

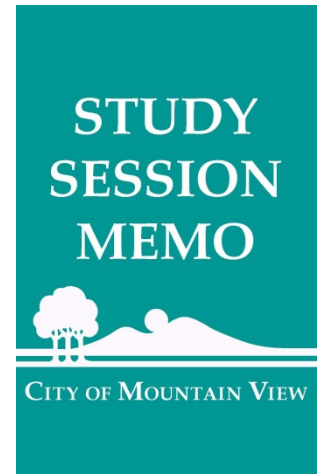
DATE: February 4, 2013

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

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TITLE: **San Antonio Precise Plan – Preferred
Alternative Endorsement**



PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is for the City Council to endorse preferred development and circulation options for the San Antonio Precise Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Precise Plan team identified key land use, urban design, and circulation topics and objectives. These were endorsed by Council at their October 8, 2013 Study Session and are discussed in the attached Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) staff report (Attachment 1). Council affirmed these key Precise Plan topics and objectives at the Study Session and emphasized the high priority for improving bicycle and pedestrian mobility to and through the area. Vehicle circulation was identified as an important but secondary factor.

The Precise Plan team then drafted Plan alternatives to provide options to implement land use, urban design, and circulation objectives. The draft alternatives were discussed at a public workshop on January 11, 2014 (as summarized in the attached EPC report) and at an EPC Study Session on January 22, 2014. The alternatives are summarized in this report and discussed in more detail in the attached EPC report and "Briefing Book."

Summary of San Antonio Precise Plan Draft Alternatives

The EPC evaluated three draft alternatives providing different approaches to implement the General Plan and prioritize uses and improvements in the Plan area.

The following features are anticipated to be part of the Precise Plan regardless of the alternative selected as the preferred Plan alternative:

- Consistency with 2030 General Plan land use designations and intensities.
- Consistent total assumed development – 1,200 housing units, 170 lodging rooms, 420,500 retail/service square feet, and 879,000 office/R&D square feet of net new development, including Gatekeeper projects (see Briefing Book discussion).
- Improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities along all public streets.
- Open space, including options to improve the Hetch Hetchy Corridor.
- Smaller, more walkable blocks, improved crossings and access to transit.
- Neighborhood integration and transitions.
- Support for neighborhood-serving/small businesses.

Draft Precise Plan Alternatives

The following are summaries of the high-level approaches for each alternative.

- Streetlife Alternative:
 - Transforms public streets, including Showers Drive, as a pedestrian-friendly “main street” with mixed-use residential development. Renovated regional retail is encouraged to face the street.
 - Focused improvements occur along public streets bounding San Antonio Center: Showers Drive, California Street, San Antonio Road.
 - Mixed-use residential wraps the “town square” on Showers Drive and office is near Caltrain.



Streetlife Urban Design

- 1-2 Stories
- 3-4 Stories
- 5-8 Stories
- Suggested Pedestrian Routes
- Active Frontage

Streetlife Alternative

- Parkways Alternative:

- Defined by mixed-use residential uses along two linear parkways within San Antonio Center (SAC) to integrate with surrounding neighborhoods. Existing major retail remains.
- Focused improvements occur along a parkway aligned with the Hetch Hetchy Corridor and a north/south parkway aligned with Pacchetti Way.
- Mixed-use residential is focused along parkways, residential is near Caltrain, and office is focused along El Camino Real.



- Central Green Alternative:

- SAC is a regional retail destination; existing major retail uses remain and additional regional destinations develop around a new central open space.
- Focused improvements occur in linked centers, such as the large central green in SAC, containing centralized underground parking.
- Mixed-use residential is focused along California Street, and office is near Caltrain and El Camino Real.



- Bicycle Option A (Major Public Streets):
 - Primary bicycle routes are focused on the four major public streets bounding SAC, with secondary bicycle routes through SAC.
 - Showers Drive and California Street would be modified with a “road diet” and provide separated/buffered bike lanes or a cycle track.
 - Primary connections to transit occur on San Antonio Road and Showers Drive.
- Bicycle Option B (Internal Links):
 - Primary bicycle routes are focused through the heart of SAC, with separated/buffered bike lanes aligned with Hetch Hetchy and Pacchetti Way.
 - Secondary bicycle routes occur on public streets, and there are new crossings across El Camino Real, Showers Drive, and San Antonio Road.
 - The primary transit connection occurs on Pacchetti Way and SAC.
- Bicycle Option C (Latham Street/Fayette Drive Bike Boulevard):
 - Primary bicycle routes are focused on San Antonio Road and a Latham Street/Fayette Drive bicycle boulevard.
 - A phased connection within SAC connects the bicycle boulevards.
 - Secondary routes occur through SAC and on public streets.

DISCUSSION

The Precise Plan team is seeking Council endorsement of a preferred Plan alternative. In order to stay on schedule for adoption of the Precise Plan by the end of 2014, Council endorsement of a preferred alternative is necessary at the Study Session in order to begin environmental analysis and drafting of the detailed Precise Plan. Additional Precise Plan issues will be brought back to the EPC prior to Council review, as needed.

This report summarizes EPC input from their January 22, 2014 Study Session on preferred land use, urban design, and circulation options. Additional background from the EPC report, key questions, and issues for further study are identified where applicable.

Overview of EPC Recommendations

Staff is requesting Council input on the overall Plan approach recommended by the EPC, and additional topic questions. The attached EPC report and Briefing Book (Attachment 1) highlight key land use, urban design, and circulation options reviewed by the EPC for the Precise Plan. Overall, the EPC favored:

- A combination of the **Parkways** and **Central Green** Alternatives.

Generally, the EPC supported building heights, active frontages, land uses near transit, and core open space components from the Central Green Alternative, as circled in the graphic below. The EPC also supported SAC land uses, additional open space locations (excluding segments east of Showers Drive), and primary pedestrian routes as shown in the Parkways Alternative.

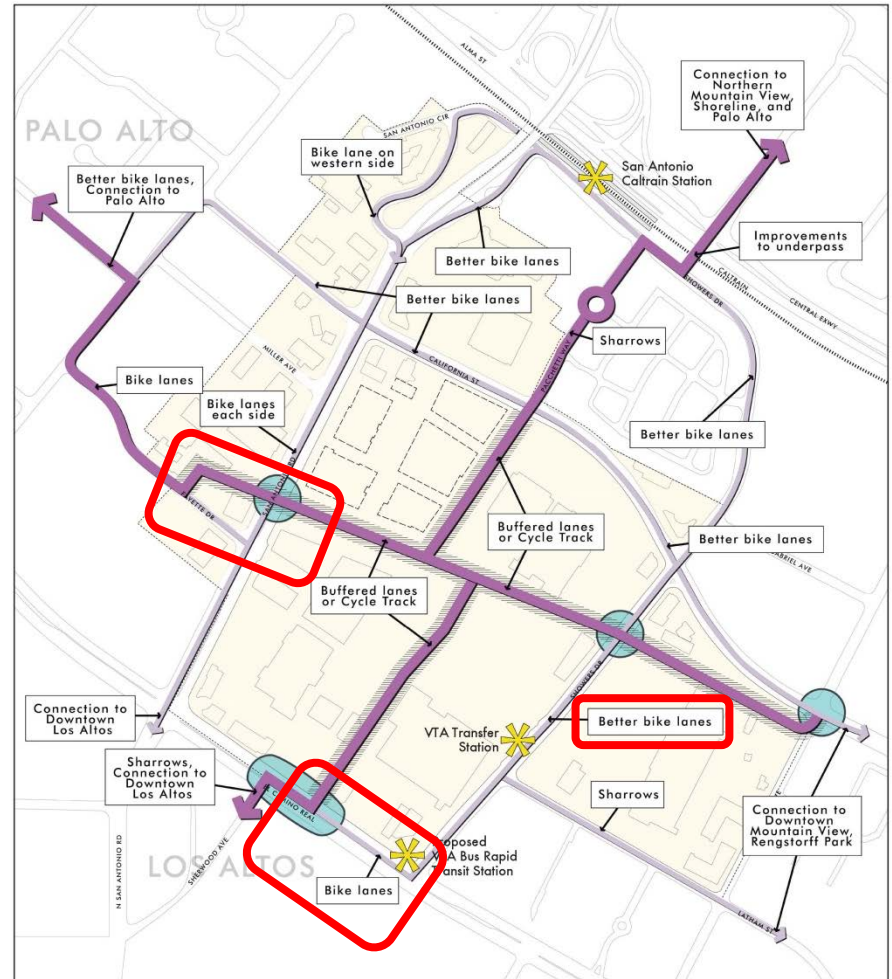
- **Bicycle Option B** with a few modifications to alter crossing locations and preferred facilities in locations circled in the graphic below and discussed later in this report.

Overall Key Question: Does Council support the EPC's preferred Plan alternative and circulation input?



- Central Green Urban Design**
- 1-2 Stories
 - 3-4 Stories
 - 5-8 Stories
 - Suggested Pedestrian Routes
 - Active Frontage

Central Green Alternative



- Bicycle Circulation Option B**
- Primary Bicycle Route
 - Secondary Bicycle Route
 - Improved New Crossing
 - Improved Existing Crossing
 - Buffered Lane or Cycle Track

Bicycle Option B



Parkways Urban Design

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1-2 Stories | Suggested Pedestrian Routes |
| 3-4 Stories | Active Frontage |
| 5-8 Stories | |



Parkways Circulation

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Vehicle Circulation | Improved New Crossing |
| Primary Pedestrian Route | Improved Existing Crossing |
| Secondary Pedestrian Route | |

Parkways Alternative

Key Precise Plan Topics – EPC Recommendations

The EPC provided input with the majority recommendations reflected below on key Precise Plan topics. A detailed summary of EPC input is contained in Attachment 2.

Open Space, Active Frontages, and Primary Pedestrian Routes

Overall, the EPC generally supported the concept of linking open space locations with active building frontages and primary pedestrian routes to create public spaces that are comfortable and vibrant. The EPC acknowledged additional changes may be needed to coordinate the preferred open space and active frontage strategy with preferred pedestrian routes, and provided the following more specific input:

Open Space – The EPC supported the Central Green concept of centralized open spaces, located away from public streets, and linked to active building frontages. The EPC supported additional open space along the Hetch Hetchy right-of-way in SAC to improve the distribution of open space in the area and align with the preferred pedestrian routes.

Additional Background: The EPC was asked to consider which open space arrangement best meets Plan objectives, given the noted priority for open space development. The draft alternatives provide strategies for open space locations and configurations – ranging from more linear approaches to centralized approaches. The three alternatives provide similar amount of open spaces.

The Central Green approach congregates open space in a few central locations and prioritizes pedestrian connections to these locations, while the linear approaches distribute open space more evenly through the Plan area. Given the priority for new open space development and based on existing open space deficits, the EPC was encouraged to consider a hybrid approach to mix/match the alternatives to best meet the open space needs of the area.

Active Frontages – The EPC discussed the challenge of activating the interior of SAC while trying to avoid having the Center “turn its back” to public streets, and supported adding active frontages to the Central Green Alternative in the following locations in/around SAC:

- Along the north/south extension of Pacchetti Way within SAC;
- Along portions of Showers Drive and SAC frontage on California Street; and

- On the corners of San Antonio Road/El Camino Real and San Antonio Road/California Street.

Primary Pedestrian Routes – The EPC supported the primary pedestrian routes, access points, and crossings from the Parkways Alternative. The EPC preferred these direct north/south and east/west connections through SAC.

Additional Background: The EPC was asked to consider locations for high-priority active frontages and pedestrian routes. Each alternative links active frontage and pedestrian route locations with the open space concept proposed in the alternative. All of the alternatives assume pedestrian improvements will occur along all public streets, but also identify primary routes where implementation would be prioritized. The alternatives identify important access points to SAC and street crossing improvements or new crossing locations.

The Parkways and Central Green Alternatives prioritize different routes through SAC based on proposed open space and active frontage locations. Prioritizing primary routes north/south and east/west through SAC provides a strong cue that the core area supports pedestrian mobility.

The Streetlife Alternative prioritizes improvements on public streets and identifies secondary paths through SAC. Prioritizing primary routes along public streets emphasizes improvements around the exterior of SAC and access to this core area.

Issues for further study:

1. Adjustments may be needed to integrate the open space locations and pedestrian routes from the Central Green and Parkways Alternatives.
2. New pedestrian crossings of public streets will require additional analysis and, in some cases, coordination with adjacent cities and/or outside agencies. Adjustments to the primary routes may be needed based on this work.
3. Primary pedestrian routes were identified through SAC. Given different lease conditions and development time lines, these interior routes are likely to occur incrementally. The Precise Plan team will need to study phased implementation strategies for these improvements.

Bicycle Options

The EPC supported the Option B strategy focusing separated bicycle improvements in SAC to provide comfortable, off-street bicycle options for bicyclists of all ages and abilities. The EPC supported separated facilities on Showers Drive only if they could be accomplished without a “road diet.” The majority of the EPC did not support bicycle lanes along the El Camino Real frontage of SAC.

Additional Background: The EPC was asked to consider where bicycle facilities should be prioritized for implementation and the type of bicycle facilities preferred in different locations throughout the Plan area.

Each bicycle strategy identifies options for both east/west and north/south routes, which are currently impacted by barriers such as the Caltrain tracks and El Camino Real. The options improve the limited bike facilities in the area and identify additional facilities. All of the options identify an improved Caltrain/Central Expressway tunnel for bicyclists and pedestrians. On-street improvements in the alternatives include some separated facilities, which may conflict with vehicle convenience in some locations.

Option A prioritizes bicycle improvements on public streets. For this alternative, the City would have the greatest control over implementation time lines. Option B has the largest amount of dedicated bike facilities, and focuses separated facilities in SAC and off of major public streets. This is a similar approach to identifying the priority for bicycle facilities in SAC as the pedestrian option in the Parkways Alternative. Option C takes a mixed approach of priority routes on public streets and in SAC.

Issues for further study:

1. Removing the El Camino Real bicycle lane option creates a gap in the Option B network. An alternate connection into Los Altos will need to be studied because the primary north/south route through SAC would dead end at El Camino Real.
2. Major improvements through SAC will require coordination between multiple property owners with different development time lines. A plan for phasing improvements over time will be needed.
3. If Council does not support studying “road diets” to improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities, additional land dedication from adjacent properties may be

required if Council prefers separated facilities be studied for public streets in the area.

4. Improving on-street bicycle facilities may also occur incrementally over time as redevelopment occurs, especially if dedication is required. Precise Plan improvements will also require coordination with City-wide plans and programs such as the Bicycle Transportation Plan and Capital Improvement Program.

Bicycle Key Question No. 1: Should separated bicycle facilities be studied on more public streets in the area in addition to Showers Drive?

Bicycle Key Question No. 2: Does Council agree with the EPC input to avoid “road diets?”

Land Use Priorities

The EPC provided input on land use priorities in SAC and near transit facilities to refine the General Plan vision for a mix of uses throughout the area.

San Antonio Center Land Uses – The majority of the EPC supported regional shopping as a fundamental feature of the area. The EPC preferred the Parkways Alternative to retain the existing amount of regional/big-box commercial uses while adding desired mixed-use residential and limited office development to SAC.

Additional Background: The EPC was asked to consider how much, if any, additional residential and/or regional commercial development would be supported in SAC. Residential and retail development are complementary uses; when located in close proximity, residential development tends to support more walking and biking trips to shopping destinations (“internalization”). However, major/regional retail uses also tend to generate higher amounts of vehicle traffic from outside the area.

The Streetlife and Parkway Alternatives retain regional retail/big-box uses but provide a greater focus on new mixed-use/residential development. The Parkways Alternative provides the strongest focus on residential uses, seeking to balance land uses to maximize internalization of trips and minimize trip generation. The Central Green Alternative prioritizes regional shopping uses as the highest priority and plans for additional regional retail uses in SAC.

Land Uses Near Transit—The San Antonio Road area has three key transit facilities: the San Antonio Caltrain station, the bus transfer station on Showers Drive (near Walmart), and bus service on El Camino Real. The EPC supported:

- A mix of residential and office near Caltrain;
- Predominantly regional commercial uses near Showers Drive; and
- Office uses near El Camino Real.

The majority of the EPC strongly supported the Central Green strategy for land uses near Caltrain. This strategy includes office development to support Caltrain service and residential development that transitions to the existing residential neighborhood.

Additional Background: The EPC was asked to consider whether office or housing should be prioritized next to transit. Office development would see the most trip-reduction benefit from locating near Caltrain, given its function as a commuter rail line, but office uses may also see benefits from proximity to any future BRT along El Camino Real. Residential uses support transit use but are not as supportive as office uses. They also tend to be slightly more flexible in terms of transit use based on distance from facilities when there is adequate transit access.

The Streetlife Alternative prioritizes office use proximity to Caltrain. While office can generate relatively high amounts of vehicle trips originating outside the area, locating office uses near transit can help maximize trip reductions. If there is significant concern about office uses next to residential areas, then the Parkway option may be best. The Central Green option provides a balanced approach with both residential and office uses located near transit.

Issues for further study:

1. While new development has occurred or is currently proposed for the west side of SAC, the east side of SAC does not currently have any proposed redevelopment. Much of this area is also occupied by a few long-term, “big-box” retail tenants. Even if redevelopment does not occur in the near future and existing uses remain, the Precise Plan can define key objectives and urban design strategies to be implemented over the long-term for this area and on the east side of Showers Drive (e.g., should buildings orient toward streets, open space, bicycle routes, etc.).
2. The Parkways Alternative retains existing regional commercial development largely as currently configured. To address EPC recommendations on other land

use and urban design objectives, additional study is needed for Precise Plan standards that balance regional commercial business needs with these objectives.

3. The Precise Plan can prioritize specific land uses near transit to support transit services or be flexible to allow the market to determine land uses near transit.

Land Use Key Question: Does Council support EPC input on land uses near transit facilities or is greater flexibility preferred?

Building Heights and Scale

The alternatives identify three height ranges for the area—one to two stories, three to four stories, and five to eight stories. Each alternative then applies maximum height ranges to parcels in the Plan area based on location, existing uses, and/or anticipated development.

The EPC generally supported building heights identified in the Central Green Alternative. However, the EPC lowered the maximum height range to five to six stories instead of five to eight stories, with exceptions considered on a case-by-case basis only for exceptional proposals with significant public benefits that are easily accessible to most people.

The EPC also supported different height maximums in two specific locations:

- Three to four stories immediately north and south of the central SAC open space and on the northwest corner of California Street and Pachetti Way; and
- Four to six stories along the northeast corner of San Antonio Road and California Street.

Additional Background: The EPC was asked to consider where building heights should be distributed in the area and priority locations for sensitive transitions. Additional input was requested for locations where six to eight stories might be appropriate and locations where lower than the maximum allowed heights might be desired.

In general, the alternatives use a strategy of coordinating taller heights with major streets/routes and open space locations. This provides opportunities for taller buildings to have more generous separation from other buildings, and links higher-intensity development with amenity and activity areas.

The alternatives also identify specific locations with lower than the maximum allowed heights, based on existing uses and the likelihood of redevelopment over the life of the Plan. For example, the Central Green Alternative identifies a one- to two-story height maximum for regional/"big-box" commercial locations and properties such as the northwest corner of San Antonio Road and Fayette Drive, where the General Plan allows up to three to four stories. The Precise Plan can specify more restrictive heights in these locations and define a process for reviewing more substantial redevelopment proposing taller heights. Alternatively, the Precise Plan can provide more general height maximums with additional design and development standards to allow greater flexibility for future redevelopment consistent with General Plan allowances.

Height Key Question: Should the Precise Plan have more restrictive height regulations based on existing uses and likelihood of redevelopment over the life of the Plan or be more general to allow greater flexibility for future redevelopment?

Precise Plan Programs and Administration

Tiered FAR Structure—The 2030 General Plan does not prescribe a tiered FAR approach in the San Antonio area, where higher FAR projects allowed by the General Plan would be expected to provide more benefits. However, input at recent Gatekeeper hearings and Precise Plan meetings has identified community needs such as open space and affordable housing, which could be linked to new development through a tiered FAR program, specifying requirements for projects in different FAR ranges under General Plan maximums.

The EPC supported studying a tiered FAR program, and additional study will include analysis of whether there are locations where additional height is needed to support higher FAR projects and provision of significant public benefits.

Precise Plan Program Key Question No. 1: Should the Precise Plan study tiered floor area ratios (FAR) with performance criteria for base FAR vs. higher FAR projects?

Shared Parking—Shared parking was identified as an important issue at the EPC Study Session. The EPC supported careful study of shared parking options, including structured/underground parking. The EPC identified objectives to ensure the area is not overparked and any program is equitable to existing and future businesses.

Precise Plan Program Key Question No. 2: Should the Precise Plan study a shared parking program, including structured/underground parking?

PUBLIC COMMENT

Input was provided by 15 public speakers at the EPC Study Session. Comments included support for Hetch Hetchy open space, office uses near Caltrain, residential uses near Caltrain, affordable housing, mixed-use development, a diversity of uses to reduce traffic or spread it throughout the day, pedestrian-scaled buildings, preservation of mountain views, shared parking, signalized or lighted crosswalks, separated bicycle paths, attractive building design and aesthetics, publicly accessible spaces allowing a complete range of public use, small/neighborhood-serving businesses, and big-box retail.

Concerns were expressed about taller building heights next to open space; ability to improve the Hetch Hetchy right-of-way given San Francisco Public Utilities Commission requirements; recently constructed tall, poorly designed buildings; and traffic. Public input from the January 2014 public workshop is summarized in the EPC report (Attachment 1).

RECOMMENDATION

The topics discussed in this report form the foundation of the preferred Plan alternative. Staff recommends that Council provide direction on the EPC recommendations and the following key questions:

- **Overall Key Question: Does Council support the EPC’s preferred Plan alternative and circulation input?**
- **Bicycle Question No. 1: Should separated bicycle facilities be studied on more public streets in the area in addition to Showers Drive?**
- **Bicycle Question No. 2: Does Council agree with the EPC input to avoid “road diets?”**
- **Land Use Question: Does Council support EPC input on land uses near transit facilities or is greater flexibility preferred in any/all locations?**
- **Height Question: Should the Precise Plan have more restrictive height regulations based on existing uses and likelihood of redevelopment over the life of the Plan or be more general to allow greater flexibility for future redevelopment?**

- **Precise Plan Program Question No. 1: Should the Precise Plan study tiered floor area ratios (FAR) with performance criteria for base FAR vs. higher FAR projects?**
- **Precise Plan Program Question No. 2: Should the Precise Plan study a shared parking program, including structured/underground parking?**

NEXT STEPS

Based on input from Council, the Precise Plan team will begin environmental analysis and drafting details of the Precise Plan for the preferred Plan alternative. This will include preparation of detailed technical studies for circulation and street design standards, parking management, infrastructure, development feasibility and public benefits, and financing strategies. Public outreach on detailed Plan strategies and studies is anticipated in May 2014, and a public draft Precise Plan and Environmental Impact Report is anticipated by September 2014. Precise Plan adoption is targeted for December 2014.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

This is an informational report only and is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies). Environmental review of the eventual draft Precise Plan will be conducted as part of the project in conformance with CEQA requirements.

PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting. City-wide courtesy notices were mailed for the January 2014 public workshop, which contained information on this Council Study Session. Meeting notices were also provided to the interested parties list. In addition, meeting information was posted on the San Antonio Precise Plan website and announced on cable television Channel 26 and the City website calendar.

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803-02-04-14SS-E

- Attachments:
1. [Environmental Planning Commission Staff Report Dated January 22, 2014, Including Exhibits](#)
 2. Summary of Environmental Planning Commission Study Session Input, January 22, 2014