's located where the action is,
2. It's surrounded by destinations,
3. It's not too big,
4. There plenty to do there,
5. The space is attractive

Enhancing the sidewalks, streets, and building facades (the “public realm”) can also enhance our quality of life, environment, and provide interaction with nature that has multiple benefits for individuals, community, and specific places. The US Environmental Protection Agency promotes [green streets](#) as a means to both treat storm water and improve our streets.

Publicly-owned open space, such as park land and public plazas, is critical for a successful neighborhood. In addition to providing open space through government, cities can require that private land-owners provide publicly accessible open space. San Francisco is one of many cities

⁵¹ Palo Alto Parking and Loading Requirements:

[http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/California/paloalto_ca/paloaltomunicipalcode?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:paloalto_ca](http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/California/paloalto_ca/paloaltomunicipalcode?f=templates$fn=default.htm$3.0$vid=amlegal:paloalto_ca)

⁵² Complete Streets: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/what-are-complete-streets/>

⁵³ Vision Zero: <https://visionzeronetwork.org/>

⁵⁴ Complete Streets: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/tag/complete-streets-case-studies/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.pps.org/>

⁵⁶ <http://plazaperspective.com/5-essential-ingredients-of-a-great-public-space>

that have developed programs that require private landowners to develop open space. [This guide](#), published by SPUR, reviews over 60 such spaces in San Francisco.⁵⁷

The development, care, and upkeep of open spaces can be a challenge for municipalities. To deal with this issue, some municipalities are creating “[Green Benefit Districts](#).” According to the San Francisco Department of Public Works’ website, a “Green Benefit District provides additional maintenance and capital improvements to parks, sidewalks and open spaces within a designated area, in addition to the City’s existing level of baseline services. The services, improvements and administration of Green Benefit Districts are governed by an independent property owners nonprofit association, representative of the neighborhood.”⁵⁸

More to Come on January 7th

The resources in this report provide an overview of just some the principles, standards, and methods generally used in planning and development, but is only a brief summary. On January 7th, we will be having a deeper discussion on several of these topics, most particularly land development, housing, and transportation and parking. This time will allow for further elaboration and sharing of resources, so please come with questions and information of your own.

⁵⁷ Secrets of San Francisco: A Guide to San Francisco’s Privately-Owned Public Open Spaces: <https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/migrated/anchors/popos-guide.pdf>

⁵⁸ <https://sfpublicworks.org/GBD>