

Union City General Plan Update

All-Hands Kick-off Meeting Summary

July 7, 2014

On July 7, 2014, the City held an All-Hands Kick-off Meeting with the City Council, Planning Commission, and General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) to provide a common understanding of the need for and purpose of the General Plan Update, the key steps in the Update process, the outreach program, legislative mandates, and other important issues affecting this important project. During the meeting, Council members, Commissioners, GPAC members, and members of the public discussed their perspectives on Union City's issues, assets, and opportunities for the Update process and resulting General Plan. The following summarizes key themes of the discussion:

Issues

Economic Development

- The General Plan Update needs to evaluate how land use impacts economic development and the long-term financial stability of City revenues.
- What are the financial levers (impacts) of different land uses?
- How do we get high tech businesses to Union City? Venture capital is coming to the region, but Union City doesn't have office space to capture this resource. The city needs more office space to attract businesses, venture capital, jobs.
- What are the impacts of having high-tech businesses in Union City? Higher property values? Higher housing costs?
- Union City should prepare for tech opportunities.
- Union City should become a destination city. The city needs venue space and places for big events (e.g., concerts, festivals).
- The quality of schools is directly linked to economic development - Investors ask about school API scores

Land Use

- There is a concern about future commercial, industrial/warehouse, and residential development and whether the City should emphasize one over the other. Union City has traditionally been a warehousing city and what has worked 30-40 years ago may not work today. Should we change the zoning to move away from warehouse uses? We need a better understanding of what we want to be and how to get there.
- The General Plan Update needs to be clear on key land use decisions. What should the City take into consideration when considering future land uses? What does the City need to communicate to residents about these land use choices?

- Union City is in a period of transition. The city is landlocked, has significant transportation issues (limited transportation and limited roadways/arterials), and is expected to continue to grow. Should the city grow vertically? The General Plan needs to provide guidance for the city's transition.
- We need to have more open space for our children.
- The General Plan needs to identify public places for people to gather.
- What are we going to do with Turk Island (i.e. closed landfill)? Is it an infill opportunity?
- There is no place to shop that is pedestrian-friendly.

Housing

- Housing costs are rising due to lack of housing inventory.
- Union City has some very old homes (50-100 years old). The City should make it easier to rehabilitate these homes and incorporate energy efficiency features. Can the General Plan reduce barriers to rehabilitating older homes?

Transportation and Mobility

- Union City is in a transitional period. We have significant transportation issues. We are going to have to deal with more people in a smaller community. How can the General Plan address these transitions? The City needs alternative options to deal with transportation issues and higher demand.
- The General Plan needs to address the linkage between the BART and Capitol Corridor stations and other transit.
- The City needs to capitalize on the expansion of BART to San Jose.
- Union City needs places that are accessible to all people; places that are pedestrian-friendly and engaging.
- Union City should be open to new and experimental approaches (e.g., driverless cars) to become a driving force for innovation in the region.
- Public transit (i.e. buses) for kids leaving school is often overcrowded and late. Are we going to change the bus schedules to fix the overcrowding issue?
- Is the General Plan going to address the potential need for new Capitol Corridor stations?
- The City needs the East-West Connector to better link the Station District to the freeway.

Demographics

- Union City's population is getting older. What kind of service can/should the City provide for an aging community? What will be the quality of life for our aging population?
- There is potential for an expansion of the youth population. What are the priorities of Union City's young people?
- The youth need to be involved with the General Plan Update.
- School-aged children are declining in population.

Schools and Education

- Schools are key to Union City moving forward.
- The City needs to facilitate better communication and coordination with the School District.

Assets

- City staff really cares about the community and works hard to make Union City a better place. The programs the City offers are an asset.
- The City's *Citizens Academy* is a great program that should be continued.
- Farmers Market. This is something the city can build on and use to promote walkability and organic foods.
- Location. Union City is centrally located in the Bay Area. It is also central to three major colleges/universities and labs.
- Open Space/Hills. Union City has preserved its open space resources. How will the hills be used in the future?
- Union City is a progressive city when it comes to sustainability (e.g. Climate Action Plan).
- Union City is a culturally and ethnically diverse community. The Update provides an opportunity to build upon the city's diversity in its policy choices.
- The current General Plan's focus on community health.

Opportunities:

- BART Expansion. The expansion of BART to the South Bay provides an opportunity to accommodate people who want to live in Union City and capitalize on new economic development opportunities.
- Underutilized Warehouse Areas. Union City could be home to the next generation of start-up businesses that can use empty warehouses.
- Opportunistic Businesses. Businesses in Union City care less about zoning regulations and will do business where they want to live and where markets exist.