



The information below provides background information on the history and evolution of the policies presented in the New General Plan Policies Memorandum.

Neighborhood Centers

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC has discussed the concept of neighborhood centers containing small neighborhood serving retail uses and community facilities as a solution for providing residents with walking access to services while maintaining Morgan Hill's small town character. These centers would support older adults and others with limited auto mobility to have full lives in the community, as well as provide the walkability that the "Millennial" generation prefers. At the same time, there are several concerns with this model: Morgan Hill already has a larger supply of retail square footage than its population would typically be expected to support; centers represent an older, not recently used format for retail and service businesses; and market feasibility for small neighborhood-serving uses could be challenging to achieve, particularly in lower-density neighborhoods with correspondingly lower service populations. New centers may attract customers away from existing local businesses.

- » Should the General Plan foster the development of neighborhood centers? If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**
 - Should land use policies and designations be changed to allow more mixed-use development in designated centers or on busier streets or intersections of residential neighborhoods, provided such development would not negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood?
 - Given that higher residential density makes services (particularly retail) more feasible, should higher density housing that might otherwise be discouraged in surrounding residential neighborhoods be allowed within a hub?
 - Should the City require that new retail and service centers be developed concurrently with significant new housing areas?
 - Should General Plan policies address the design of neighborhood centers separately from the residential areas that surround them?
 - Should the City specify that neighborhood serving commercial land uses be the only uses allowed in neighborhood centers?

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the neighborhood centers policy options as follows:

- » GPAC members held varying opinions about whether neighborhood centers should be designated. While most GPAC members supported the concept of neighborhood centers, there were also concerns that they might bring inappropriate or unattractive uses into residential neighborhoods; that they would draw traffic away from existing retailers; and/or that small retail centers would not be viable, creating vacant storefronts.
- » The GPAC agreed that the General Plan should focus on strengthening existing centers, including shopping centers, medical offices, sports fields, and the CRC, through improving connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and transit accessibility.
- » In general, GPAC members were open to allowing neighborhood centers should a developer elect to pursue such a concept.
- » The GPAC mostly agreed that the General Plan should provide guidance on the desired size and characteristics of any future hub.

Non-Traditional Uses in Shopping Centers

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed the concept of repurposing and rehabilitating low performing shopping centers. As discussed in the Economics White Paper, there is an oversupply of existing retail centers and vacant retail land in Morgan Hill. To address the oversupply issue, the Economics White Paper proposed exploring the option of rehabilitating and repurposing low performing retail centers. The General Plan focuses on encouraging a strong retail climate, but does not address the issue of what to do (if anything) with an oversupply of existing retail uses.

- » Should the General Plan encourage non-traditional uses in shopping centers? If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**
 - Should non-retail land uses be proposed or permitted for low performing retail centers? If so, should residential uses be considered? What about other uses such as institutional uses (e.g., schools, churches, medical facilities, social services, government offices)?

- Should the City incentivize the relocation of retail from less competitive shopping centers to more suitable areas of the city to strengthen existing centers that are performing well?
- Should the City focus on adding housing to areas that already have retail and services?

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the non-traditional uses in shopping centers policy options as follows:

- » The GPAC was mostly supportive of adding General Plan policies allowing non-retail uses in low performing shopping centers, including places of worship.
- » GPAC members also supported policies to encourage locating new housing next to existing retail and services.
- » The GPAC requested that strong policies with specific direction be drafted to help repurpose failing shopping centers.

Residential Design Standards

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed whether the General Plan should increase the regulation of residential design. Morgan Hill's current urban design guidance is established in the General Plan, Zoning Code, and Design Review Handbook, and enforced through the design review process. The community wants to ensure that new residential development – whatever the density or intensity- is high quality and is harmonious and compatible with the community's existing character. The revised Community Development Element Goal 9 calls for well-designed residential neighborhoods that are high quality, aesthetically pleasing, livable, sustainable, and well-connected to neighborhood services.

- » Should the General Plan augment the residential design standards? If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**
 - Should the General Plan include either 1) mandatory or 2) flexible residential design policies? Mandatory design guidelines would help establish a cohesive urban identity in Morgan Hill, but could preclude creative site and building design (not if done properly) and be perceived as imposing a new burden on developers. It should be noted that design guidelines, whether

mandatory or flexible, could allow customization for different neighborhoods and different parts of town, from central/urban/multi-family areas to rural fringe/low density areas.

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the residential design standards policy options as follows:

- » In general, the GPAC agreed that design guidelines should be flexible and not mandatory.
- » The GPAC requested examples of residential design policies in other General Plans to see how other cities have handled this issue.
- » GPAC members also requested that Community Development Action 8.2 be clarified and updated to refer to the City's existing Architectural Review Handbook, which includes guidelines for both Single-Family and Multi-Family Housing. Language should also be added to the General Plan regarding maintaining and updating design guidelines and that they should be utilized in the review of development applications.
- » Some GPAC members were particularly interested in whether there are any existing design policies that support/require streets without on-street parking in residential neighborhoods. GPAC members, in general, agreed that residential projects should provide on-street parking.

Youth and Senior Services

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed ways to increase youth and senior services in Morgan Hill. According to the Population and Housing White Paper, Morgan Hill has a large proportion of children under the age of 18 and an increasing proportion of residents 55 and older. As the baby boom cohort ages, the 65- to 84-year old age group may be Morgan Hill's most rapidly growing age group in the next two decades. The existing General Plan already includes policies to encourage recreation services for youth and seniors, but there is an opportunity to expand these policies to reduce the potential marginalization of these two population groups.

- » Should the General Plan foster increased youth and senior services? If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**

- Should the City provide incentives to developers to provide youth and senior services as part of some market-rate projects (such as funding for recreation programs, health services, etc.)?
- Should the City work with VTA to locate transit stops near medical facilities?

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the youth and senior services policy options as follows:

- » The GPAC supported including a policy that would require both the City and developers to explore ways to increase youth and senior services.
- » The GPAC also discussed the need to maintain the appropriate zoning designation for medical facilities and encouraging medical providers to locate in these sites.
- » GPAC members discussed the need to encourage Universal Design, a design concept that encourages accessibility for people of all ages, in new developments.
- » GPAC members supported including a General Plan policy that would encourage transit stops near medical facilities.

Community Health

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed ways to increase health and well-being in Morgan Hill. Motivated by the dramatic increase in national obesity rates and obesity-related illnesses over the last two decades, public health professionals and urban planners have identified city planning and urban design as a key strategy to increase individuals' physical activity rates and access to healthy foods. These same strategies can also help to reduce per capita air pollution and increase pedestrian/bicyclist safety. Although the existing General Plan already includes policies to encourage walking and biking, the General Plan update provides an opportunity to assess whether the General Plan could strengthen its policies related to community health.

- » Should the General Plan augment policies to support a healthy community? If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**

- Should the General Plan include policies to encourage healthy diets in Morgan Hill? Some policy options to consider are listed below. **The City could elect to do all, some, or none of these options.**
 - Should the General Plan support access to healthy foods throughout the City? This could be achieved by setting a maximum distance new large housing projects can be from a grocery store or produce market or by decreasing barriers (such as zoning or permitting) to healthy food retailers and farmers' markets.
 - Should the City limit the concentration of unhealthy food sources (i.e., convenience, liquor, and fast food stores)?
- Should the General Plan include strategies to address mental health issues? This could be achieved by partnering with mental health service providers and/or the Morgan Hill Unified School District to increase public awareness of mental health resources and/or training City staff who interact with the community (such as police officers) to recognize mental health issues and to connect individuals affected by mental health issues with appropriate services.
- Should the General Plan include strategies to strengthen access to education and professional development resources? This could be achieved by working with the Santa Clara County Library District to expand access to technology resources, expanding City recreation programs, and/or partnering with Gavilan College to increase awareness of adult education resources.

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the community health policy options as follows:

- » GPAC members did not support including a policy to encourage healthy diets in Morgan Hill. Instead, GPAC members discussed adding policies to improve access to healthy food such as allowing produce carts in neighborhoods, encouraging community gardens, educating the public, and encouraging individual home produce gardens. None of these options should be mandatory.
- » The GPAC supported including a policy that would encourage access to mental health services and to encourage increased education and professional development resources.

Community Gardens

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed ways to increase access to community gardens in Morgan Hill. Through the Morgan Hill 2035 outreach process, stakeholders identified community gardens as one feature that highlights Morgan Hill's agricultural character and makes the community unique. Morgan Hill residents voiced the desire for more community gardens, and the need for them to be accessible to all ages, functional abilities, and socio-economic groups.

- » Should the City require or incentivize new development to incorporate open space for community gardening? If so, **the City could elect to do either or both of the options below:**
 - Should community gardens count towards existing open space requirements for new development projects?
 - What should the City's role be in developing and maintaining community gardens?
 - Establishing partnerships and initiatives with public agencies and private and nonprofit groups to expand community gardens?
 - Further incentivize – or require – community gardens in new residential development?

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the community gardens policy options as follows:

- » The GPAC was in favor of allowing community gardens to count towards existing open space requirements for new development.
- » GPAC members supported City involvement in establishing partnerships with public agencies, private entities, and nonprofit groups to expand community gardens.
- » GPAC members did not support making community gardens a requirement in new residential developments.

Park Requirements

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed ways to increased access to open space and parks in Morgan Hill. Goal 18 of the existing Community Development Element commits the City to providing accessible and high-quality park and recreation facilities. There is an existing policy in the General Plan to attempt to ensure that there are parks within ½ mile (walking distance) of housing, and the RDCS frequently extracts private open space as a part of awarding allocations to projects. The City works with developers to ensure that these parks are built to adequately serve new housing developments and surrounding residences.

- » Should the General Plan increase access to parks and open space in Morgan Hill. If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**
 - Should the City encourage and/or request public access to all future privately-owned Homeowners Association (HOA) parks to be publicly-accessible?
 - Should the City specify that private parks and open space in residential developments be excluded from counting towards the developer's requirement to provide public parks and open space? Private parks and open space in residential developments, obviously, preclude citywide access to these facilities. These new residents would have an impact on the overall City park and open space system, even if there is a private park or open space associated with their residence.

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the park requirements policy options as follows:

- » Some GPAC members supported the idea that open space created as part of a development project be open to the public.
- » The GPAC agreed that private open space funded by and maintained by Homeowners Associations should not be discouraged.
- » The GPAC agreed that an action should be added that the City will seek to establish funding resources for park maintenance. It was suggested that Measure C could include money for park maintenance.

Transit for Seniors

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed increased transit options for seniors. As the baby boomer generation (i.e., those born between 1946 and 1964) ages, more and more people will forego driving or become unable to drive. Without proper access to affordable transit or families, friends, and/or neighbors who can provide rides, seniors face an increased risk of social and physical isolation. Currently, Outreach, a non-profit organization that serves seniors and the disabled, offers transportation services for seniors in Morgan Hill. These services include a subsidized transportation pass and subsidized taxi rides (\$1.50 per trip, with a maximum of 60 trips per year). Residents must be 65 or older to participate and there are no income restrictions. Outreach provides transportation services to destinations within Santa Clara County only. While Outreach provides an important service to the community, there is a daily cap on the number of rides offered so all user requests may not be accommodated.

- » Should the General Plan encourage increased transit options for seniors? If so, **the City could pursue this option, or make no change to the General Plan.**
 - Should the City work with local businesses, developers, non-profits, and/or the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority to expand senior transportation options in Morgan Hill (e.g., volunteer ride programs and increased taxi services)?

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the transit for seniors policy options as follows:

- » GPAC members were generally supportive of adding a policy in the General Plan to encourage the expansion of transit services for seniors.
- » The policy should clearly state the mechanisms to encourage senior transit and should list as many options as possible.

High Speed Rail

At the October 23, 2014 GPAC meeting, the GPAC requested the General Plan consider policies to help steer the development of High Speed Rail through Morgan Hill. The GPAC did not discuss particular policy options, but rather the need for Morgan Hill to have an active voice in the configuration and development of the High Speed Rail line.

Agricultural Preservation

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed agricultural preservation options in Morgan Hill. Active agricultural uses can be found within the Morgan Hill City limits as well as within the Sphere of Influence (SOI). Agricultural land is often mentioned by residents as a key component of Morgan Hill's unique character and as important to the local economy both because it generates revenue and increases agri-tourism to the area. Goal 5 of the Community Development Element and its associated policies and actions calls for the preservation of agricultural uses outside the Urban Growth Boundary. In addition, Goal 3 of the Open Space and Conservation Element and its associated policies and actions calls for a viable agricultural industry. In addition to these General Plan goals and policies, the City released a Draft Agricultural Lands Preservation Program on October 30, 2013. This program outlines the agricultural preservation and mitigation strategy for agricultural land within the City's SOI and recommends several policies the General Plan Update should consider. The Draft Agricultural Lands Preservation Program also identifies Agricultural Priority Areas to ensure the viability and conservation of agricultural uses.

- » Should the General Plan augment its agricultural preservation policies? If so, **the City could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**
 - Are there specific agricultural uses that the General Plan should promote within the City limits, such as small-scale food production and produce stands?
 - Should the General Plan prioritize the protection of specific agricultural areas within the SOI? The Draft Agricultural Lands Preservation Program calls for the City to focus permanent agricultural preservation efforts in the Southeast Quadrant area first, and then in other areas of the Sphere of Influence later. Outside of the SEQ, are there are other areas within the SOI where the City should focus its agricultural preservation efforts, based on factors such as soil quality, availability of irrigation water, parcel size, and distance from residential uses?
 - Should the General Plan establish a minimum agricultural buffer requirement around new urban development next to Agricultural Priority Areas and land with a County Agricultural land use designation? This is a policy recommended for consideration in the Draft Agricultural Lands Preservation Program.

- Should the General Plan consider implementing an agricultural Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program¹? The intent of a TDR program is to encourage the voluntary reduction or elimination of development potential in designated preservation areas (called “Sending Areas”) by transferring that development potential to areas where growth is desired (called “Receiving Areas”). Sending-area landowners can either choose to develop their property or voluntarily record permanent deed restrictions on their land in return for the ability to sell transferable development rights, or TDRs, to developers in the receiving areas. In many TDR programs, the number of TDRs issued to a participating landowner equals the number of dwelling units precluded on the sending site. Receiving-area developers can either choose to develop at a baseline density or, alternatively, develop at a higher density if they purchase TDRs. Developers are motivated to exceed baseline by the higher profits resulting from the bonus density achievable by using the TDR option. To be successful, TDR programs require both a Receiving Area that needs to be preserved and a Sending Area where higher densities are acceptable. The feasibility of a new TDR program in Morgan Hill has not yet been analyzed; if there is interest in such a program that would be an important early action item for General Plan implementation. An agricultural TDR program would provide agricultural property owners the opportunity to receive financial compensation, in return for permanently preserving prime agricultural land.
- Should the City promote legislation to establish Countywide and Statewide agricultural preservation programs, including identifying sources of funding necessary for implementation of such programs? This is a policy recommended for consideration in the Draft Agricultural Lands Preservation Program.

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the agricultural preservation policy options as follows:

- » The GPAC was generally supportive of adding a policy to promote boutique agricultural uses within the City limits.

¹ This would be similar to the City’s Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program applied to land with “significant environmental features” in Morgan Hill, such as the hillside areas.

- » GPAC members also agreed that the General Plan should prioritize the protection of specific agricultural within the SOI. The GPAC specifically mentioned exploring the option of preserving some portion of the Mariani property as established by a Specific Plan. Other properties the GPAC suggested exploring include the Guglielmo vineyards and the area south of the Tennant Avenue overpass near Ace Hardware.
- » GPAC members were supportive of including a policy that requires a minimum buffer around agricultural land adjacent to new urban development.
- » The GPAC was generally supportive of exploring some kind of program that would compensate agricultural property owners if they choose to preserve agricultural uses. One idea was to require a Specific Plan for significant development areas that would specify the areas to be preserved and identify funding sources to compensate the property owners, such as HOA fees. Other ideas included exploring an increased transfer fee or modifying Measure C to specify funding for agricultural preservation.
- » GPAC members were generally in favor of including a policy of promoting City, County, and State agricultural preservation programs.

Water Conservation

POLICY OPTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GPAC

The GPAC discussed increased water conservation policy options. California is currently facing one of the most significant droughts in over 40 years. Many jurisdictions, including the City of Morgan Hill, are instituting water conservation measures to respond to the current supply crisis. As climate change becomes more significant, a change in weather patterns, including reduced rainfall, will continue to be an issue in the years to come. The General Plan update provides an opportunity to be on the forefront of this issue and provide direction on future conservation efforts. Goal 21 of the existing Community Development Element already focuses on water conservation, calling for effective management of water resources. However, new policies could be added to further strengthen this goal at the local and municipal level.

It should be noted that the City's Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), updated every five years, provides detailed direction on water conservation practices and demand management. The purpose of General Plan policies related to water conservation would be to provide the overarching policy direction for the UWMP.

- » Should the General Plan augment its water conservation policies? If so, the City **could elect to do all, some, or none of the options below.**
 - Should the General Plan include policies and actions to partner with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and/or the South County Wastewater District to establish a purple pipe (i.e., recycled water) system in Morgan Hill? ²
 - Should the City consider a water fixture retrofit program, where in order to allow new water consuming development, the water use of the new project must be offset by the developer implementing the retrofit of inefficient water fixtures in existing developments?
 - Should the City consider additional restrictions on new development, above the water-efficient landscaping requirements set by the State, to eliminate (rather than reduce) high-water-use landscaping?

SUMMARY OF GPAC DISCUSSION

The GPAC discussed the water conservation policy options as follows:

- » GPAC members supported adding a policy option to the General Plan to explore establishing a purple pipe system in Morgan Hill.
- » The GPAC was interested in looking at ways to incentivize existing or new homeowners of older homes to retrofit their water fixtures. GPAC ideas included adding a fee tied to water usage to the water bill that would create a pool of money for water fixture retrofits; exploring County programs that incentivize water retrofits; and looking at ways Measure C could fund such programs. The GPAC was not in favor of requiring new development to pay for water retrofits of existing homes.
- » The GPAC was in favor of including a policy to explore eliminating high-water use landscaping for commercial and industrial uses. For residential uses, the GPAC was in favor of a policy that minimized or reduced the use of high-water landscaping.

² Note: The City has initiated a study to explore the possibility of establishing a recycled water system in Morgan Hill.