



## **SAN LUIS OBISPO ZONING REGULATIONS UPDATE**

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### **stakeholder interview summary**

March 20, 2017



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## stakeholder interview summary

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## stakeholder interview report

### **Introduction and Background**

THE CITY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO is currently engaged in updating the Zoning Regulations (Title 17 of the Municipal Code). The focus of the Zoning Regulations update is to implement policies and programs in the 2014 Land Use and Circulation Elements (LUCE), which is one of eight elements of the San Luis Obispo General Plan. The LUCE update was undertaken to respond to changed and evolving conditions in the community, to incorporate policies and programs that address sustainability and climate change, and to address current State laws. Importantly, the program involved intensive community engagement to reaffirm the values, vision, and goals for the physical development of the city.

Updating zoning and subdivision standards is a critical implementation action required by the General Plan and represents the translation of LUCE goals and visions into specific regulations and standards. The Zoning Regulations establish the detailed rules for how properties can be used and developed. The Zoning Regulations also set forth application review processes and define the overall administration of zoning in San Luis Obispo.

Over a two-week period in late February and early March of 2017, City staff interviewed more than 50 residents and community stakeholders to help inform the Zoning Regulations update process, and to identify land use and development needs, opportunities, and issues. Interviews were conducted with residents, neighborhood groups, architects, developers, real estate brokers, technology groups, environmental groups, and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce—people who regularly use the Zoning Regulations or have a specific interest in zoning to implement the General Plan. The interviewees were asked a series of questions regarding overarching concerns, as well as specific topics. Participants were also given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them not otherwise addressed in response to specific questions.

## Summary of Participant Comments

Comments and key themes mentioned during the interviews are presented in this report. Due to the breadth of comments received, comments may contradict each other, reflecting interviewees' differences of opinion. Where statements indicate direction to or considerations for City staff, those statements reflect the verbatim comments of one or more participants. Throughout this summary, "word clouds" are included from a March 2, 2017 workshop with the Chamber of Commerce. The word clouds—prepared by a participant attending the Chamber of Commerce meeting—graphically represent the most commonly spoken words during the meeting. Common themes expressed in the word clouds also emerged during the group and individual interviews, as shown in the summary notes presented in this report.

### GENERAL COMMENTS

Participants agreed that the Zoning Regulations are most useful when they provide clarity about use limitations, development standards, and entitlement processes, and when the regulations simply and succinctly cover these topics. Many people stated that the Zoning Regulations should be user friendly and include illustrations.

#### Organization and Clarity

- Currently the code has too much ambiguity, particularly for nonresidential uses. This creates difficulties for staff interpretation and results in inconsistent responses.
- Resolve inconsistencies and "hidden surprises" through reorganization of the Zoning Regulations. An example given: the fact that limitations on business hours are provided within the standards for mixed-use projects.
- Look at the overall organization and find ways to improve navigation through the document.

What do you want city staff to know as we begin the update to the regulations?

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## stakeholder interview report

- In general, providing more flexibility—with performance standards that identify the appropriate circumstances to modify a requirement—is the best practice for zoning. It is always better to include elements in a project that can be allowed through regulations rather than looking at the request as a variance or exception.
- Clarify code intent language. “Must” should not be used; if a regulation is required, use “shall.”
- On the co-mingling of requirements versus guidelines, users need to know the “shalls” first and be able to deal with that first. Then move on to the “shoulds.” Readers can get bogged down with the “should,” paying focused attention where it is not warranted.<sup>1</sup>
- Update the purpose and interpretation statements to apply a direction of duty to staff and decision makers.

### **Regulating Form and Design**

- A form-based code could help clarify the review processes. Each neighborhood could have its own code.
- The Downtown Concept Plan and Community Design Guidelines should be codified.
- Add an illustrated urban design section to the Zoning Regulations to address site planning and how the visual character or setting should be incorporated into new development projects, rather than using a form-based code.

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<sup>1</sup> As a consideration moving forward, the consultant team recommends not using “should” at all in the Zoning Regulations given their regulatory nature. Any provision involving subjective judgement is more appropriate in design guidelines.

## **Code Update and Technology**

- Provide ready access to zoning information through the effective use of current technologies. As an example, an electronic version of the Zoning Regulations can incorporate hyperlinks from Table 9 (use table) directly to corresponding definitions, or to related notes, to ease navigation and information discovery. It would be especially helpful to offer links to related “property-centric” information, such as special development fees applicable to particular areas (e.g., Margarita Area Specific Plan fees).
- A portal to the website with parcel/owner information/permit history would be great.
- The Zoning Regulations are very text heavy. Consider using more graphics and creating an interactive tool that both residents and developers can use without having to read through all the text. Specifically, consider a tool that allows a user to highlight a certain area and then see what uses are allowed in that area. This can also be used by residents who are interested in knowing what uses are allowed in their neighborhoods and adjacent commercial districts.

## **Update Process**

Include a summary of the major changes proposed to the code to help users get familiar with the new document.

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### Opportunity Areas

Participants discussed various areas around town that could be considered “opportunity areas.” (These comments may not necessarily reflect current land use designations and intensities allowed by the LUCE.)

- South Broad Street (between Orcutt and Santa Barbara) – maximize residential and commercial
- Downtown
- Mid and South Higuera
- Foothill
- Monterey Street from Santa Rosa to California
- FoCho (Foothill Chorro) district (could increase density here to five- to six-story buildings)
- Places between Higuera and Marsh: perfect area for workforce housing
- “Ring” around Downtown: three- to four-story residential and mixed use
- Orcutt Area Specific Plan: three- to five-story residential
- Margarita-Prado Road Specific Plan: residential and mixed use
- Increase density along transit corridors
- Need for more housing near MindBody so employees can bike to work

Is there a **specific area** of the city that you think would benefit from relaxed land use regulations?



## **LAND USE REGULATIONS**

Participants discussed the current land use regulations and pointed out a need to simplify land use categories and definitions to streamline review processes and provide consistency.

### **General Land Use Comments**

- Consider how uses are changing and will continue to change (working from home, shared work spaces, retail market shifts).
- Consider a process similar to the administrative review process: allow staff more leeway to place tenants in locations that make good planning sense and offer positive benefits to the community as a whole.
- Encourage high-density mixed-use housing with less dependence on vehicles. Encourage more public transportation and bike and pedestrian access. This use would be ideal to encourage neighborhood commercial type uses.
- Protect prime agricultural land.
- Encourage neighborhood preservation and stabilization of the renter/owner ratio.
- Consider operational characteristics and performance standards of various uses and activities.

### **Commercial and Office Uses**

- The code has too many commercial zones: 11 zones with seven different types of office uses. This could maybe be condensed to three zones and one office use.
- Offices do not need to be in just one centralized location; allow professional offices to be dispersed.
- Office uses generally should not require an Administrative Permit because the requirement deters new users. The uses and impacts are generally understood and therefore can be simplified.
- Some office uses should be allowed in retail zones, but there is also a concern to preserve retail zones for retail uses. Perhaps the code could define a certain maximum percentage (20 percent +/-) of a retail zone that could be office.

## stakeholder interview report

- Increase the uses allowed in commercial zones, adding flexibility so that empty spaces can be occupied.
- Consider how uses are regulated in the CS (Commercial Service), CT (Tourist Commercial), and M (Manufacturing) zones; it seems arbitrary which uses are permitted where.

### **Mixed Use**

Participants had differing opinions on whether or not a specific percentage of commercial square footage should be required in mixed-use projects. Some felt a requirement should be prescribed, requiring a specific percentage of ground-floor commercial, while others appreciated the flexibility and feel it is necessary to support project development.

- Mixed use should identify the intent of presence on street.
- Consider requiring a certain percent of commercial to qualify for parking reductions.
- Consider allowing commercial component on an adjacent parcel (horizontal mixed use).
- Specific use restrictions for mixed-use projects have not proven to be warranted. Compatibility of tenant mixes should be the responsibility of the property owner through functional management and logical tenant placement, not through land use restrictions.
- Describe the factors that constitute use “compatibility.”
- Add performance standards for mixed-use projects that include residential, such as a requirement to disclose conditions of mixture of uses (noise, hours of operation, solid waste collection, etc.)
- The live/work and work/live section is confusing and complicated. The format doesn’t really seem to work in San Luis Obispo. Such uses are more appropriately described as a home office. Also, these types of development are difficult to finance.

### **Residential**

Interviewees indicated broad support for increasing local housing supply, but the mechanisms to deliver this housing differed.

- Consistent with new State Law (SB 1069), make it easier for people to

create units while still preserving neighborhood character.

- The regulations should include clearer language about how a guesthouse is not an accessory dwelling unit (also referred to as a secondary unit or granny flat).
- The State's exceptions for affordable housing are too generous.
- Encourage more affordable and workforce family housing.
- Explore micro units for students and young professionals in the areas of Foothill/Chorro or Downtown, with ground-floor amenities, shared utilities, and shuttles to destinations.
- There is concern about the rental/owner imbalance. Consider different zoning regulations around Cal Poly.
- Develop regulations to limit "offices" that are really bedrooms.

#### **Other Specific Uses**

- Consider small hotel operations as a good way to repurpose old buildings. Perhaps they can be their own use type.
- Separately define and regulate imaging-type medical service facilities due to the configuration and related parking demands (i.e., much of the floor area is occupied by large equipment).
- Limit the number of alcohol outlets concentrated in one location, particularly Downtown. Consider a requirement for a finding of public convenience or necessity. This is what the City of Montebello does.
- One solution to some of the alcohol issues in Downtown is to require that bars serve a minimum amount of food until they close.
- Allow for real neighborhood commercial uses to reduce vehicle trips.
- We need more definition regarding independent living, assisted living, and convalescence. Simplify this or broaden it. If we want people to age in place, we should consider some changes.
- Consider allowing clusters of food trucks. Is there a way to have a time-constrained beer license? (e.g., Bend, Oregon)
- Address trends encouraging homestays and unstaffed lodging in boutique hotels.

#### **Zones**

- On Sacramento Drive, the east side of the street is zoned M (Manufacturing) and the west side is zoned CS (Service Commercial).

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Lots of uses are allowed in both zones, and this area should be seen as a district, not divided.

- Consider the Manufacturing zone: it is important that some industrial areas get preserved and are available for start-ups and innovation. We have Cal Poly grads with amazing ideas and creativity, and they need affordable places to do their work.
- The S (Special Consideration) overlay zone confuses people and should be eliminated.
- Apply the S overlay on wildlife corridors and also over C-T (Tourist Commercial) and C-D (Downtown Commercial) zones contiguous to residential neighborhoods, specifically Dana Street and Lincoln Street.
- Make sure the boundaries of Downtown are clear.

### DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

All groups and individuals interviewed raised issues or opportunities about the current development standards, design guidelines, and/or zoning.

- San Luis Obispo is experiencing unsustainable population growth, especially growth in new jobs, which is outpacing the housing supply.

Are there any standards in the zoning regulation that could be **changed** to help the city achieve its housing goals (parking, density, height, etc.)?

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**Clarity** Allow Smaller Units  
 Prioritize Areas Ready for High Density  
**Small Lot Requirements For Smaller Lots**  
 Simplify To Get To '75 **Flexible Parking**  
 Keep Review Boards Within Scope  
**Stop Caring If People Are Making Money If We Get What We Want**  
**Form Based Codes** **Flexibility** Expedited Timing By Right  
**Solutions for More Housing**

- Create incentive-based opportunities in pre-existing zoning categories. We need clear incentives for density, parking variances, and land use concessions.
- Parking, FAR (floor area ratio), and landscape requirements have not been brought up to speed to accommodate new uses.
- Develop clear definitions, including neighborhood, concept, and scale.
- Curb sprawl and avoid cookie-cutter tract houses like Los Angeles and little “Lego” houses.
- High tech/modern, rigid buildings do not seem to be in keeping with the mission-type architecture that is predominant.
- Consider implementing General Plan policies LUE 4.9 (Coordination of Late Night Environment), LUE 9.10 (Urban Forest), and LUE 2.14 (Neighborhood Wellness Action Plans) as part of the Zoning Regulations update.

## **Sustainability**

Many participants noted the importance of sustainability in zoning.

- Greater emphasis should be placed on climate change: carbon sequestration, rooftop skylights, light colors, and solar panel arrays.
- Incorporate sustainability standards, particularly as applied to site design (tree preservation) and optimal solar orientation.
- Consider modification to Ordinance 1544 to encourage tree preservation.
- Increase incentives for applicants that support the Climate Action Plan and multimodal goals and policies.
- Any new parking should be constructed on permeable paving.
- Increase specifications in the code for more bike and pedestrian requirements with development.

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### Density

- Allow smaller lots in both nonresidential and residential zones that are suitable for mixed use, live-work, work-live, or some form of commercial-residential.
- The continuing trend of splitting lots in R-1 (Low-density Residential) neighborhoods is turning these neighborhoods into R-2 (Medium-density Residential) zones.
- The Downtown maximum density should be increased to actually provide housing there (80 units/acre).
- The C-C (Community Commercial) density is too high at 36 units/acre.
- Increase density for smaller units with shared common spaces and amenities
- Consider multifamily density by bedroom size or tenure.
- Consider rounding up density to the nearest whole number to provide flexibility.
- Utilize FAR to limit stories in neighborhoods based on averages.
- Explore a percent change in intensity of use of infill to ensure compatibility.
- Investigate how the required FARs affect projects. Consider FAR instead of density.

### Height

Building height was an issue discussed extensively during the interviews. Participants were equally divided on whether taller buildings should be allowed or existing scale should be maintained, particularly in Downtown. The comments provided under the Downtown heading below expand on the following comments.

- The General Plan includes goals to maintain a compact urban form, but requests for taller buildings do not get supported by the public, even in

the Downtown core. The City worked very diligently on the performance standards to allow for taller buildings in the C-D zone (Downtown Commercial). However, even though well crafted, the regulations have not really accommodated many buildings above 50 feet in height.

- A minimum height requirement may be appropriate in some areas.
- Set clear criteria for higher building heights.
- Consider height limits by stories in addition to feet.
- Consider the use of temporary story poles on development sites so the public can see how tall a building will be before it is approved.
- There needs to be hillside viewshed protection: this is the character of the city.
- Compatibility is important and as such, higher stories should trigger additional review.

### **Yards and Setbacks**

- Add street side yards to the residential zone sections. Provide reference to the range of required yards, noting that they vary with building height. Cite the applicable table. The information is in the document but requires constant flipping between sections.
- Provide more flexibility on setbacks for unusually shaped lots, including upper-story step-backs.
- Layout and setbacks should be changed to optimize solar access.

### **Fences and Walls**

- Add guidance about allowed fence heights in street yards. The graphic is great to illustrate the concept that the fence height can be taller farther back from the street but does not help a user identify what height is allowed at certain distances from the street property line.

## stakeholder interview report

### **Multi-Family Standards**

- Require more family amenities (open space and storage) so that new developments do not become de facto student housing.
- Unit size in affordable housing should reflect the needs of workforce families (don't just build studio units).

### **Transitions between Zones**

Participants agreed that the Zoning Regulations should pay special attention to transitions between zones, both lower-density residential to higher-density residential, as well as commercial to residential.

- Find ways to mitigate impacts of R-4 (High-density Residential) development, such as articulation along the street front and entries along the street that mimic single-family homes.
- To provide compatibility for R-1 to R-2 transitions, require additional setbacks on upper floors.

### **Occupancy**

- Consider how bedrooms will be used (large bedrooms will be shared).
- In some areas, maybe bedroom count should be the only way of calculating density.

### **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

Participants expressed general support for accessory dwelling units and tiny homes. Stakeholders identified various locations where these should be allowed/prioritized, including on existing golf courses, near the outer limits of the city near green space, and as infill in existing neighborhoods. Some interviewed indicated that ADUs should be owner occupied and include a foundation. Others indicated that more flexibility for tiny homes and recreational vehicles was preferred, with directives to be creative for ADUs inside existing houses and provide incentives for more ADUs.

## Adaptive Reuse

Encourage repurposed buildings, and provide the flexibility to establish new uses in existing buildings, such as a provision for parking exceptions.

## Planned Development

- Reduce the size required for a planned development overlay to maybe one-half acre or one-third acre.
- Planned development (PD) standards need to be reviewed and firmed up so as not to act as spot zoning. Mandatory project features should include affordable housing, energy efficiency, protection of natural features, or addition of public outdoor amenities. Findings should be strong.

## Open Space

- Encourage public and semi-public open spaces in new projects.
- San Luis Obispo has a need for more parks, especially in the North Broad Street neighborhood.

## Historic Resources

- Ensure strict adherence to the City's Historic Guidelines.
- Consider requiring height reductions adjacent to historic resources.

## Noise

- Consider noise control measures for rooftop decks and balconies.

## PARKING REGULATIONS

Participants had varying views on parking. For some, parking reductions in areas where densification is desired (largely Downtown) were noted as opportunities. Others cited reductions in parking as a negative that should be used sparingly.

- There is a huge trade-off between livability and parking; if you give people incentive to park below ground, the space above becomes more walkable and attractive.

Generally, would you say that parking requirements are too high, or too low?

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Expand In Lieu Locations  
Lyft Uber Use Based  
**Too High**  
Creative Solutions  
Autonomous Cars Compact Parking  
No On Site Parking

## stakeholder interview report

- Parking needs will change. For the future, we need to plan for self-driving cars, etc. Perhaps the maximum number of cars exists today.
- Parking incentives/reductions should not be cumulative.
- Parking reductions are too broadly applied and should be limited to mixed use.
- The process of parking exceptions is unclear and applied unequally. Multiple exceptions that are additive are especially problematic and may be resulting in reductions (especially in parking) to levels that were not anticipated.
- Incorporate transportation demand management (TDM) into the development review process.
- Establish a Downtown in-lieu parking district.
- Consider basing parking standards on building square footage only, rather than use. It will help fill empty spaces. Also clarify parking calculations (occupancy and useable area).
- Parking is a big challenge in developing, managing, and placing tenants. Modern office uses have increased occupancy density to the point that 3 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of floor area (3/1,000) no longer works. Perhaps the appropriate standard is 2/1,000 until adequate alternative transportation is realized.
- Parking reductions for shared parking (off-period use shifts) may not be as effective today because people are leaving their cars at home during the day more often. We have a car storage problem. The issue is where to put your car when you are not using it.
- Parking reduction for bike racks should be eliminated.
- Bike offsets that work well include fix-it stations, bike shops, locked bike parking, staked bike parking, and free bike tubes.
- The calculation for restaurant parking is very complicated. In practice, there has been inconsistency with calculations by different planners and other users. Consider looking at a formula that is simpler and more like the C-D calculation (X spaces/XX building square feet).
- Restaurant outdoor dining should not be counted in the area considered toward parking. There is inconsistency in implementation

because the code is not clear. Consider eliminating parking requirements for outdoor dining.

- Re-evaluate warehouse parking to simplify it, especially with regard to outdoor storage yard. Consider using the County's standard.
- Section 17.16.060E: Suggest rewording sentence #2 to read: "The applicant shall provide reasonable justification for the reduction through a Transportation Demand Management Plan, which highlights innovative design components and strategies to reduce single-occupant vehicle travel to and from the site." This would be consistent with the City's current practice.
- Regional retail areas should be held to higher parking requirements, and local retail area could use more flexibility.
- Consider parking requirements based on area rather than uses.
- Do more to incentivize alternative transportation options for businesses.

### **Residential Parking**

- We are underserved for parking in the R-1 zones because people do not use their garages for parking. Instead, they use garages for storage, game rooms, etc.
- Consider parking standards for residential by square footage rather than bedrooms.
- Clarify when reduced parking requirements for affordable housing apply. Does the project need to be 100% affordable or exceed inclusionary requirement? Do reduced standards apply to just the affordable units in a project or the total parking requirement? How are additional concessions considered/applied outside of State requirements?
- Is there a way to create residential zones that don't require any parking? Alternatively, allows parking reductions for building owners who include provisions that restrict tenancy people who do not have cars or have only one car. It could be outside the Downtown area. Code provisions would limit residency to persons who do not own cars. It would be hard to manage and would have to be monitored. It would have to be in a walkable area with good transit connections. It seems like we need density before we can get better public transportation.

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- Parking requirements are too high. You cannot achieve multimodal goals while retaining high parking requirements.
- Allow for car share by right to achieve parking reductions.
- Parking requirements are too low. Downtown does not have enough parking for disabled and elderly citizens.
- Garages should not be required. Just require off-street parking and let the developer decide how to provide on-site parking.
- Consider the future of parking in light of autonomous vehicles and shared vehicles. Passenger loading areas may be more appropriate than garages and spaces at some point in the future.

### **CODE ADMINISTRATION AND PERMITTING PROCESSES**

Comments about code administration and permitting focused on three major topics: the prevalence of appeals, the length of the approval process, and Use Permits.

- Timing and processing timeframes are more important in responding to economic conditions than the form and content of the Zoning Regulations themselves. Interviewees voiced frustration about the length of review processes.
- The review processes should be amended so that projects with multiple entitlements should only have one decision body (i.e., don't have the Architectural Review Commission and Planning Commission on separate tracks).
- There needs to be consistency in interpretation by advisory bodies and how they apply the Community Design Guidelines.
- The Architectural Review Commission puts too many conditions of approval on projects, many of which are not enforceable. Projects get caught between staff and Architectural Review Commission opinions.
- The Zoning Regulations do not provide a clear enough picture of the necessary entitlement processes and their timeframes. Code provisions should be clearly written to better guide decisions. Currently, negotiations seem drive the decision-making process.
- The review processes need clearer criteria for submittal. Developers think they have submitted everything and then the City asks for something else.

- The recent “completeness” process seems to be onerous, time consuming, and beyond the scope of the application.

- The variance process is complicated. City staff should be able to do more administrative approvals.

- Establish more administrative (staff-level) approvals for projects in general.

- Craft clear regulations that use consistent terminology. Make it abundantly clear if a use requires no Use Permit, an Administrative Use Permit, or a Planning Commission Use Permit. Ensure consistency between the permit application and what it says in the Zoning Regulations.

- Too many appeals occur.

- The appeal process appears easy from the Code language but does not reflect the work and cost involved in responding to the appeal. All residential projects are getting appealed to the City Council. Perhaps appeals should be based on cost recovery.

- The section describing the appeal process could be much more descriptive, laying out the limitations and responsibilities. This would put appellants on notice about what they will need to present—and the efforts that will be involved—and would discourage frivolous appeals.

- Appeals of projects should be clear about the scope of the appeal and the particular project components of concern.

- Provide better signage for describing proposed developments (possibly funded by the developer).

- The agenda correspondence process could be improved (for advisory bodies).

- Consider reduced impact fees in areas the City wishes to see developed.

What changes could be made to Zoning Regulations to make it easier to establish new business in town (e.g. simplify table of allowed uses, simplify office destinations, etc.)?

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Redefine Classification Based on Impact  
 State What's Not Allowed Expand Parking District  
**Discretionary**  
**Simplify** Encourage Mixed Use  
 Broad Categories Encourage ID Use **Flexibility**  
 Incentivize Business

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- Consider a threshold for very large projects to have expanded notification procedures.

**CAL POLY TOPICS**

Student housing was a comment topic discussed by multiple interviewees. Concerns focused on noise, parking, trash, and what constitutes student/group housing. The commenters noted a general feeling that the University community did not recognize or take ownership of its impacts on the City with regard to student housing and the University's master plan for development.

The rental inspection program was discussed in terms of its immediate impact on neighborhoods surrounding the University. Recommendations included enforcing the number of occupants in a rental. Some participants indicated that areas around the University should be rezoned to allow denser development, as those areas already function as higher density, but within a single-family form.

**DOWNTOWN**

Participants had diverse views about Downtown. Many recognized and supported the General Plan policies to encourage a compact urban form. They noted an inherent struggle to effect this policy while at the same time trying to preserve what makes SLO special and unique and how best to maintain that character.

- We should build to the vision of what we want Downtown to be, consistent with the General Plan vision.
- Encourage residential development in Downtown and prioritize it over commercial development.
- Provide more senior housing in Downtown.
- Allow for smaller dwelling units and tenant spaces for more options.
- Consider expanding transfer of density credits. Re-examine the ability for density transfers to noncontiguous properties within the Downtown core.
- Expand Downtown core policies up Monterey Street, Higuera, and Marsh, past Santa Rosa Street.
- Buildings that are four stories and built with little to no street setback are good ideas Downtown and elsewhere.

- Allow residential density increases so that three and four stories (above first-floor commercial) are residences.
- Allow height increases for buildings if the first story is used for stacked parking and mechanical parking lift.
- Include a height minimum requirement for Downtown to preclude one-story structures.
- Allow for rooftop uses on buildings used as public accesses spaces, not just parks but businesses and coffee shops.
- The Downtown height ordinance allows for additional height, but it has been financially infeasible to provide the “wedding cake” stepped-back floors with amenities.
- Downtown buildings should be limited to two to three stories to preserve SLO’s small town character. Infill development should occur on surface parking lots.
- Consider an urban design standard for Downtown that addresses surrounding existing building heights and limits new adjacent buildings to one to two stories higher. Taller heights should also be stepped back from the ground floor.
- Downtown height should be limited to 50 feet. Identify creative ways to increase density without increasing height.
- For buildings exceeding 50 feet in height, the City should get more clearly defined benefits. Too much discretion is involved now.
- Downtown height increases should require meeting at least three policy objectives rather than two.
- Consider the late-night environment of Downtown, and ensure safety.
- Include provisions to implement Downtown Concept Plan goals of more visual connections to the creek.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Some participants were concerned about traffic congestion and requested that the City deny projects that contribute to traffic congestion. Multiple interviewees discussed the need to enhance alternative transportation options throughout town, including transit and bicycle routes. In particular:

- Provide more Class 1 bike lanes, possibly connecting Foothill and California Boulevard, and linking to the University.

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- Develop a bike beltway around the city.
- Better/more public transportation is needed, including better use of Amtrak (i.e., Santa Barbara/Ventura model).
- We need smaller buses or dial-a-ride vans.
- We need buses off Ramona (and on Foothill).

### **OTHER**

One participant provided an “Orchids and Onions” review of well done and “stinker” developments around town. Some participants disagreed with these characterizations. In particular, the projects which were identified as both good and bad examples included 22 Chorro and the Mix at Monterey/Monterey Place, among others.