



SPUR

POLICY BRIEF
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The 15-Minute Neighborhood

**A framework for equitable growth
and complete communities in San José
and beyond**



Acknowledgments

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SOM

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The findings and recommendations of this report are SPUR's and do not necessarily reflect the views of those listed here. Any errors are the author's alone.

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Executive Summary

More than a decade ago, the City of San José began planning for growth by adopting a new land use strategy. The city would build “urban villages” that emphasize livability, affordability, and access to opportunity through dense, mixed-use development that is served by transit, is friendly to pedestrians, and features a variety of housing options at a range of price points. Yet for a variety of reasons, few of the villages called for in the Envision San José 2040 General Plan have been approved. Since 2011, the year Envision San José 2040 was adopted, more than 60% of San José’s residential development has occurred in areas without an urban village plan.

The beauty of the urban village plan is that it can guide the kind of development that would theoretically create “15-minute neighborhoods,” where residents enjoy access to many essential, everyday services and amenities just a short walk or bike ride from their homes. The concept has gained currency around the world. Cities have begun to translate the 15-minute framework into policy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the unsustainability of car-dependent urban planning and its attendant ills, including deepened socioeconomic divides, increased air pollution, and reduced resilience.

The City of San José could use the 15-minute framework, alongside other policy and implementation frameworks including transit-oriented communities, for undertaking and evaluating actions to implement its urban villages. After convening a cross-sector working group, conducting interviews and workshops, and consulting with stakeholders to better understand the utility of the 15-minute concept in San José, SPUR recommends six strategies to enable these more complete, connected, and equitable communities:

- Double down on commitments to inclusive urban growth and prosperity, setting specific goals for sustainability, accessibility, and improved quality of life.
- Foster the co-creation of cities with community members.
- Catalyze and incentivize 15-minute framework demonstration projects, public-private partnerships, and land use policies such as mixed-use zoning, transit-oriented development, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and adaptive reuse and revitalization.
- Encourage diverse uses of buildings’ ground floors.
- Leverage city data and make the data publicly accessible to equitably improve services.
- Develop a city-led center for urban design to ensure implementation of design principles consistent with the 15-minute framework.

Together, these strategies would help San José meet its goals of creating more complete and connected urban neighborhoods.

Suburban Environments Reimagined as More Urban, Walkable, and Mixed-Use Places

In urban planning circles and municipal town halls, there's growing interest in the "15-minute city," where everyone can meet most, if not all, of their needs within a short walk or bike ride from home. It's a city composed of lived-in, people-friendly, "complete," and connected neighborhoods.

Many of the principles of the 15-minute city (or of the 20-minute city or neighborhood, as envisioned in some locales such as Portland, Oregon, and Melbourne, Australia) are already embedded in policies to create transit-oriented communities, develop public-realm and greenspace enhancements, and implement traffic reduction measures. What is new is that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased recognition of the 15-minute city as a concept for supporting the reimagining of cityscapes to create more resilient, healthy, and prosperous communities. In this concept, city leaders and community advocates see promise for increasing housing and transportation affordability, fostering social and economic inclusion and equity, and regenerating urban life.

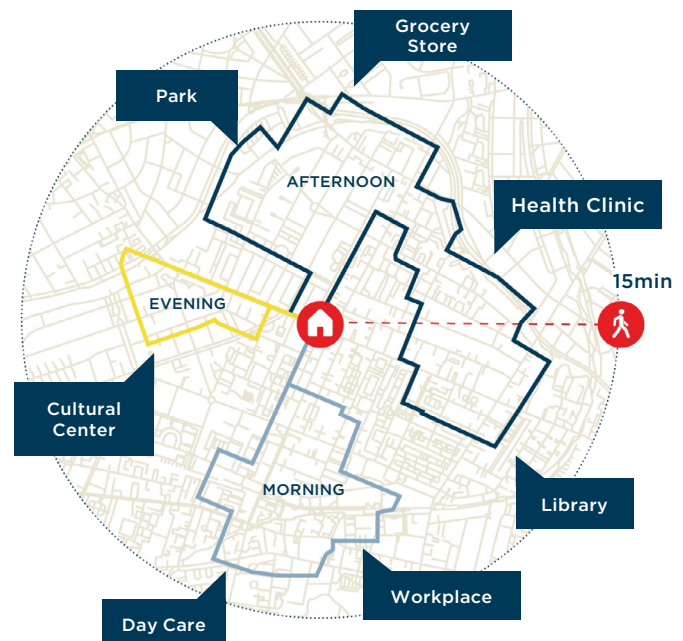
Creating walkable neighborhoods through proximity of mixed uses requires a deep understanding of the municipal and regional context, including land use and economic growth patterns. Equitably and sustainably planning for the future of neighborhoods and cities means grappling with the tensions that shape both geographies. The 15-minute neighborhood/city model leverages this understanding to reshape urban landscapes, emphasizing accessibility. It calls for a reconsideration of how cities are structured and encourages the incorporation of familiar yet transformative elements into urban planning, ultimately offering a path to more sustainable, vibrant, and connected urban environments.

EXHIBIT 1

The 15-Minute Neighborhood Privileges Walkability

The 15-minute neighborhood increases quality of life by allowing residents to link multiple errands in one outing, saving time spent on travel.

Source: Gehl Architects



Much has been written about the amenities and services necessary for a 15-minute city, but few road maps exist for realizing the benefits of such a place in the context of a car-oriented, low-density city like San José.

SPUR convened working groups, interviews, workshops, and stakeholder meetings to better understand the utility of 15-minute models in San José and how they might shape policies and future development. The discussions made clear that implementing 15-minute neighborhoods will require public-private partnerships.

This brief describes the 15-minute neighborhood and San José's planned urban villages, which embrace the 15-minute neighborhood's aims. It also describes the legacies of planning and investment that have shaped San José and that have helped create and perpetuate racially and economically segregated communities with inequitable access to critical public resources. Finally, it proposes the 15-minute framework for undertaking and evaluating actions to implement more walkable and complete communities and outlines six strategies that together comprise a road map for enabling those communities.

The 15-Minute Neighborhood and San José's Urban Villages

Transforming already-developed suburban environments into more urban places isn't easy. The 15-minute framework acknowledges the tension between walkability and car dependence, which has defined the development patterns of many American cities. In response, it challenges the century-old urban planning paradigms that have isolated residential areas from businesses, retail, industry, and entertainment. It approaches urban planning and the building of a city narrative as mechanisms for leveraging land use development, urban design, and placemaking strategies to build walkable communities where all people can enjoy a high quality of life. To fulfill this promise, the framework includes provisions for service delivery that can effectively respond to socioeconomic challenges and structural inequalities and for the data collection that is needed to set up investments to restructure a city for inclusive prosperity.

The 15-minute neighborhood encourages a shift from car-oriented urban landscapes toward more human-centered design. Nirvana Soul coffee shop is an example of a neighborhood amenity that has made a small but mighty human-scale addition to the downtown San José community.



Photo by Lanny Nguyen

The 15-Minute Neighborhood

The aim of 15-minute neighborhoods is to provide a range of essential, everyday amenities and services within walking distance from people's homes. These neighborhoods improve quality of life by creating urban environments that support people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and that offer a variety of housing options at different price points. The neighborhoods encourage social interaction and active lifestyles, and they foster a strong sense of community. Additionally, by promoting proximity and accessibility, 15-minute neighborhoods reduce dependency on cars and, thus, disparities in economic and other forms of opportunity.

Urbanist Carlos Moreno, who coined the term "15-minute city," highlights six social functions that allow residents to fulfill their everyday needs near their homes:

- **Living:** housing and residential spaces
- **Working:** job opportunities and local economic activity
- **Commerce:** access to essential goods and services
- **Health care:** access to health facilities, educational institutions, child care centers, and community services
- **Education:** access to educational and learning opportunities
- **Entertainment:** recreational spaces, parks, cultural venues, and leisure facilities¹

EXHIBIT 2

The 15-Minute Neighborhood Facilitates Six Social Functions

Within a 15-minute walking radius of their homes, residents should have easy access to a range of amenities and services that serve key social functions.

Source: Gehl Architects



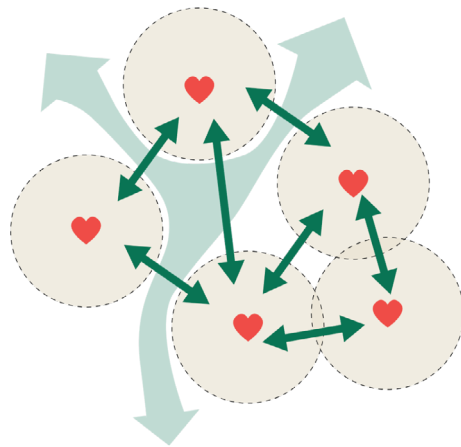
¹ C. Moreno, Z. Allam, D. Chabaud, C. Gall, and F. Pralong, "Introducing the '15-Minute City': Sustainability, Resilience and Place Identity in Future Post-Pandemic Cities," *Smart Cities* 4(1): 93-111, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/smartcities4010006>.

But importantly, no single neighborhood can cater to every need. Facilitating easy movement between different neighborhoods through high-quality active mobility and public transit networks is vital for an integrated, resilient, and socially vibrant city. Connected neighborhoods expand people’s access to a wider range of amenities, services, and opportunities. The burden on individual neighborhoods to provide each and every amenity, especially specialized services, is alleviated when links between neighboring communities are strengthened.

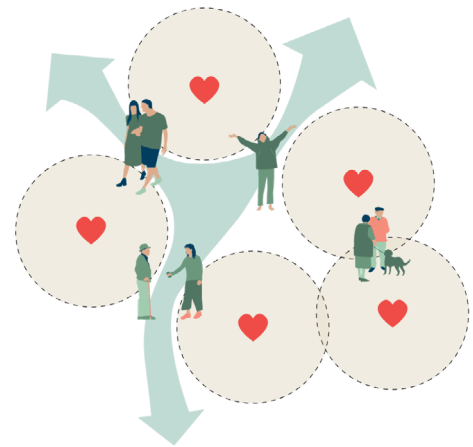
EXHIBIT 3
Connections Between 15-Minute Neighborhoods

Facilitating strong connections and improved streetscapes between neighborhoods can create great places that make people want to get out of their cars and onto the streets.

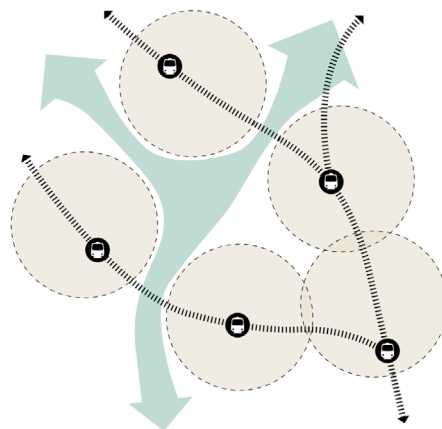
Source: Gehl Architects



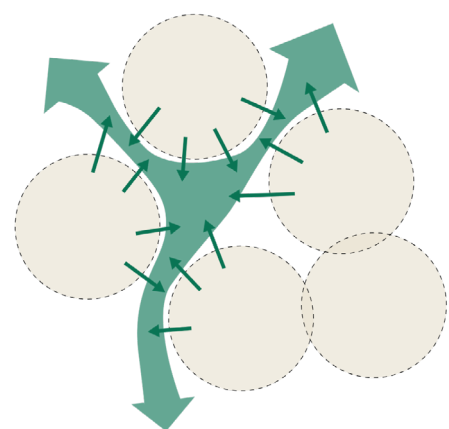
Connections between 15-minute neighborhoods are essential as no neighborhood is entirely self-sufficient.



The experience of the city becomes rich and varied as 15-minute neighborhoods build on their unique character and promote multicenter regions.



A high-quality, rapid public transit network facilitates sustainable mobility and links points of interest within the polycentric urban region.



Citywide destinations, such as regional parks, provide public spaces beyond the immediate neighborhood and serve as places for social mixing.

San José's Urban Villages

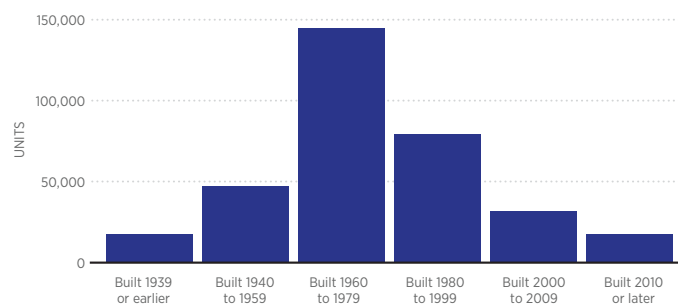
San José embraced principles similar to those embodied in the 15-minute neighborhood in 2011, when it proposed “urban villages” as a pillar of its Envision San José 2040 General Plan.² Envision San José 2040 proposed that the city accommodate 470,000 new housing units — a number since reduced to 120,000 units — within 60 villages over a 30-year period. To date, the San José City Council has approved 14 urban village plans and 11,894 housing units within the approved plans.³

The proposed urban villages are very different from the kind of residential development that occurred in San José's car-oriented construction heyday. Most of the city's housing stock, 144,617 units, was built from 1960 to 1979, during a time when minimum parking requirements were first introduced for commercial and residential real estate,⁴ leading to the large parking lots and structures that we know today.⁵ The 17,578 units built since 2010 represent a mere 5.2% of the city's current housing stock.⁶

EXHIBIT 4 Housing Production in San José Peaked in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s and 1970s were the heyday of the city's housing production. The norms, patterns, and policies of that time have made a lasting impact on the city's built environment.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2015–2019)



The city's current form is due in large part to its growth through annexations of less urban nearby areas, such as Alviso and Berryessa. A.P. Hamman became city manager in 1950 and aggressively pursued urban growth through annexation, which led to uncontrolled urban sprawl. By the late 1970s, new city leadership had curtailed this unrestricted growth and begun to steer new development within the city's urban growth boundary. But the impact of the annexation era persists today. As of 2020, the San José housing stock was made up of 52.6% single-family detached homes, 9.7% single-family attached homes, 6.9% multifamily homes with two to four units, 27.5% multifamily homes with five or more units, and 3.3% mobile homes.

² City of San José, Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/22359/637928744399330000>.

³ San José General Plan Annual Performance Review, 2022, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/95597/638168259703370000>.

⁴ Madeline Brozen and Mark Valliantos, “Encouraging Diverse Missing-Middle Housing Near Transit,” May 2019, <https://www.lewis.ucla.edu/research/encouraging-diverse-missing-middle-housing-near-transit/>.

⁵ For more information about San Jose's urban growth, read “Flashback: A Short Political History of San Jose” from *Movers and Shakers* by Philip J. Trounstine and Terry Christensen, 1982, <https://www.sjsu.edu/polisci/docs/faculty-cv/SJ%20History%20to%201970.pdf>.

⁶ Association of Bay Area Governments, Housing Needs Data Report: San José, ABAG/MTC Staff Baird + Driskell Community Planning, 2021.

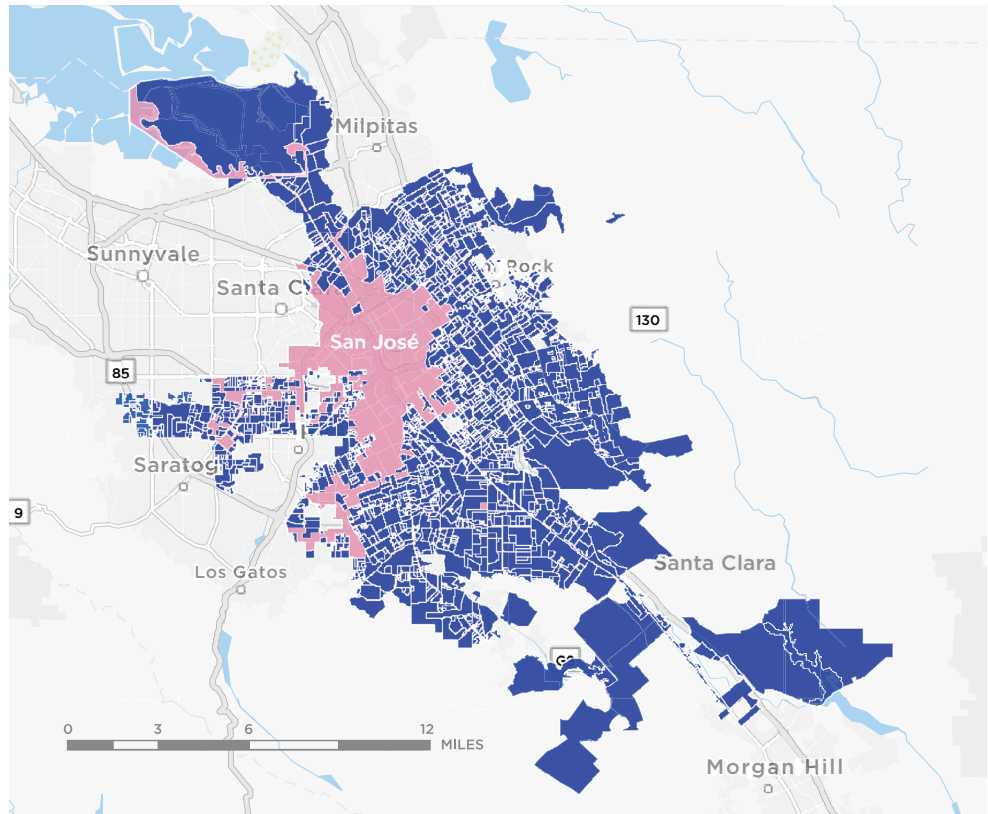
Due in part to this history, the city has embraced urban villages as a key land use strategy to concentrate sustainable, higher-density, and mixed-use urban growth in primarily commercially zoned locations that are accessible by existing transit or by walking and biking. Each urban village has a target for commercial square footage and a housing unit cap. Few single-family homes have been included in the urban village areas, and the urban village planning strategy was not originally intended to change the zoning in single-family residential areas to allow multifamily housing.

**EXHIBIT 5
San José’s Land
Annexations Since 1959
Feature Car-Privileged
Development**

Much of San José’s land area was acquired through annexations of less urban nearby areas, which began in 1959. The annexed areas (shown in dark blue) are more amenable to driving than to walking. Pre-1959 San José contains downtown and historic streetcar suburbs like Willow Glen that continue to be defined by pedestrian-oriented commercial districts and environments.

Source: City of San José GIS

- San José land area before 1959
- Areas annexed since 1959



The city has set up the urban villages to include a mix of uses for many reasons: to disperse employment, to grow or create clusters of activity, to ensure that retail and other local services are available throughout the city, and to create opportunities for businesses.

City data show that approximately 35% of all new residential projects built since the urban village strategy was enshrined in the city’s General Plan have gone up within the 60 areas designated for urban villages.⁷ Since 2011, more than 60% of San José’s residential development has occurred in areas without an urban village plan to guide the kind of development that would theoretically create 15-minute neighborhoods. The majority of the city’s new office projects also are sited outside urban villages.

⁷ Maggie Angst, “Why Some Say San Jose’s Urban Village Strategy for Growth Is ‘Driving Development Away,’” *Mercury News*, September 13, 2021, <https://www.mercurynews.com/2021/09/13/why-some-say-san-joses-urban-village-strategy-for-growth-is-driving-development-away/>.

This pattern of development outside urban villages does not adequately support San José in meeting its own housing and job production goals. A 2021 study on the urban villages' impact on real estate development found that the density-enabling plans and policies did not result in substantial growth.⁸ Potential explanations include a lack of actual zoning changes, urban village requirements that make development more complicated, and a mismatch between the development types envisioned in municipal plans and real estate market conditions.⁹

Although approved plans guide the vision for urban villages, implementation of those villages — and realization of the city's goals for the villages — relies on private investment. State legislation and city-sponsored policy adjustments have resulted in some relaxation of the city's urban village requirements, but complexity and confusion abound for developers and businesses. Approved plans (especially newer ones) often identify amenities and improvements that might be required as conditions of development approval but do not estimate their costs or specify which entities are responsible for building or making them. Moreover, the requirements for amenities and improvements — for example, street and public infrastructure enhancements such as tree plantings and widening of sidewalks¹⁰ — are not standardized and can vary from plan to plan. The result is uncertainty for investors and lack of accountability if city- and community-prioritized amenities fail to materialize.

Despite their challenges, urban villages provide an existing policy framework to enable implementation of the principles of the 15-minute city, alongside other key frameworks. These frameworks include policies for local and regional transit-oriented communities, complete streets and urban design guidelines, and placemaking strategies. In *It Takes a Village*, SPUR outlined a series of recommendations to remove barriers to sustainable growth using the urban village land use strategy.¹¹

A renewed focus on more complete and connected neighborhoods will be even more critical in the years to come as San José will see a major expansion in key transportation investments. Aside from the BART Phase II Extension, which will expand regional rail transit to downtown San José, the Valley Transportation Authority will expand service along light-rail lines and create extensions for the Eastridge Connector. The agency has big plans for transit-oriented development at 18 sites; the crown jewel is a major redevelopment of Diridon Station.

⁸ C.J. Gabbe, Michael Kevane, and William A. Sundstrom, "The Effects of an 'Urban Village' Planning and Zoning Strategy in San José, California," *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, January 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2021.103648>.

⁹ The study found that between 2012 and 2020, there were 44 up-zonings spread across the city's urban villages, with no more than three in any one urban village.

¹⁰ Such requirements are listed in the implementation section of the approved Stevens Creek Urban Village Plan, page 163, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/32895/637782058470400000>.

¹¹ Kristy Wang, *It Takes a Village: Strategies for Successful Implementation of San José's Urban Village Vision*, SPUR, November 2019, <https://www.spur.org/publications/white-paper/2019-11-19/it-takes-village>.

The Context for Pursuing a Pedestrian-Friendly, Mixed-Use Land Strategy in San José

San José, like many other major urban areas across the country, has experienced a sustained period of growth under an umbrella of policies and investments that devoted land uses to cars and that prioritized ease of driving. Zoning requirements led to car-centric, low-density, single land uses that helped create and perpetuate racially and economically segregated communities with inequitable access to critical public resources such as parks and public spaces. Moreover, these requirements sustained a pattern of development that has collectively contributed to a rising carbon footprint and an increase in commute times, traffic congestion, pollution, and energy use.

Historically, zoning has increased racial and economic segregation in the United States, dividing cities and diminishing diversity in the built environment by separating different types of land uses, such as housing, retail, and commercial office development, as well as preventing some communities from accessing pathways to homeownership and economic opportunity, precluding upward social mobility.

With the Envision San José 2040 General Plan, the city sought to alter San José's physical form, outlining a wide variety of living and working environments that support more diversified and dense neighborhoods to accommodate the city's growth. Specifically, the plan called for the continued development of downtown, the preservation and improvement of existing residential neighborhoods, and the creation of new, vibrant urban villages. Given that 80% of San José's existing residential zoning is dedicated to single-family residences, these goals represent a huge lift. Reimagining and reinventing San José's urban form will require the city to holistically define its growth for complete communities.

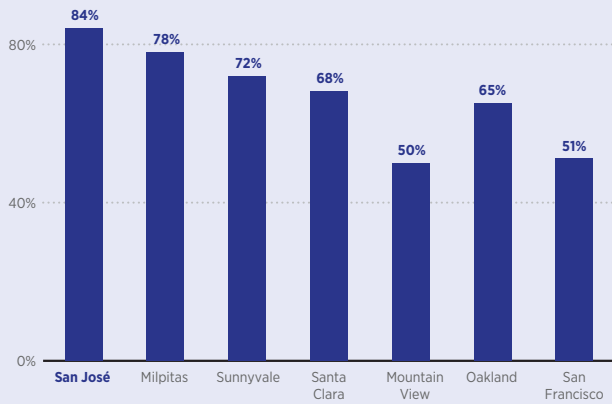
Data Tell a Story of Inequality and Its Underpinnings in San José

San José is among the wealthiest cities in the country by income, yet inequalities and disparities persist across racial and ethnic lines, curtailing socioeconomic opportunities for many individuals and families living in the city. Under the city’s current Housing Element cycle, San José must create a plan to increase housing affordability and enable anti-displacement policies that could also improve accessibility to employment, education, and social inclusion.

Single-Family Residential Zoning as a Percentage of All Residential Zoning in San José and Six Neighboring Cities

In percentage terms, San José has more single-family residential zoning than many other neighboring cities. The two other largest cities in the region, Oakland and San Francisco, feature lower percentages of single-family residential zoning.

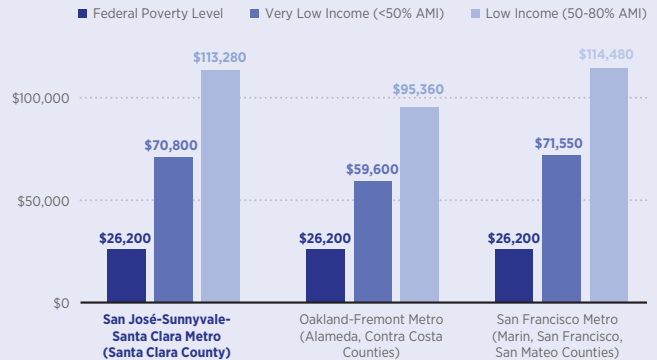
Source: Data from the Othering and Belonging Institute



Maximum Income Values for a Family of Four in the HUD-Designated Oakland, San Francisco, and San José Metropolitan Areas, 2020

As in other Bay Area metros, a four-person household in the San José metro area can live well above the poverty level but still meet federal definitions for a very low-income household.

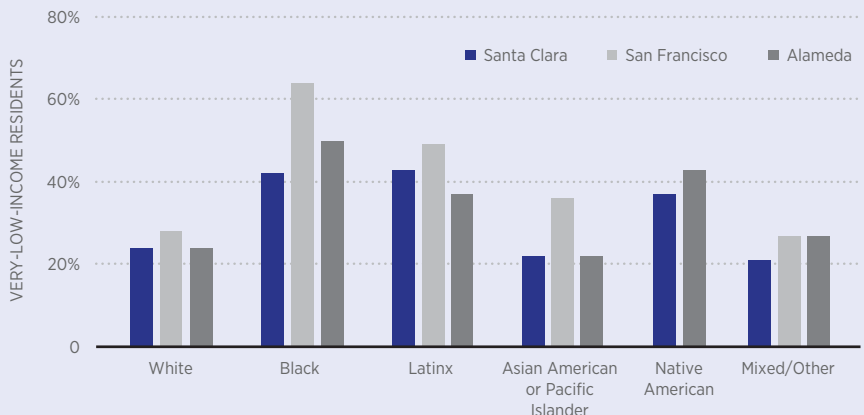
Source: Bay Area Equity Atlas, 2020 five-year American Community Survey
 Note: AMI = area median income



Share of People in Very-Low-Income Families by Race/Ethnicity and County, 2020

More than 40% of Black and Latinx residents in Santa Clara County are in very-low-income families. Similar patterns exist in San Francisco and Alameda counties. Low income is defined as earning less than 50% of the area median family income.

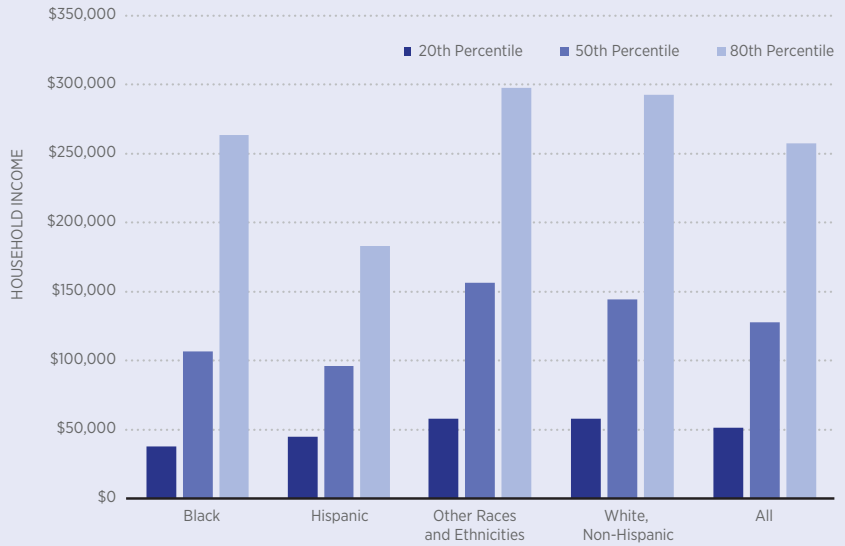
Source: Bay Area Equity Atlas, 2020 five-year American Community Survey



Household Income by Race and Ethnicity at the 20th, 50th, and 80th Percentiles, San José, 2021

Household incomes in San José are high, but disparities persist along racial and ethnic lines.

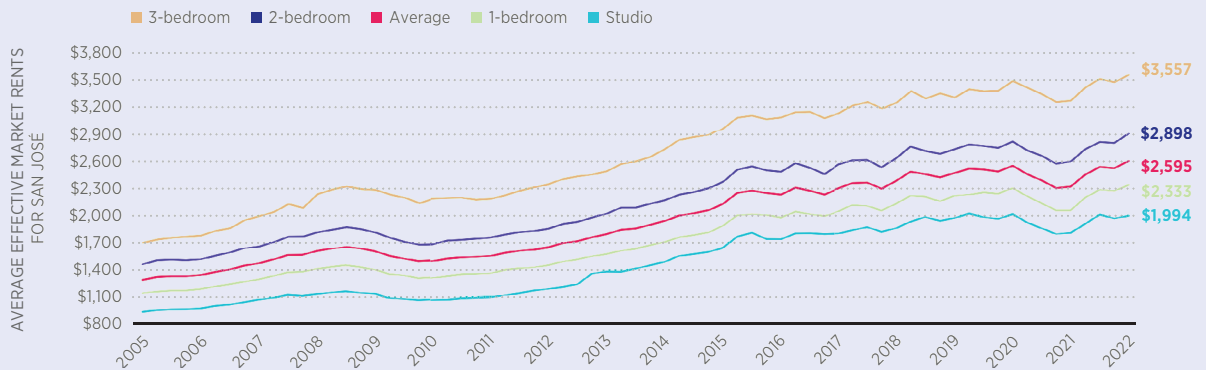
Source: Urban Institute; US Census Bureau's 2021 1-Year ACS via IPUMS; Missouri Census Data Center Geocorr 2022; Geographic Correspondence Engine



Average Market Rents in San José, 2005–2022

Since 2005, the city's average market rent has doubled.

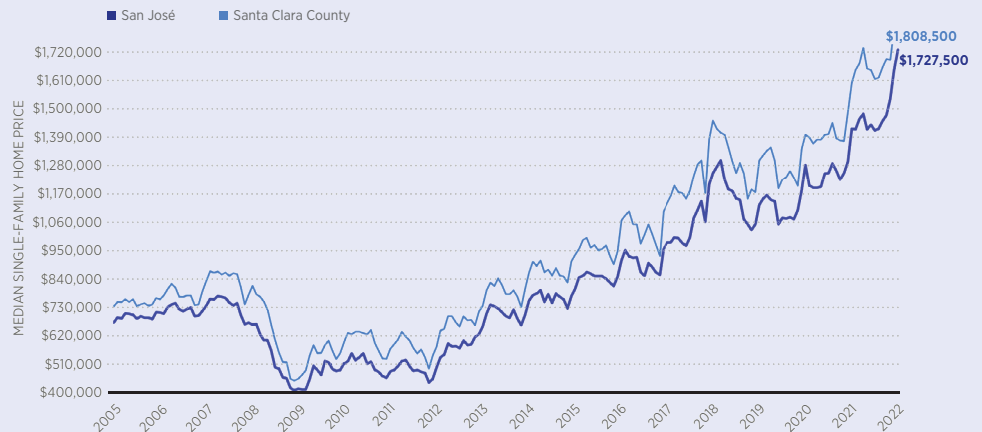
Source: CoStar, 1st quarter over quarter, year over year



Median Single-Family Home Price in San José and Santa Clara County, March 2005–March 2022

Since March 2005, the median price of a single-family home in San José has nearly tripled, from \$670,000 to more than \$1,727,500.

Source: Santa Clara County Association of Realtors, March 2022

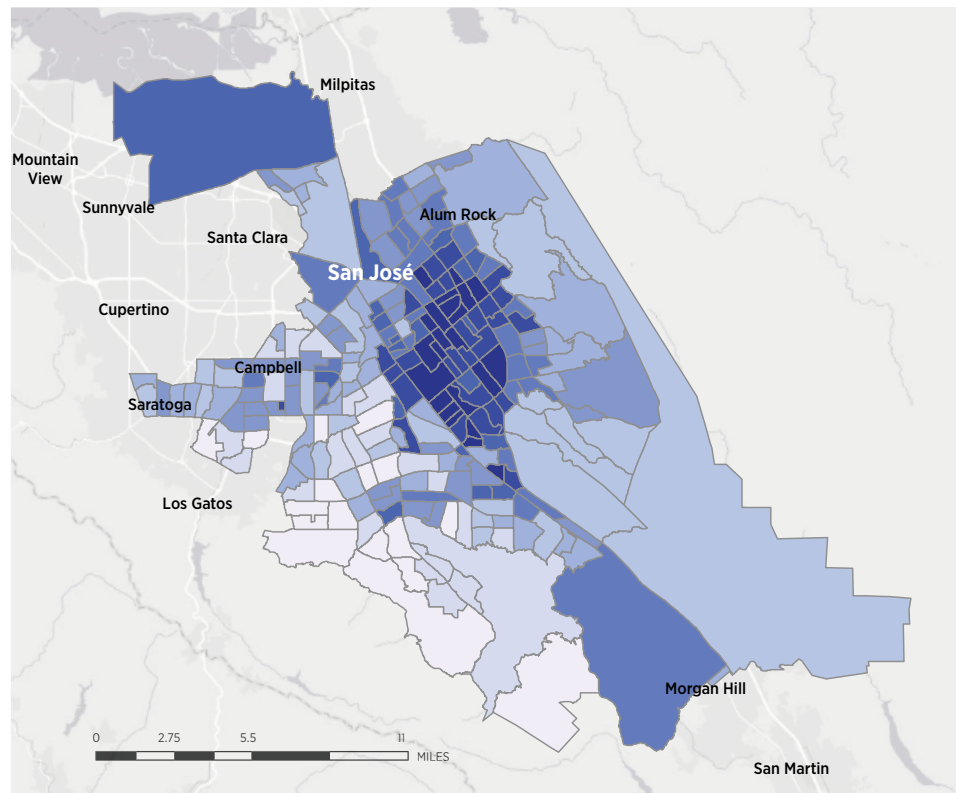
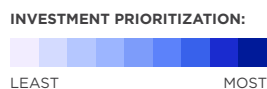


An analysis conducted for SPUR shows that although residents of large portions of San José have services and amenities nearby, historic patterns of community disinvestment and segregation continue to persist. Residents of Alum Rock in East San José have less proximity to services and amenities than do residents in West San José. Further data gathering, metrics, and tracking could inform the city’s approach to reforming or creating policies that will begin to counteract these patterns.

**EXHIBIT 6
Prioritization for Equity Investments Is Highest in Central and East San José Neighborhoods**

San Jose’s Office of Racial Equity has developed a framework for prioritizing investments from an equity standpoint using a simple scoring system. Neighborhoods that score the highest (dark purple), such as central and east San José, receive the highest levels of investment.

Source: City of San José Combined Equity Atlas Index based on ACS 2021 demographics at the census tract level for race (percent of people of color), income (median household income), language (percent of people of limited English proficiency), and education (percent of adults with less than a high school diploma or equivalent).



**EXHIBIT 7
Access to Groceries and
Childcare Tends to Be
Lower Than Access to Other
Services and Amenities in
San José**

The following maps draw on indicators for access and proximity (within one-half mile) to groceries, financial institutions, parks, community centers, childcare, and health facilities. They show that areas with high access to some services and amenities, say, financial institutions, can have low access to other services and amenities, in particular, groceries.

Source: Analysis by Ahoura Zandiatashbar

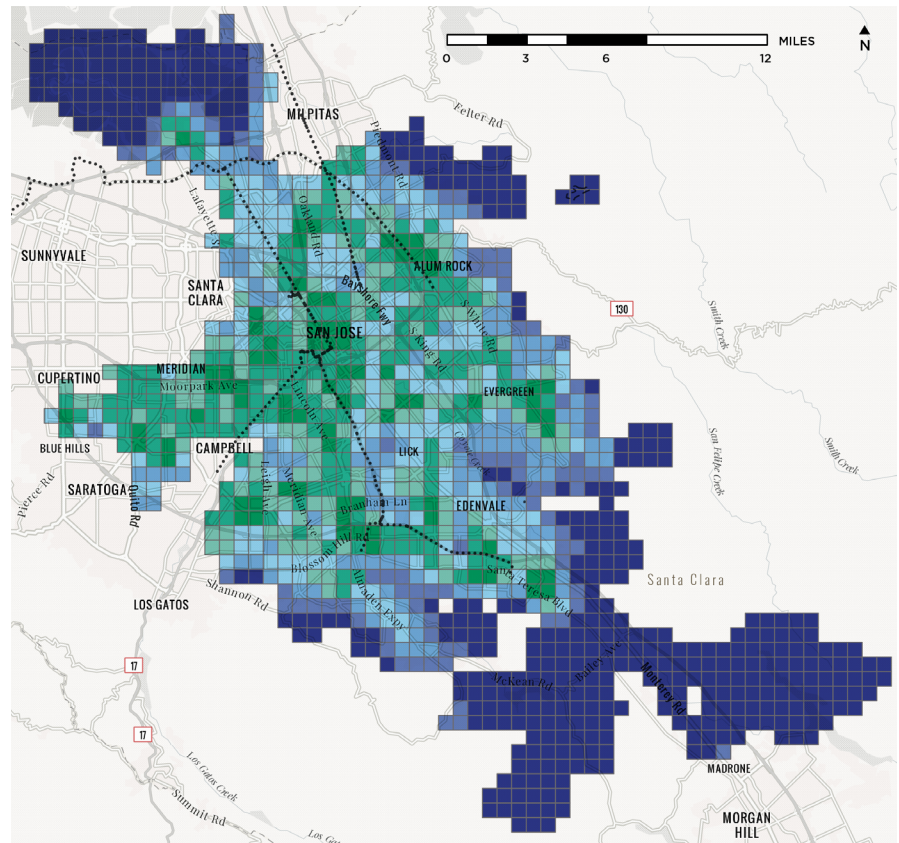
Data Sources: City of San José GIS, ESRI Data Axle, ESRI SafeGraph, ESRI FourSquare

ACCESSIBILITY:

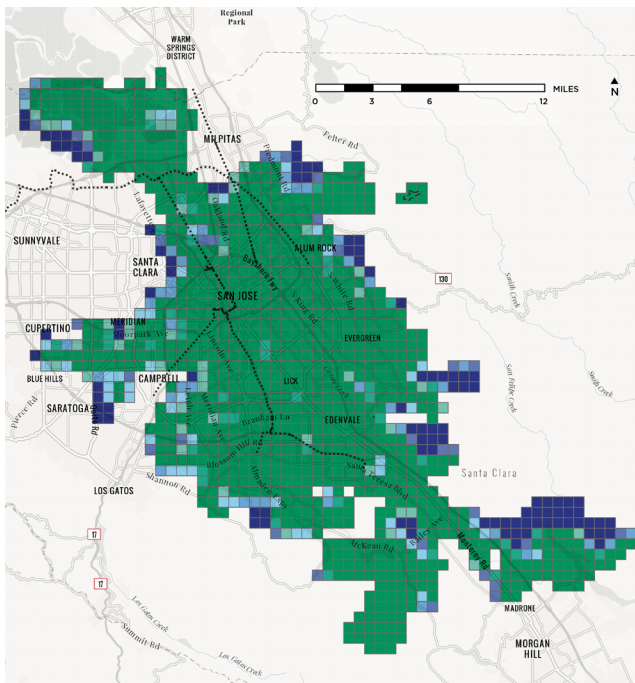


..... Light Rail (VTA+BART)

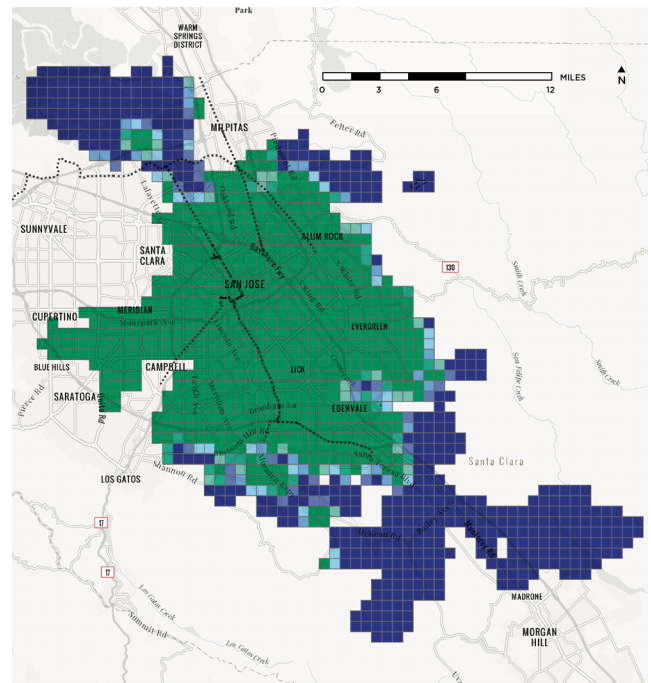
**Composite Proximity to
Six Services and Amenities**



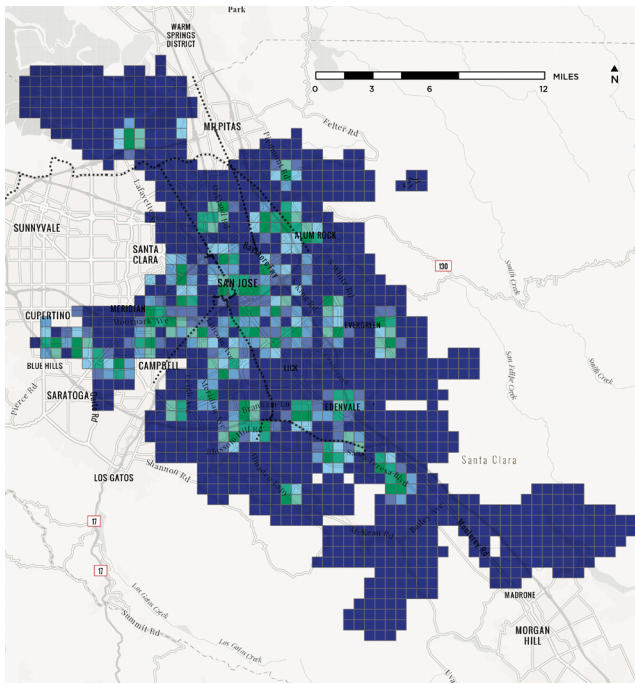
Parks, Open Space, and Trails



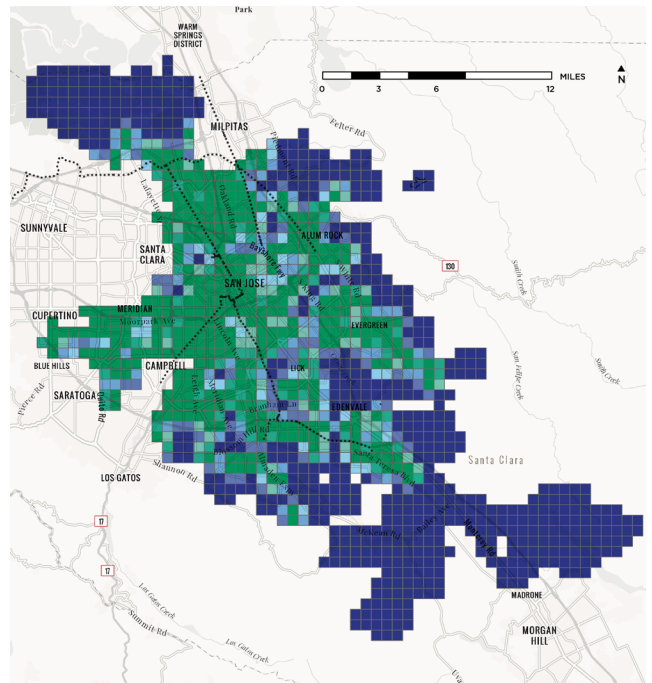
**Community Facilities (Libraries, Community Centers,
Recreation Centers, Senior Centers, Churches)**



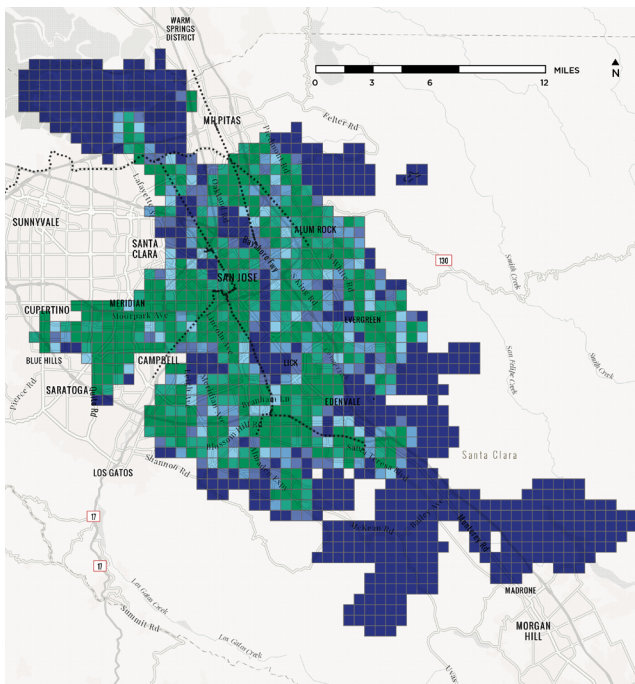
Fresh Food (Grocery Stores, Community Gardens)



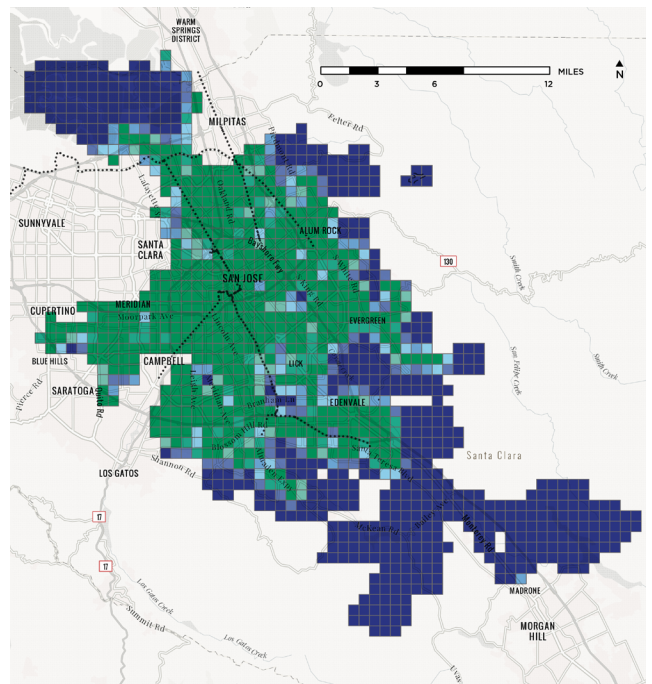
Financial Services and Banks



Childcare and Early Childhood Education Centers



Healthcare Facilities and Pharmacies



ACCESSIBILITY:



..... Light Rail (VTA+BART)

Strategies for Achieving More Complete, Connected, and Equitable Communities in San José

San José is experiencing tremendous growth and economic investment from both the private and public sectors. With increased commercial and residential development on the horizon, it's more important than ever that the city balance investment in physical infrastructure with investment in street networks and public spaces that bring people together, connect natural habitats, and provide health benefits. The 15-minute city/neighborhood offers a model for doing so.

The primary task is to create an environment that encourages the shift toward walkable and sustainable urban landscapes. Transitioning from car-oriented to walkable neighborhoods requires interventions, including concentrating public investments near transit hubs, offering time-sensitive permitting and fee structures to spur immediate investments, encouraging human-centered urban design, and establishing implementation support for critical projects such as the development of affordable housing. San José has already removed one of the largest barriers to that development: eliminating parking requirements citywide.

Here are six other strategies for realizing more complete, connected, and equitable communities in San José.

Double Down on Inclusive Urban Growth and Prosperity

San José has struggled with the challenge of unequal access to opportunity within its sprawling footprint. The Envision San José 2040 General Plan, approved in 2011, sought to connect housing and employment land uses, put existing infrastructure to better use, and encourage non-auto transportation. The city that considers itself the capital of Silicon Valley must focus on human-scaled design and infrastructure improvements that bring services and amenities to workers' doorsteps. In defining a vision for neighborhoods, city leaders and their community partners must emphasize sustainability, accessibility, and improved quality of life and set specific goals and objectives to guide the implementation of that vision.

Foster the Co-Creation of Cities

It's a common response for residents to think of development and city-building as things that an external "they" do to or for communities. And this often leads to feelings of cynicism, powerlessness,

and opposition — even to changes that could make communities better off and cities more prosperous and secure. SPUR often heard about the need to establish more dynamic and public community engagement practices in San José’s land use planning and about the desire to see catalytic changes that provide, among other things, more housing options and greater affordability.

Community engagement is critical within a 15-minute city framework. It makes use of local knowledge, fosters ownership and empowerment, facilitates tailored solutions, promotes social equity, and contributes to sustainable implementation. By involving communities in the co-creation of cities, policymakers can create more livable, inclusive, and vibrant urban environments that meet the diverse needs of their residents.

Catalyze and Incentivize 15-Minute Framework Land Use Policies, Demonstration Projects, and Public-Private Partnerships

Facilitating easy movement between different neighborhoods through high-quality walking/biking and public transit networks will mean continuing to pursue ambitious policies and investments to retrofit existing infrastructure and alter land use patterns.

The burden on individual neighborhoods to provide every desired amenity and service, especially specialized services, can be alleviated by strengthening links among neighboring communities. Therefore, San José should bolster land use policies that encourage the following:

- **Mixed-Use Zoning:** Mixed-use zoning allows for the integration of residential, commercial, and public spaces within neighborhoods. A mix of land uses increases residents’ access to essential services, amenities, and employment opportunities within a short distance from their homes. Mixed-use zoning also reduces the need for long-distance commuting, thereby enhancing the walkability and livability of neighborhoods.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** Transit-oriented development can facilitate the establishment of walkable communities around transit nodes. Transit-oriented development typically features a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational facilities, ensuring that residents have essential services and amenities nearby. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s recently adopted regional Transit-Oriented Communities policy will further push San José to create higher densities near existing and future stations.
- **Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure:** Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure creates a safe and interconnected network. This infrastructure includes well-designed sidewalks and bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly streets. When the built environment is conducive to walking and cycling, residents can easily reach their destinations while reducing congestion on roads.

→ **Adaptive Reuse and Revitalization:** Repurposing vacant or obsolete structures can foster the establishment of new amenities, such as community centers, health care facilities, or local markets, within neighborhoods.

San José should implement demonstration projects to showcase the benefits and feasibility of pedestrian-oriented infrastructure. The projects can temporarily transform selected areas into vibrant, walkable neighborhoods with improved access to services and amenities. Demonstration projects can build public support, encourage policy innovation, and provide valuable insights for realizing the 15-minute neighborhood concept citywide.

Collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential for successful land use policies and demonstration projects. Private developers, investors, and businesses can contribute expertise, resources, and innovation. Public-private partnerships can help accelerate mixed-use projects, transit-oriented development, and the provision of necessary infrastructure and services.

Encourage Diverse Uses of Buildings' Ground Floors

Putting businesses, cultural initiatives, and creative projects on the ground floors of buildings creates an environment of innovation that attracts talent, fosters a culture of creativity, and strengthens the city's dynamism.

Ground floors activated by diverse uses ensure that people spend more time at the street level, connected to life in the public realm. Especially desirable are uses that can extend ground-floor activity beyond typical working hours. These uses of ground floors can make neighborhoods feel more animated, inviting, and safer.

Multifunctional spaces don't just enliven the public realm. They enable communities to address equity concerns by ensuring that all residents can access a variety of amenities and services. When an environment caters to all residents regardless of socioeconomic status, urban disparities diminish.

Additionally, multifunctional spaces promote neighborhoods' capacity to adapt to changing needs and trends because these spaces can be repurposed more easily, without major investments.

Leverage City Data and Make It Publicly Accessible to Equitably Improve Services

In 2022, San José launched a program to use data analytics to improve delivery of city services.¹² The Equity through Data and Privacy Program investments, supported by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, will be used to make the city's data publicly available while safeguarding

¹² City of San José, "City of San José Launches New Equity through Data and Privacy Program," Press Release, June 29, 2022, <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/4290/4699>.

residents' digital privacy. The data will give policymakers, urban planners, and community members valuable insights into existing neighborhood conditions and will enable evidence-based decision-making, allowing for a more equitable distribution of services, resources, and infrastructure within neighborhoods.

Develop a City-Led Center for Urban Design

The pattern of development in San José has resulted in an abundance of parking lots, blank walls, and wide roads that will take strong public-private partnership and investment to change. SPUR often heard from developers and staff that San José has yet to establish a strong sense of place through its built environment. A center for urban design in City Hall could drive development that creates that sense of place and aligns with the city's vision and goals for urban villages. As a hub for local expertise, strategic planning, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and research, it could coordinate the efforts of municipal departments, agencies, and community organizations involved in the planning and development process, ensuring the implementation of design principles consistent with the 15-minute framework.

In 2021, the city approved separate citywide and downtown urban design guidelines that set minimum requirements and standardized review processes.¹³ The next step is to formalize structures of working with local designers, architects, developers, and the community to enable good urban design. The development of a center or division for urban design could be transformational if the center were empowered to centralize local expertise, coordination, strategic planning, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and research capabilities.

¹³ For more information on the citywide and downtown design guidelines, see: <https://www.sanioseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/planning-building-code-enforcement/planning-division/start-a-new-project-or-use/design-guidelines>.

EXHIBIT 8

City-Led Urban Design Studios, Centers, and Divisions Are Enabling Design Compatible with Vibrant and Walkable Communities

Many cities have leveraged networks and resources to create entities that spearhead inviting urban design.

Source: SPUR

	Urban Design Studio (2019) Los Angeles, California	Charlotte Urban Design Center Charlotte, North Carolina	Urban Design Division Miami, Florida	Urban Design Division Austin, Texas
Mission	Match remarkable private spaces in the public realm, elevate design expectations for private development, and promote Los Angeles as a center of design innovation and experimentation.	Advance the quality of Charlotte’s built environment, bring public awareness to the importance of urban design, and advocate for great public places in a livable city.	Develop and implement a visionary and cohesive plan for development of the city based on smart-growth principles such as pedestrian-friendliness, compact building design, mixed uses, and environmental sensibility.	Provide people-centered design solutions that impact the public and private realm and collaborate with other city departments on advocating for great public spaces while adding value to the development review process.
Initiatives	Pursue neighborhood-level and citywide design initiatives that promote healthy buildings, reimagine streets and squares, and facilitate wayfinding.	Consolidate urban design consultation, placemaking, and community engagement services under one roof.	Prepare master plans that include high standards for architecture, landscape, and urban design and that enhance the form and quality of the urban environment.	Provide services for planning, design, advocacy, activation, and review.

Transitioning from a car-oriented development model to a 15-minute neighborhood model requires a comprehensive, data-driven approach to planning that engages local stakeholders and public-private partnerships. Walkable communities, such as those envisioned in San José’s planned urban villages, challenge the conventional assumptions underlying car-centric development, instead embracing consumer preferences for easy access to a multitude of amenities and services and a variety of housing options at a range of price points. The 15-minute framework can allow the City of San José to pursue development that caters to those preferences, in the process achieving more livable, environmentally sustainable, and economically resilient urban neighborhoods.



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