

# Santana Row/Valley Fair (SRVF) Urban Village

## DRAFT

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### Parks, Plazas, & Placemaking Chapter

#### INTRODUCTION

The Parks, Plazas, and Placemaking chapter offers strategies for creating new publicly accessible open spaces within the existing and planned context of the Santana Row/Valley Fair Urban Village. It is vital that both existing and new residential and commercial communities incorporate well-designed and accessible public spaces. The SRVF Urban Village is currently underserved by these facilities; planning for these spaces will enhance the sense of place of the area, reinforce walkability and bikeability of the public realm, and enhance the character and identity of this community as it develops. In addition, the incorporation of public art into the public realm will play a vital role in increasing the sense of place.

#### The Strategy

This Plan is intended to support the open space needs of existing residents, new residents and visitors to future development. This Plan envisions the creation of a system of various types and sizes of open spaces to meet the needs of the Urban Village, which may include: traditional community parks, multi-purpose plazas, pocket parks, and active or passive Green Connectors. Together with high-quality, native landscaping and public art, each of these types of spaces can provide much needed opportunities for recreation and social interaction, and contribute to the positive identity and visual character of the SRVF Urban Village.

Traditionally, parks in San José have been developed as large spaces of at least one acre in area that provide the community with recreational opportunities such as ball fields, playgrounds and trails. The SRVF Village includes Frank M. Santana Park, a traditional community park, on the corner of Tisch Way and S Monroe Street, as well as a few other privately owned and publicly accessible pocket parks and plazas throughout the Village

Today, as San José focuses on the design of more intense development patterns in its many urban villages, there is a need to use all development opportunities to include open spaces – even small, urban spaces. As such, this Plan envisions the development of a Green Web throughout the SRVF Village as further connecting to the adjacent Stevens Creeks and Winchester Urban Villages. The Green Web will be a connected series of various types and sizes of public and publicly accessible, but privately maintained, open spaces. As new development occurs, space on each site will be dedicated to open space whether it be an Emergency Vehicle Access (EVA) that doubles as an active paseo, a large multi-purpose plaza, a small corner plaza, a passive green connector through a development, or a recreation path in the public right-of-way, these spaces will be located so as to easily and logically connect together to create a web of connected open spaces throughout the Urban Village.

#### PARKS, PLAZAS, & PLACEMAKING GOALS AND POLICIES

##### Parks and Plazas

**Goal P-1: Create public parks and plazas that are attractive, vibrant, and provide places for community activities and interaction that will contribute to the livability of the SRVF Urban Village.**

**Policy P-1.1:** Provide a system of parks that serves the needs of both the existing and future residents and surrounding community.

**Policy P-1.2:** Neighborhood parks should be designed and configured in a manner that provides secure and usable open space and maximizes accessibility to the surrounding community.

**Policy P-1.3:** Support development of parks that benefit people of all ages.

**Policy P-1.4:** Promote the use of native vegetation in new parks.

**Policy P-1.5:** New development designated as open spaces should be designed in such a way that the building(s) interface well with the open space.

**Policy P-1.6:** Parks and plazas shall be appropriately programmed and properly maintained.

**Policy P-1.7:** Support the redevelopment of excess land (reclaimed space, e.g. large landscaped buffers, setback areas, extra right-of-way, etc.) into useable active or passive Paseos/Green Connectors, pocket parks, or parklets through a joint use agreement with the property owner and the City of San Jose or through other mechanisms.

**Policy P-1.8:** Support and encourage the redevelopment of surface parking lots into public parks. by consolidating the surface parking into parking garages.

**ACTION ITEM 1:** Explore opportunities for the City to acquire property specifically for park development, especially properties designated in the Plan's Land Use Diagram as Open Space, Parkland.

## **Publicly Accessible/Private Maintained Parks and Plazas**

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**Goal P-2 Ensure the creation of publicly accessible, but privately owned and maintained urban plazas.**

**Policy P-2.1:** As new development occurs, space on each site will be dedicated to some form of open space. These spaces should be located so as to easily and logically connect with other open spaces in the surrounding area to work towards creating a connected Green Web of open space throughout the Urban Village.

**Policy P-2.2:** Integrate publicly accessible, but privately owned and maintained urban plazas into new development that are attractive, vibrant and that provide for community activities and space for casual interactions.

**Policy P-2.3:** Privately-owned, publicly accessible plazas should generally be a minimum of 2,000 square feet in area.

**Policy P-2.4:** Encourage new plazas to be business-supportive, allowing for flexible expansion of businesses into private park space on a permanent, seasonal or temporary, basis.

**ACTION ITEM 2:** Explore policy or ordinance changes that would facilitate the development and maintenance of privately-owned plazas within the SRVF Urban Village.

**ACTION ITEM 3:** Explore modifying Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PDO) requirements to allow commercial activities like farmer’s markets and café seating within privately owned but publicly accessible spaces.

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## **PARKS AND PLAZAS GUIDELINES**

Open spaces within this Plan are envisioned on both publicly owned (City) sites and privately owned publicly accessible spaces. Whether publicly or privately owned, open spaces must collectively create an interconnected system that meet the needs of the Urban Village. Below is a description of each type of open space envisioned for this urban environment, followed by guidelines for their design.

### **TRADITIONAL PARKS**

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Traditional parks tend to be larger parks (over 1 acre in area) that are owned and maintained by the City. In order for a parcel to be officially designated as parkland, the City must first own the property. The City finances park development through the City’s Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PDO). The PDO requires that new residential or mixed-use residential commercial development dedicate land for public parks, pay a fee in lieu of parkland dedication, construct new park facilities, or provide a combination of these. The total funding obligation is based on the number of residential units built.

### **MULTI-PURPOSE PLAZA (PLAZA)**

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Plazas represent a creative way to provide publicly accessible open space in urban areas. Plazas are spaces that are open to the public, and may be owned, developed and maintained either privately or publicly. This Plan requires the dedication of land or construction of a privately owned and publicly accessible plaza by a residential developer to receive parkland credit as part of their obligation under the City’s Park Dedication and Park Impact Ordinances (PDO/PIO).

## Plaza Amenities and Programming

Plazas should be visually engaging gathering spaces for community members to socialize and to hold neighborhood events. Features such as art installations, fountains, unique landscaping draw the eye to these lively, urban focal points. These spaces should also be used for commercial activity including outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes, and/or active spaces for food carts and small farmers' markets.

## GUIDELINES

### PLAZAS

#### Location and Scale

- Plazas should have at least one or two sides open to the street.
- Locate and orient plazas to maximize sunlight access throughout the day and provide uses that take advantage of the sunny location (e.g. cafés and patios).
- Generally, plazas have a 1:1 proportion of length to width, and should be of a minimum size of 1,100 square feet to include tree plantings and seating areas.
- Plazas should be connected to bike and pedestrian facilities and be a part of an interconnected pathway or parkway system where feasible.

#### Uses & Programming

- Casual use, passing through, secondary pedestrian routes, building entrances and small gathering spaces.
- Large plazas may include fountains and water features, concession stands or washrooms as appropriate (if not publicly-accessible in adjacent buildings).
- Provide a variety of seating opportunities such as traditional benches as well as mobile chairs, which give the users the ability to rotate the chairs for sunlight or shade.
- At the time of design and construction, plazas should be designed to accommodate pop-up retail. Provide bollards, power outlets, clips on the ground and plug and play for music performance.

#### Edges and Access

- Primarily defined by adjacent buildings, which will contribute to the unity and environmental quality of the space.
- At least one edge is open to the public sidewalk. The remaining edges are comprised of building façades (either one building or multiple buildings), potentially with mid-block pedestrian connections.
- Plazas should generally be located at the same grade level as the public sidewalk. Where changes in grade are an important element of the overall design and programming, clear and direct access from the public sidewalk must be accommodated, and ensure universal accessibility.
- The edges of plazas should be lined with active uses at-grade, including building entrances, to animate and support the open space. Spill-out spaces, such as patios should be encouraged.
- Large plazas should provide continuous weather protection in the form of canopies at the perimeter of the space.
- Locate building entrances, glazed façades and active uses along the edges of open spaces. Multiple entrances will promote activity in the space.
- Ensure the edges of open spaces that abut public sidewalks are unobstructed.

#### Landscape & Amenities:

- Small scale elements should be used to create a human scale, and to define smaller sub-areas within the plaza for ample seating and gathering in the sun and shade.
- Ample seating should be provided.
- Provide pedestrian scale lighting at appropriate locations.

## **POCKET PARKS**

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Pocket parks contain landscaped area and neighborhood-serving amenities. Pocket parks are typically built on single lots or irregularly shaped pieces of land and owned and maintained by private developments. Pocket parks may be constructed by residential developers on private property. Provided that the park remains publicly accessible, it may be eligible for “private recreation” credit as part of their obligation under the City’s Park Land Dedication and Park Impact Ordinances,. Pocket parks should include areas to socialize, sit and relax.

### **Guidelines:**

#### **PARKS/POCKET PARKS**

##### **Location and Scale**

- Publicly accessible open space shall have a minimum area of 800 square feet.
- A well-proportioned space with a minimum of one side open to and accessible from the public street.
- Parks should be located and oriented to maximize sunlight access during midday. Encourage south-facing parks, as they maximize the space’s exposure to direct sunlight.
- A pocket park can be of an intimate scale, providing a tranquil setting.
- Avoid fragmentation of open spaces where possible. Larger areas provide more flexibility to accommodate a range of social functions as well as more usable space and easier irrigation.
- Minimize changes in grade both from the public street and within open spaces. Public spaces with large changes in must ensure accessibility concerns are addressed.
- Where appropriate, locate open spaces adjacent to or visible from, public streets and locate active uses at-grade thereby creating "eyes on the street".
- Pocket Parks should reflect the design and placemaking elements of surrounding urban character through the use of architectural styles, signage, colors, textures, materials and other elements.

##### **Use and Programming**

- Parks can be designed to have water feature, canopies, trees, planting, public art installation or children's play facilities.
- Publicly accessible open space shall be accessible to the public at minimum from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days per week.
- Encourage edible roof gardens to improve access to fresh food.
- Consider a dog park as a part of Pocket Parks where appropriate.
- Pocket Parks should have movable chairs and tables to allow people to have control over where they sit.

##### **Edges and Access**

- Consider pedestrian movement through the site. Adjacent or nearby public uses such as open spaces, schools or community centers might inform where and how pedestrian circulation networks should be provided. Consider existing and potential pedestrian desire lines in the design and placement of walkways.

- Publicly accessible open space shall not be more than three feet above or below street curb level.
- Provide unobstructed views to and from other nearby public spaces, including public streets or parks.
- New residential and commercial uses are encouraged to locate secondary building entrances, windows, outdoor seating, patios, and balconies to overlook park spaces.

#### **Landscape & Amenities:**

- Predominantly soft landscaping or a balance of soft and hard landscaping.
- Plant materials should be tolerant of urban conditions.
- Ensure all elements, including adjacent building façades, paving and planters are of a high-quality design, materials and construction.
- Provide ample seating, and co-ordinate seating locations with the park features.
- Provide pedestrian scale lighting at appropriate locations, and co-ordinate with garden features.
- Incorporate adequate pedestrian scale lighting.

#### **Green Connectors and Pedestrian Pathway System**

A paseo can function as a green buffer that visually screens more intensive development from an abutting single-family neighborhood while providing passive circulation paths for bicycles and pedestrians or it can function like an alley providing access for pedestrians, bicycles, and cars. A paseo can also function as an active linear public space that creates connectivity to adjacent sites and provides an opportunity for more intensive uses such as sitting, gathering, public art, and social interaction.

This concept is showcased at a development called The Meridian at Midtown located between Race Street and Meridian Avenue in the West San Carlos Urban Village and is also proposed at the Great Oaks Development in South San Jose connecting River Oaks Parkway to Coyote Creek Trail. Similarly, the former San Jose Redevelopment Agency successfully executed several paseos, such as the Paseo de San Antonio, that were envisioned in the San Jose Downtown Streetscape Master Plan (2003).

Under certain criteria, including public access, active paseos constructed by residential developers and located on private property may be eligible for “private recreation” credit toward their obligation under the City’s Park and Dedication and Park Impact Ordinances (PDO/PIO).

#### **Guidelines:**

For guidelines and standards, refer to Chapter 5, Urban Design.

## **SECTION 2: PLACEMAKING**

To create a sense of place in the SVRF Village, public art and other placemaking elements will be incorporated into new commercial and residential development, bus stops, plazas, and the public right-of-way and sidewalks. Public art can be traditional sculpture or murals; it can also be incorporated into the design of infrastructure and amenities as sidewalks, street furniture, wayfinding elements, environmental systems (e.g. stormwater), transit systems, and lighting to become an integral part of the public realm. It may be temporary or long term in nature. Depending on the funding sources, public art may also include “plug and play” events and performances within parks and plazas.

At present, the community has identified the Winchester Mystery House, Santana Row and Century Theaters as memorable places within the Urban Village. When asked about additional placemaking

elements that will be appropriate for the SRVF Urban Village, residents at public meetings have recommended the following:

- Public art + parks and green spaces
- Landscaping schemes
- Street/tree lighting
- Student/resident artwork on mural or utility boxes
- Community events such as farmers' markets

As the SRVF Village continues to evolve, public art will play a significant role in engaging the community, increasing sense of place, and enhancing the quality of experience in the area. Business owners, property owners, and resident groups may initiate public art projects or event programming, obtaining guidance from the City where needed. Artists, integrated early into the design of public infrastructure and private development, can identify new ways of project delivery that enhances the public realm as well as private development. Successful public art implementation would contribute greatly to "branding" the Santana Row/Valley Fair Urban Village, giving it a memorable identity.

## **GOALS**

**Goal P-3: Build on existing public art within the SRVF Urban Village to ensure that public art plays a significant role in the public realm.**

**Goal P-4:** Promote a diverse and stimulating art presence to enrich the historic identity of the area to enhance the pedestrian experience, and improve the economic vitality of this Urban Village.

## **POLICIES**

**Policy P-3.3:** Ensure that public art is considered when developing all types of areas accessible to the public, including sidewalks, streets, parks, plazas, transit stops, wayfinding systems, trail network, community facilities and stormwater management areas.

**Policy P-3.4:** Engage the surrounding community in the development of a public art to increase the local identity of the public art and cultivate community-based art projects.

**Policy P-3.5:** Integrate artists early into the design of public infrastructure and private development to provide a sense of place, and enhance the quality of experience in the area.

**Policy P-3.6:** Locate plazas in the areas that will support community events such as farmer's markets, art fairs, live music and other periodic special programming, and near parking.

**Policy P-3.7:** Employ paseos as new development abuts existing neighborhoods, where such a feature would facilitate the continuation of an existing paseo or provide new connection to an adjacent site.

**Policy P-3.8:** Work with the community to integrate adaptive reuse and public art with the Century 21 Theatre site.

**Policy P-3.11:** Public art should be designed to respond to day and night activities.

**Policy P-3.12:** Incorporate art into streetscape elements such as crosswalks, stormwater management systems, bus stops, light poles, bicycle racks.

**Policy P-3.13:** Engage the surrounding community to ensure that public art is authentic and reflects the cultural values of the SVRF Urban Village and surrounding community.

**Policy P-3.14:** Encourage local business owners and resident groups to initiate cultural events that help foster a strong art community in the Urban Village.

## **GUIDELINES:**

### **A toolkit for Art: Elements that frame and define a place**

Elements that can define and frame a space to contribute to placemaking can be categorized as the following. The purpose of these elements are to create spaces for people and to think of streets as multipurpose and multifunctional spaces and to consider art to build on the strong sense of identity and place that exists for the SRVF Urban Village.

- **Elements of Distinction** are unique, memorable features.
  - Add meaning and metaphor to spaces through engagement to communicate and reflect the lives, values, and priorities of the community.
  - Consider art as large scale and character defining, for example a forest of light fixtures that references history.
  - Consider art to be iconic or functional, for example a monumental bike rack that can still function as a bike rack.
  - Integrate art with linear parks, for example, incorporate art in unique small park-like gathering spaces that can provide comfort and foot rest.
  - Merge art and play areas.
  - Make passages welcoming, for example, incorporate art into pedestrian bridges and passageways to create a unique experience.
  - Consider small-grain details in placemaking, for example provide special paving in design of new landscapes.
  - Consider interactive public art installations, for example dance steps that people can follow along with is interactive art.
  - Incorporate iconic, destination-quality artwork, particularly in commercial development and open space where the scale of the location may support larger scale artwork.
  
- **Elements of Continuity** are repeated elements that create a sense of character.
  - Unify major streets by incorporating into the streetscape design elements such as surface treatment and crosswalks, special lighting, unique seating, specially treated bike racks and utility covers with fine-grained covers, and utility boxes with public art.
  - Incorporate interactive art projects and designate locations to accommodate a program of changing temporarily-placed artwork.
  
- **Elements of Change** are temporary features such as, performances, events, festivals, and fairs.
  - Employ temporary and interactive placemaking that varies users' experience of a space at different times of the year.
  - Use art in social engagement, such as pop-up eateries serving a range of cuisine.
  - Use art to celebrate community rituals, such as special events to celebrate cultural, religious and spiritual activities.

**ACTION ITEM 4:** Explore strategies to allow for the continued funding of public art.



**ACTION ITEM 5:** Engage an artist to develop an art masterplan after the Plan is adopted. A masterplan should describe an overall vision and articulate values, priorities, and strategies.

**ACTION ITEM 6:** Work with the residents, businesses, artists, and property owners to identify potential locations for art installations.