



## Frequently Asked Questions

Mountain View General Plan Update  
Fall 2009

### What is a General Plan?

The General Plan is the City of Mountain View's blueprint for the future; it is a guide for the City that includes all of the aspects essential to creating a thriving and well-balanced community. The State of California requires every city and county to have a general plan to guide its future growth. As a long-range policy document, the General Plan addresses the many elements of a well-functioning community: land use, circulation and mobility, housing, public safety, natural resource conservation, open space, and noise. In addition to these mandatory elements, the Mountain View General Plan Update will also include other topics of great importance to our city: health, sustainability, and urban design. The General Plan also establishes future growth and land use development goals and policies for the City.

### Why update the General Plan?

The General Plan was last updated in 1992, and much has changed in Mountain View over the last 17 years. The General Plan update will provide the City with goals and policies that more accurately reflect today's shared community values, potential change areas, and compliance with state law and local ordinances. The new General Plan will also serve as a guide for future land use decisions.

### Where are we in the General Plan Update process?

The City of Mountain View's General Plan Update began with a visioning process in Summer 2008, when community members engaged in discussions about a common vision for the future of the city and how to best direct and design growth and development to achieve the community vision. In Spring 2009, the City hosted a round of community meetings and targeted outreach forums in neighborhoods across the city to inform general land use directions. These ideas were then refined by the City and are now being presented for review at seven community workshops and additional targeted outreach meetings to confirm broad planning direction and gather specific feedback regarding land use, built form and character, and other key topics, such as village node prototypes and neighborhood-specific planning issues. This feedback will help shape the forthcoming General Plan land use alternatives.



The schedule for the fall round of community workshops follows.

Date	Local Planning Area	Location	Time
Monday, 8/31	Miramonte/Springer	City Hall Rotunda	6:30–9:00 pm
Tuesday, 9/1	North Bayshore	Google, 1300 Crittenden, Maxwell Conference Room	9:00–11:00 am
Thursday, 9/3	San Antonio/Rengstorff	Mountain View Senior Center	6:30–9:00 pm
Wednesday, 9/9	Moffett/Whisman	German School	6:30–9:00 pm
Thursday, 9/10	Central Neighborhoods	City Hall Rotunda	6:30–9:00 pm
Tuesday, 9/15	Grant Road/Sylvan	City Hall Rotunda	6:30–9:00 pm
Monday, 9/21	Monta Loma	Rengstorff Community Center	6:30–9:00 pm

### How will community feedback be utilized?

Feedback from the community workshops and key information from existing City policy documents and other initiatives are also informing development of a draft General Plan policy framework, scheduled for review by the General Plan Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) in October 2009. The framework will be composed of potential policies and actions organized into broad topic areas, such as circulation, land use and design, and open space, among others. This framework will serve as a foundational piece for the development of General Plan policies.

Feedback from the September community workshop activities will be used to help inform the development of draft General Plan land use alternatives. These alternatives will be analyzed in fall 2009 relative to technical factors (such as climate change, economics, fiscal impacts, qualitative transportation and infrastructure, and development program build-out). The draft land use alternatives and technical analysis will then be presented to the PAC in December 2009. Following PAC feedback, these alternatives will be refined and then presented at the citywide workshop in January 2010 for review and selection by the community of a preferred land use alternative. An additional early February 2010 PAC meeting will then be dedicated to finalizing a preferred land use alternative.

### How can I stay up-to-date on the General Plan Update process?

The neighborhood workshop summaries from the first round of seven community meetings were emailed out to the PAC and are also available at <http://www.mountainview2030.com/>. Notes from the additional targeted outreach meetings with youth, seniors, business owners, and Spanish, Russian and Chinese-speaking groups are also posted on the City's website.



## **What is the difference between General Plan policies and zoning regulations?**

As a long-range planning document, the General Plan outlines long-term visions, policies, and actions designed to shape future development within Mountain View. The Zoning Ordinance serves as an implementing tool for the General Plan by establishing detailed, parcel-specific development regulations and standards in each area of the city. Although the two are distinct documents, they are closely related and State law mandates that zoning regulations be consistent with the General Plan maps and policies.

The City of Mountain View will be updating its Zoning Ordinance following the completion of the new General Plan. Check the General Plan website at <http://www.mountainview2030.com/> for more information on the zoning update process.

## **What related planning efforts are currently underway in Mountain View?**

### *Grand Boulevard Initiative:*

This initiative is a collaboration of 19 cities, counties, local and regional agencies, and Caltrans to improve and revitalize the length of El Camino Real. The initiative brings together agencies that have a stake in improving the street, including the City of Mountain View. A set of guiding principles established through the Grand Boulevard Initiative has been adopted by the City.

Principles that relate to land use decisions along the corridor include:

- Encourage compact mixed-use development and high quality urban design and construction;
- Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and improve streetscapes, ensuring full access to and between public areas and private developments;
- Provide vibrant public spaces and gathering places;
- Preserve and accentuate unique and desirable community character and the existing quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods; and
- Pursue environmentally sustainable and economically viable development patterns.

For more information on the Grand Boulevard Initiative and upcoming opportunities to participate in the planning process, visit <http://www.grandboulevard.net/>.

### *Pedestrian Master Plan:*

The City and Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc. are in the initial stages of developing a Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP). Coordination with the General Plan update provides a rare opportunity to incorporate new far-reaching and effective policies and to create broad, enduring changes on land use, modes of transportation and circulation and sustainability. The goal is to create a PMP that will result in improved community health, reduced traffic congestion, higher transit usage, greater pedestrian safety, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, lower cost of living for residents and more vibrant neighborhoods. The PMP is anticipated to be completed in December 2010. For more information about the PMP, visit <http://www.mountainview.gov/pedestrian/>.



*Climate Action Plan:*

The City of Mountain View is currently developing a Climate Action Plan to measure, monitor, and mitigate the effects of climate change in the city. The plan will present a series of goals, policies, and actions to address everything from emissions to waste disposal to climate-supportive land uses. The Climate Action Plan will be closely coordinated with the new General Plan to ensure that all policies are consistent. Visit the Mountain View website at <http://www.mountainview.gov/> for more information on climate planning in the city.

*Mountain View General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report (EIR):*

The environmental review of the new General Plan will begin in early 2010 after the preferred land use alternative has been selected and development of the individual General Plan elements has begun. The EIR process will assess any environmental effects that may be associated with implementation of the new General Plan and zoning, and will identify mitigations or other changes that will address these concerns. Visit the General Plan website at <http://www.mountainview2030.com/> for updated information on the EIR process, including opportunities to comment on the draft EIR, as the General Plan update progresses.



## PLANNING GLOSSARY

**Bicycle Amenities:** Amenities intended to make a street more pleasant to bicycle along such as bicycle racks, bicycle lanes, “sharrows,” or street markings that remind drivers that bicycles will be sharing the lane, and other features.

**Building Articulation:** How individual parts of the building—the materials, patterns, textures, colors, façade, and more—fit into the entire structure, and into the physical environment that surrounds it. Building articulation, particularly on the ground floor, can contribute to the scale and feel of a street and any adjacent public spaces.

**Building Scale:** The size, height, bulk, and intensity of a building in relation to its surroundings.

**Build-to line:** See *setback (planning)*.

**Density:** A measurement of the number of people or housing units per gross acre. Typically expressed as *dwelling units (du) per acre*.

**Development:** The new construction of homes, stores, and office buildings as well as roads and utilities. Redevelopment typically refers to the development of land with existing uses.

**Environmental Impact Report (EIR):** A detailed review of a proposed project that analyzes significant effects on the environment, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures for the project.

**General Plan Element:** “Chapters” of the General Plan that address specific topics, including Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Noise, Safety, Conservation, Open Space, Air Quality, Hazardous Materials, Energy, etc.

**Infill Development:** The construction of new facilities such as housing and/or commercial centers within existing urban or suburban areas. Infill development may range from development on vacant lots to reuse of underutilized sites, such as older strip malls.

**Land Use:** A description of how land is occupied or used. This can include, but is not limited to, commercial, residential, industrial, recreational, agricultural or open space uses.

**Massing:** The relationship between a building’s components to each other and to the surroundings.

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC):** MTC oversees regional transportation planning and funding for the nine-county Bay Area, which includes the City of Mountain View and the County of Santa Clara. MTC produces an updated Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Bay Area every three to four years.



**Mixed Use:** Mixed use refers to the practice of containing more than one type of use in a building or set of buildings. This can mean some combination of residential, commercial, industrial, office, institutional, or other uses. Mixed use developments often feature commercial businesses on the ground floor and residential units above.

**Multimodal Street:** A street designed to provide multiple transportation options, including walking, bicycling, driving, and transit.

**Pedestrian Amenities:** Amenities intended to make a street more pleasant to walk along such as street lights, pedestrian lighting, street signs, benches, trash cans, and planters.

**Pedestrian (or Human) Scale:** Urban design—including building size, use, and characteristics—that allows pedestrians to feel comfortable walking and interacting with the street and built environment.

**Regional Transportation Plan (RTP):** The RTP is a long-range plan prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) that plans for transportation improvements in the nine-county region based on projections for growth in population, housing and jobs. The RTP is updated every three to four years and establishes funding priorities for transportation-related projects.

**Right-of-Way:** Land that is used for streets, sidewalks, alleys, transit lines, freeways, and public utilities.

**Setback (*planning*):** Also called *build-to line*. The minimum required distance that a building must be “set-back” from the property line, adjacent buildings, or right-of-way such as a street, easement, or other edge. Setback requirements or “build-to” lines, which dictate how close to the lot line a building must be, are specified in zoning ordinances to enhance spatial definition of a street.

**Setback (*architecture*):** Also called *step-back*. The degree to which a building’s upper floors are stepped back from the build-to line for the ground floor. Buildings may have setbacks on upper floors in order to avoid casting long shadows and allow more light to reach the street and other adjacent buildings or uses. Architectural setbacks also prevent buildings from forming effective walls along streets from the pedestrian perspective.

**Specific Plan or Comprehensive Plan:** A detailed policy plan that identifies allowable land uses and infrastructure needs for a specific geographic area. Zoning, subdivision, and public works decisions must be in compliance with specific plans. Specific Plans are generally used to master plan new growth areas.

**Step-back:** See *setback (architecture)*.



**Street Definition:** The manner in which buildings and public and private spaces are arranged along a street and the “edge” (or lack thereof) that this arrangement creates. Strong street definition establishes clear distinctions between the public and private realms and forms active edges between buildings and the adjacent sidewalks or streets.

**Streetscape:** Elements that help to define the street appearance and function, including bicycle and pedestrian amenities, street trees, landscaping, sidewalks, pavement treatments, public art, and other features.

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** A residential or commercial area designed to maximize access to public transit that often incorporates features to encourage transit ridership. A TOD neighborhood typically has a center with a transit station, surrounded by compact and mixed use development, with progressively lower-density development spreading outwards from the center. TODs generally are located within one-quarter to one-half mile of a transit stop. TODs offer mix of residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses within comfortable walking distance, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, or foot, as well as by car.

**Transit Supportive Uses:** Land uses such as homes, restaurants, stores and entertainment options that can help create a “destination” and are configured in a manner that encourages transit ridership. An example is being able to go out to dinner and to a movie or the theater, all within walking distance or a short transit ride of each other. Non-transit supportive uses would include businesses that require the use of a vehicle, such as auto dealers or self-storage venues.

**Universal Design:** Standards that ensure that a street or other public place is designed to accommodate all users safely, efficiently, and comfortably. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) establishes minimum requirements for universal design, but designing beyond these requirements can often benefit not only those individuals with disabilities, but all users of a space.

**Urban Design:** The character and quality of the built environment, especially as they relate to humans who will use the space.

**Zoning:** A classification system of permitted and prohibited land uses, densities, and intensities designed to regulate uses and development, promote land use compatibility, and provide more detail than the General Plan land use designations. Zoning is adopted by ordinance and carries the weight of local law. It is the primary instrument for General Plan implementation, and a new zoning code for Mountain View will be developed once the General Plan Update is complete.