



Downtown Capacity Assessment

May 26, 2009
General Plan Update Task Force Meeting

At the April 27th, 2009 meeting, the Envision San Jose 2040 Task Force requested that staff complete additional evaluation of the potential job and housing growth capacity for Downtown San Jose in order to add job and housing growth capacity in the Downtown in Scenarios C (1.2 Jobs/Employed Resident) and Scenario E (1.1 Jobs/Employed Resident). This document outlines the results of the additional analysis conducted by staff in response to this request.

Staff's analysis consisted first of a review of existing site-specific office, retail, hotel, and housing entitlements cross-referenced with review of larger area policy and environmental documents that established specific amounts of job and housing capacity. The cumulative amount of growth capacity identified through this review could be realized under the City's current General Plan and has thus been incorporated into the "No Project" (San Jose 2020 General Plan) scenario being used for the Envision San Jose 2040 process. Staff was able to identify additional capacity for both job and housing growth and so added 3,500 jobs and 1,150 dwelling units to the Downtown for the "No Project" alternative. This capacity was then carried over to each of the Land Use Study scenarios as the base amount of Downtown growth capacity.

Staff then looked at each site within the Downtown area to determine if additional job or housing capacity could be added on top of the existing General Plan capacity. Adding job capacity to the Downtown requires either an increase in the projected Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the commercial development opportunity sites currently identified for employment use or a conversion of non-employment uses to employment use. Similarly, housing growth capacity can be added by either increasing the planned density (dwelling units per acre) for residential sites or by converting additional sites to residential use. Because of the amount of job growth in each Land Use Study scenario, staff did not make use of this latter option.

Because the projected FARs for commercial development opportunity sites are already at the feasible level, staff concluded that additional job growth capacity (above 3,500 jobs) cannot be incorporated into the Downtown area through further intensification of employment sites. It is possible to add job growth capacity in the Downtown by converting some sites planned for residential development to employment use. For Scenario J (1.5 Jobs/Employed Resident), staff will recommend converting some non-employment sites to employment use in order to increase the overall Downtown job growth capacity.

Scenario C includes relatively little housing growth capacity above the existing San Jose 2020 General Plan. For this scenario, staff has increased the housing capacity for the Downtown (per the Task Force request) using the additional capacity noted above (1,150 dwelling units and 3,500 jobs), but staff is not including additional capacity in the Downtown so that some growth can be programmed for other high priority growth areas (e.g. transit-oriented development sites).

Scenario E includes growth capacity for 47,000 dwelling units more than Scenario C. By increasing the dwelling units per acre on potential residential development sites in the Downtown, approximately 750 additional dwelling units can be accommodated beyond the capacity identified in the "No Project" alternative and in Scenario C.

Scenario K (ABAG Projections 2009, 1.0 Jobs/Employed Resident) has the highest level of housing growth capacity of the four Land Use Study scenarios. Based upon the amount of housing growth anticipated by this scenario, it is reasonable to assume further intensification of residential sites within the Downtown. For this scenario staff is proposing to add capacity in the Downtown for approximately 1,500 housing units above the “No Project” alternative and Scenario C growth capacity amounts.

Similar to Scenario C, Scenario J adds very little housing growth capacity. For that reason, staff would not recommend incorporating additional housing capacity in this scenario in the Downtown over the existing “No Project” alternative amount. However, to accommodate the additional job growth necessary to achieve Scenario J, staff proposes converting a limited number of the planned housing sites to employment use, thereby increasing the job growth capacity for the Downtown. To maintain the same residential capacity in Downtown, the density (dwelling units per acre) for the remaining residential sites would increase above the “No Project” density.