



HEALTHTrust

January 20, 2010

Andrew Crabtree
Principal Planner
Department of Planning, Building, & Code Enforcement
City of San Jose
200 East Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA 95113

RE: Comments on the Draft San Jose General Plan

Dear Mr. Crabtree and Members of the General Plan Task Force:

On behalf of The Health Trust, a Silicon Valley nonprofit foundation committed to advancing wellness, I am writing to provide support and feedback on how we can make the City of San Jose a healthy city for all through the City's General Plan.

The Health Trust would like to begin by commending the City of San Jose on their efforts in developing an effective draft Plan. While having actively monitored a number of General Plan processes in Santa Clara County, San Jose presents the strongest policy language in support of healthy communities that we are aware of in the area. The draft Plan and its health policies are aligned with and reinforce our Healthy Living Initiative which aims to reduce and prevent obesity, our Healthy Communities goal to eliminate health disparities, and our Healthy Aging goal to create livable communities for older adults.

Attached is a memo produced by Public Health Law & Policy that provides health recommendations for the current draft Plan. The Health Trust would like to highlight the following recommendations in the memo and respectfully request that you include these enhancements in the final version of the General Plan.

Healthy Environments

Policy items from the draft Plan that we support:

- Providing bicycle and pedestrian access to trails within a three mile radius of all homes, and improving bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to parks and open space (TN-2, PR-1.11).

- Promoting bicycle and pedestrian access to schools and transit in order to facilitate mode shift away from private automobiles (TN-2.10, VN-1.1, CD-3.4, ES-1.6).
- Requiring large employers and the City of San Jose to develop Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, including parking pricing and transit subsidies, which encourages employees to shift their commute from driving to bicycling, walking and transit. (TR-7.1, TR-7.2, TR-7.3).

In addition to supporting the policies listed above, we submit the following as recommendations for the final plan:

- **Ensure that bicycle and pedestrian facilities are prioritized in low-income communities**, which are less likely to have access to a private automobile, and thus more likely to be dependent on walking and bicycling for transportation.
- **Adopting more specific and deliberate action items.** Replace words like, “encourage,” “consider,” and “recommend” with words like “require,” in order to adopt enforceable policies (TN-2.6, 2.7, CD-2.1, CD-3.8, CD-3.11, CD-11.4, CD-8.2).

Transit Oriented Developments (TOD)

Policy items from the draft Plan that we support:

- Planning for high density, residential and mixed-use development in growth areas that “maximizes transit usage” (H-3.2) and “reduce auto dependency” (H-4.2) while also considering access to other elements of healthy developments, such as access to open space, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and retail services. The Plan also acknowledges the importance of integrating higher density development with the surrounding neighborhood (CD-7.1).

Recommendations for the final plan:

- **Implement parking demand management for development near transit** in order to promote substantial transit ridership and ensure that transit users can walk or bike safely to transit hubs.
- **Prioritizing low-income areas for transit investments and growth.** Low-income residents are less likely to have access to an automobile, and thus more likely to rely on transit. Reliable public transit can connect residents with employment and economic opportunities, while also fostering economic growth and opportunities at transit hubs within low-income areas.

Improving Access to parks, trails, and open space

Policy items from the draft Plan that we support:

- Setting discrete acreage targets for parkland per capita (7.5 acres per 1000 population; PR-1.1, PR-1.2)

- Drawing specific attention to the potential of parks and urban spaces to be community focal points and places for interaction, such as festivals, events, and farmers' markets (PR-1.7)
- Acknowledging the importance of parks in creating a "healthy city," including mental and physical health (PR-2.10), and more specifically, access to healthy food and exercise through community gardens (PR-2.1)

Recommendations for the final plan:

- **Adopt park "Level of Service" standards that address size, facilities, programming and maintenance** as an enhancement to park and open space acreage targets.

Increasing access to healthy foods

Policy items from the draft Plan that we support:

- Working collaboratively with the Public Health Department to measure and locate nutrition deficient neighborhoods, assessing healthy food access relative to unhealthy food access (VN-3.6, VN-3.7).
- Explicitly targeting low-income and nutrition deficient neighborhoods for grocery store and produce market development with economic incentives (VN-3.8).
- Encouraging urban agriculture by encouraging edible landscaping on residential, commercial and public developments (VN-3.11, LU-17.7, LU-15.8); updating the Zoning Ordinance to allow community gardens and incidental gardening as a permitted use (LU-15.11); expanding nutrition deficient communities' access to community gardens (LU-15.1, LU-15.2, LU-15.9, PR-2.8).

Recommendations for the final plan:

- **Establish requirements and offer support for farmers' markets to accept EBT, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), and the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP)** in order increase affordability to residents, in addition to promoting the establishment of farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods.
- **Identify steps for substantially increasing community garden plots, and create an urban agriculture master plan for San Jose.** PHLP's recent Santa Clara Healthy Food Resource Assessment discovered that there are 737 San Jose residents on a waitlist for a community garden plot. For more information on access to community gardens in San Jose, see www.thehealthtrust.org/foodaccess.

In addition to the topic-specific recommendations above, we would like to highlight from the memo that we wish to see the final plan stay strong and effective by keeping these core elements:

1. **Commit to a broad perspective on health and healthy communities as a guiding principle** throughout the various elements of the Plan. Incorporating health language reinforces the community's commitment to considering and ultimately improving health outcomes in all decisions made.
2. **Ensure the plan's healthy community goals are supported by specific policies and implementation/ action items.** Overall, the current draft does an excellent job of identifying clear and specific goals, policies, and objectives. Adopting a plan with such a clear and specific policy framework will go far to ensure that San Jose's vision for a healthy community becomes a reality.

On behalf of my staff and all our community partners, I would like to thank you again for your continued efforts and applaud your work on an exemplary draft Plan. If you would like further details of any of the information provided in this letter or attached memo, please do not hesitate to contact Steven Le of my staff at (408) 879-8434.

Yours in health,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frederick J. Ferrer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Frederick J. Ferrer
CEO

Cc: General Plan Task Force Members