



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 11/17/2020

ITEM NO: 7

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DATE: November 12, 2020  
TO: Mayor and Town Council  
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager  
SUBJECT: Provide Direction for the Land Use and Community Design Elements of the General Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Provide direction for the Land Use and Community Design Elements of the General Plan.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Town of Los Gatos is in the process of updating its long range, comprehensive General Plan that looks forward to the year 2040. The Town Council appointed a General Plan Update Advisory Committee (GPAC) consisting of two Council Members, three Planning Commissioners, members of the General Plan Committee, and other residents. The GPAC is an advisory body to the Planning Commission and Town Council. All GPAC agendas, minutes, staff reports and associated materials are available online: [www.losgatosca.gov/13/Agendas-Minutes](http://www.losgatosca.gov/13/Agendas-Minutes)

Key milestones are brought to the Town Council for consideration, direction, and approval. The last milestone was the Council's selection of the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework (Attachment 1) on April 7, 2020.

The GPAC is currently in the process of reviewing the initial drafts of the Land Use and Community Design Elements (available in the November 5, 2020 GPAC agenda packet: <https://www.losgatosca.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/11052020-1759>). These Elements contain most of the goals, policies, and implementation measures that directly implement the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework.

**PREPARED BY:** Jennifer Armer, AICP  
Senior Planner

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Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

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BACKGROUND (continued):

At its meeting on November 5, 2020, the GPAC expressed that the Land Use Element did not demonstrate the full vision of the selected Alternative. Among other items, individual GPAC members requested (i.e., no votes were taken on these items):

- Clear depiction of how the Land Use Diagram translated the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework through the appropriate distribution of the Land Use designations;
- Explanation of how the Missing Middle housing would be facilitated with the new density range for the Low Density Residential designation and conversely, an understanding of how housing targets could be achieved without further increasing the density in the Low Density Residential designation;
- The removal of obsolete language pertaining to the Los Gatos Boulevard Plan; and
- Clear policies directing the evolution of existing commercial tax generating uses (i.e., auto dealers on the Boulevard) to mixed use.

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Town Council to provide direction on the translation of the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework into the Land Use designation development parameters. This is intended to assist the GPAC in its review of the Land Use and Community Design Elements which is continued to its meeting on November 19. In addition, the GPAC requested that the Council clarify the extent of the revisions expected as part of this update of the General Plan.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed modifications to the existing Land Use and Community Design Elements are intended to address emergent trends and changes to State Laws and implement the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework. The primary focus of the selected Alternative was to plan for at least 2,000 new housing units, especially in mixed-use and medium/high density developments.

The total net new dwelling units listed in the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework, including accessory dwelling units, was 2,464. To accomplish this increase in potential new housing units, certain assumptions were made about maximum allowed densities (expressed as dwelling units per acre) which are laid out in Attachment 1, Table 1.

The development of the Land Use and Community Design Elements was based on the following direction from Town Council, Planning Commission, and GPAC:

- Target 2,464 net new dwelling units of the Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework (excluding pending/approved dwelling units);

DISCUSSION (continued):

- Facilitate the increase in allowable densities mostly within the areas identified as Opportunity Areas;
- Ensure that the increase in density in Opportunity Areas steps down when adjacent to lower density development;
- Keep the implementation as simple and clear as possible;
- Do not increase density in the hillside areas; and
- Delete or modify existing goals, policies, and action items (now implementation measures) as needed because of changes to State law, completion of items, or potential for consolidation with other items.

Based on this direction, the following modifications were made to the Land Use Designations and Development Standards Table (Attachment 5) and Land Use Diagram (Attachment 6):

- Maintain the allowable density in Hillside Residential designation;
- Increase density for Low Density Residential to the range listed as “Outside Opportunity Areas” because most Low Density Residential is located outside the Opportunity Areas and to accommodate Missing Middle housing (see Attachment 2);
- Increase density for Medium Density Residential to the range listed as “Inside Opportunity Areas” because much of the Medium Density Residential is located inside the Opportunity Areas;
- Increase density for High Density Residential to the range listed as “Inside Opportunity Areas” because much of the High Density Residential is located inside the Opportunity Areas;
- Increase density for Mixed-Use and Central Business District to the range listed as “Inside Opportunity Areas” because most of the Mixed-Use is located inside the Opportunity Areas;
- Divide the areas currently designated as Neighborhood Commercial into two designations. For those that retain the Neighborhood Commercial designation, increase density to the range listed as “Outside Opportunity Areas,” and for those that are now designated Community Commercial, increase density to the range listed as “Inside Opportunity Areas.” Though most of these areas are located inside the Opportunity Areas, some are more neighborhood focused, and some have a larger community service area; and
- Increase density for Central Business District to the range listed as “Inside Opportunity Areas” because most of the Central Business District is located inside the Opportunity Areas;

These changes result in 2,950 net new dwelling units (excluding pending/approved dwelling units) (see Attachment 3). In addition, the revised Community Design Element includes specific goals, policies, and implementation measures focused on the Opportunity Areas (now called Community Place Districts) to address compatibility and other issues.

DISCUSSION (continued):

To assist the Council and GPAC visualize the translation of the Alternative into the General Plan update, the consultant has prepared the following attachments:

- Attachment 2 describes how the Land Use Element is intended to meet the housing needs of Los Gatos, not just through mixed used developments, but also through Missing Middle housing. While the Land Use Element does not specifically address the affordability of housing, the incorporation of regulations that support Missing Middle housing provides for a wider variety of housing types that would be part of meeting the Town's Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA).

The illustration compares a one-acre block in the Low Density Residential designation under the current maximum density of five dwelling units per acre versus the proposed new density of 12 dwelling units per acre. It shows how the introduction of new housing types can occur within existing single-family neighborhoods.

- Attachment 3 includes a description of the housing capacity estimated under the refined Land Use designations for the 2040 General Plan.
- Attachment 4 includes a pair of illustrations that provide a visualization of the massing (though not specific design) of different maximum Floor Area Ratios (FARs) for commercial sites. They show the potential massing for development of the property on the corner of Los Gatos Boulevard and Los Gatos-Almaden Road under two different FARs, 1.5 and 2.5. If the ground floor of the buildings shown would be retail or office and all other floors are residential, then a density of 40 residential units per acre would result with an average unit size of approximately 1,200 square feet (sq. ft.) for a FAR of 1.5, and approximately 1,700 sq. ft. for an FAR of 2.5.

These numbers are rough gross floor area, and do not account for the need for hallways, lobbies, community spaces, mechanical rooms, stairwells, and elevators, which would result in further reduction of the average unit size. In addition, the unit sizes would be smaller if more of the floor area were used for more office or other non-residential uses.

The initial draft Community Design Element includes new objective design policies that are intended to allow the expected new growth in the commercial and mixed-use areas to develop in a way that will be compatible with the existing fabric of the Town. The Opportunity Areas in the selected Alternative have been replaced with Community Places Districts and are located where the greatest land use modifications are proposed (see Attachment 7).

If these Elements are approved with the draft designations, diagrams, goals, and policies, updates to the Zoning Code, design guidelines, and other documents will be necessary to

DISCUSSION (continued):

ensure consistency with the new General Plan. It is not possible to update all planning documents simultaneously. Implementation programs are proposed for this purpose.

CONCLUSION:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Town Council with an opportunity to provide direction to the GPAC, staff, and the consultant on the translation of the approved Alternative in the new Land Use Designation table and Diagram (Attachments 5 and 6).

The following questions may help guide the Council discussion:

- 1. Do the attachments adequately explain the translation of the selected Alternative into the Land Use Designations and their development parameters? If not, what additional information would be useful?*
- 2. Does the Council support the inclusion of Missing Middle housing in the Low Density Residential Designation?*
- 3. How much change should the GPAC make in the update of the General Plan?*

The initial direction from Town Council was that the existing General Plan is serving the community well, and this update provides the opportunity to refine the General Plan, address emerging trends and recent State laws, and consider new issues. However, the discussions of the GPAC have evolved over the last two years, so they have asked for some clarification from Town Council on how proactive and forward-looking these revisions should be, both in respect to the goals, policies, and implementation measures, as well as to the descriptive and introductory language of the document.

Staff looks forward to the Town Council's review, discussion, and direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

A final decision on the Land Use and Community Design Elements will be considered as part of the approval of the 2040 General Plan. An Environmental Impact Report will be prepared as part of the General Plan update process.

Attachments:

1. Preferred Land Use Alternative Framework
2. How to Meet the Housing Needs of Los Gatos
3. Housing Production Estimated Under 2040 General Plan

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SUBJECT: Land Use and Community Design Elements of the General Plan

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Attachments (continued):

4. FAR Comparison Graphics
5. Land Use Designations and Development Standards Table
6. Land Use Diagram
7. Land Use Diagrams for Community Place Districts