

## VI-1. LAND USE

*The key to a livable community is to create accessible, mixed-use neighborhoods and village centers where people choose to walk and cycle, rather than drive, to meet their daily needs, socialize, hold civic events and enjoy community life.*

Innovative land use and urban design aim to create a network of activity centers with a "Main Street" that is celebrated as a vibrant, memorable and identifiable public place.

As shown in Figure 3, Santa Cruz has a natural hierarchy of village centers: a vibrant downtown followed by mixed-use employment villages (on the Westside/Mission Street, Eastside/Ocean Avenue and Harvey West/River Street), UCSC and subsequently by smaller neighborhood activity centers. The following land use initiatives will support making Santa Cruz's activity centers walkable, transit-oriented places.

- Create vibrant compact, mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented villages. Clustering higher densities of housing, retail and employment within a five to ten minute walk provides the greatest potential to shift SOV trips to walking, biking, carpooling and transit.
- Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements to support transit ridership. By their nature, nearly all transit trips are multi-modal. Providing adequate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements will help support the choice of taking transit. Pedestrian improvements in areas adjoining transit nodes should have higher priority for implementation than most other pedestrian projects.

Increase the diversity of higher density housing types, including affordable housing located near transit. A community should contain a diversity of housing types to enable citizens from a wide range of economic levels and age groups to live within the city boundaries. Higher density housing supports more local-serving retail in a village center, which enhances community livability. Those housing options within Santa Cruz can shift some "travel-in" trips to "local city" trips, offering greater potential for people to choose an alternate travel mode.

- **Manage and share parking to increase land use efficiency and walkability of village centers.** Implement parking management and shared parking strategies so that the total on and off-street parking supply is utilized to maximum efficiency throughout the day. (See Strategic Initiative 8.)
- **Update the City zoning ordinance:** The Santa Cruz zoning ordinance needs updating to create a more village-oriented urban form. Even though the last General Plan Update included "smart growth" land use concepts, the General Plan does not ensure mixed-use, walkable site planning. For example, since last General Plan update, several projects have been built that are ideal uses for a village center, yet they have an auto-oriented site plan. Unfortunately these developments, such as Walgreen's, Longs Drugs and Safeway, do not foster a walkable environment with their auto-oriented site plans.



## CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN

The land use initiatives are consistent with many goals and policies in the General Plan.

For example Goal L5 states: *Develop compatible relationships between land use and circulation patterns and encourage land use patterns that encourage an efficient transportation system and discourage urban sprawl and excessive dependence on the automobile.*

Similarly, Vision 6.2 of the MTS states: *The City will encourage a mix of uses in neighborhoods so that residents may work, shop and play close to home,* and Goal 6.8 directs the City to: *Construct housing next to transit and other necessary amenities.*

The Circulation Element of the General Plan also details policies and programs that relate to land use. The first circulation goal identifies the role of land use for reducing auto trips and offering travel choice:

*Develop a comprehensive, multi-modal circulation planning program that takes as its highest priority reduction of automobile trips by the creation of viable alternative transportation modes, effective transportation systems management programs, and integration of land use and circulation planning.*

As a mostly "built out" City with little available vacant land for development, the General Plan Land Use Element also calls for residential intensification in the most urban areas of the city: the downtown and along major transportation corridors. This pattern of development serves transit use by concentrating higher densities close to public transit routes and within easy walking distance of employment centers, shopping, and other amenities.

The Land Use Element addresses the relationship between the placement of commercial uses and transportation choices. It contains policies calling for the protection of existing neighborhood markets and commercial uses to reduce the need for automobile travel and encourage walking or biking. Along commercial corridors it encourages the development of mixed-use commercial centers, commercial nodes, and high density residential. And in industrial areas it promotes mixed uses (including support services such as child care and eateries), transit use, and trip reduction measures.

The Community Design Element discusses the concept of maintaining a compact city surrounded by open space, and requiring development at a human/pedestrian scale. The Economic Development Element contains policies regarding the concentration of retail uses to efficiently use available land and to minimize automobile trips. It also promotes development of commercial nodes to encourage mixed commercial and residential uses proximate to transit and safe pedestrian and bicycle routes.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE MTS WITH THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

The City will be initiating a comprehensive update of its General Plan in 2003. The MTS provides a framework for revisions to the goals, policies, and programs primarily in the Circulation Element, and other elements of the Plan. The update will be informed by the recommendations of the Study, which provides an implementation framework for achieving the City's transportation objectives. While the General Plan currently addresses many of the issues raised in the MTS, the Study provides clear direction on implementation measures and priorities that are critical for the realization of the vision of both documents.

Through the General Plan update, the recommendations of the MTS would be further evaluated and assessed in terms of specific locations, programs, and budget implications. Identified capital improvement projects would be incorporated into the updated Circulation element as implementation programs. Other policy recommendations of the MTS would be translated into General Plan policies and programs.

For example, the MTS identifies "Activity Areas" for pedestrian and bicycle improvements and implementation of livable streets concepts. As part of the update process these concepts could be expanded and applied to specific locations with programs incorporated into the General Plan. In addition, the Livable Streets and Neighborhood principles would be used to initiate planning based on the priorities and direction established in the MTS.