Smart Infill

A practical guide to creating vibrant places throughout the Bay Area

GREENBELT ALLIANCE
Open Spaces & Vibrant Places

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Executive Summary

The Opportunity of Infill

Infill development is more than a way to avoid paving the Bay Area's spectacular greenbelt of farms and natural areas.

It is even more than a way to reduce driving and cut greenhouse gas emissions—although this is a clear benefit that is becoming ever more critical.

Infill is an opportunity to use the Bay Area's growth to make our communities better.

Past patterns of development have drained resources away to the region's edges. But infill invests in the places where people live now.

Done well, infill can rebuild abandoned areas, bring new life to old downtowns, and provide homes where people can meet their needs close by. It can create neighborhoods where it is safe and pleasant to walk or bike, where driving is not the only option. It can create more attractive, inviting communities.

This guidebook, *Smart Infill*, is a tool to help city leaders encourage infill development that is done well.

Santana Row

Infill development is bringing new life to cities and towns around the Bay Area.

Infill is an opportunity to use the Bay Area's growth to make our communities better.

Strategies

Good infill takes a combination of strategies on several fronts:

Planning

Determine what land is available for infill and actively encourage development there.

Cities surrounded by open space should first adopt an urban growth boundary to define the limits of growth. The next step is to do an assessment of land available for infill, and make this public. Cities should update their general plans and zoning codes to remove barriers to infill and encourage dense development with a mix of uses, like homes above shops. Specific plans can then focus investment in a given neighborhood and speed development with a comprehensive environmental review.

Community

Involve the public to help development go forward smoothly, and share the benefits and costs fairly.

Cities should agree on a process for public involvement and use this to find out how new development can meet community needs. It is also critical that cities act early to include affordable homes in new development, avoid displacing residents, and take other actions to ensure current residents enjoy the benefits of development in their neighborhoods.

Design

Think carefully about how new development will fit in to the neighborhood and how people will use it.

Good infill uses land efficiently; to enable this, cities should allow significant density and height, allow a mix of uses and housing types, and reduce parking requirements as much as possible. Form-based codes provide a way to guide the general appearance of new development without restricting density, allowing more flexibility for developers. Design guidelines enable cities to go into more detail about the look of new development and preserve local history and character. The design process is also an opportunity to implement creative solutions to meeting parking needs and channeling stormwater. Considering a diversity of people with a wide range of needs will result in well-used, well-loved buildings and public spaces.

"If the Bay Area gets serious about smart growth, we can lead the nation toward greener, more equitable development. Every city has a part to play. If we get it right, the future will be better—for our communities, our landscapes, and the climate."

– Jeremy Madsen, Executive Director, Greenbelt Alliance

Development
Simplify the process for developers.

By streamlining permitting and construction processes, getting departments to work together to promote infill, and ensuring requirements are consistent, cities can smooth the way for good development. Redevelopment agencies can be powerful tools to make land available and finance neighborhood improvements. Cities can also help developers get financing, clean up brownfields, and provide funding for affordable homes.

Case Studies

Bay Area communities, large and small, are encouraging infill:

- San Rafael and Oakland are making concerted efforts to add significant amounts of housing to their downtowns.
- San Francisco, Santa Rosa, San Jose, and San Mateo are creating whole new neighborhoods around public transit.
- Petaluma, Morgan Hill, and Cloverdale have taken steps to improve their streetscapes and create more inviting places to walk.
- Berkeley, Redwood City, and San Francisco are taking creative approaches to parking.
- Emeryville, Oakland, Sunnyvale, and Morgan Hill have pulled funding together and smoothed the way for development.

Recommendations

Supporting infill development takes action at all levels. State and regional policies should support local efforts—and they are increasingly doing so, especially around climate change. Counties should direct development into cities. Cities should adopt policies to encourage infill, bring down barriers, and create plans to make it happen. The active involvement of residents, business groups, neighborhood associations, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, and the media is also crucial.

Getting There

Already, the Bay Area's cities can learn a great deal from one another about how to do infill well. It is time to apply these lessons broadly, and act on them with vigor.

It will take leadership, creativity, and commitment to make the major shift in development patterns that the region needs—toward smart infill. The result will be a Bay Area that truly thrives as it grows.

Steve Price/Urban Advantage, urban-advantage.com

Before and after: Infill can transform neighborhoods in a way that enhances their character.

Introduction

The San Francisco Bay Area is facing a growth challenge. The region is now home to 7.2 million people. By 2035, that number will be over 9 million people. If new development continues to sprawl outward on the urban edge, it will drain resources from existing cities and create longer commutes, more traffic, and more climate-changing greenhouse gases. This kind of development will not meet the need for affordable homes close to jobs.

In recent years, tract housing developments in outlying areas have lost value rapidly, hit hard by the foreclosure crisis.[1] In a time of unstable housing markets, rising gas prices, and a changing climate, the Bay Area—and the nation—can no longer afford sprawl development.

Fortunately, there is a better way to grow.

Many Bay Area cities have embraced smarter growth in recent years. Now, if the region's growth is to be sustainable for its residents and for the climate, it is time for an even greater shift.

"California must adopt the necessary changes that will encourage economic growth while reducing greenhouse gases. This difficult transition from our current escalating dependence on fossil fuel demands that cities and counties encourage maximum building efficiency and innovative land use."

– Jerry Brown, California Attorney General

It's Time for Infill

Infill development means focusing new growth inward, in existing cities, instead of outward onto the region's greenbelt of natural areas and working farms.

Infill development offers the Bay Area a way to grow that is better for the economy, for the environment, and for current and future residents. It makes economic sense because it supports community businesses, provides housing for Bay Area workers, and uses infrastructure more cost-effectively. It makes environmental sense because it lowers development pressure on farmland and natural areas, reduces driving, and provides the opportunity to clean up polluted urban lands. It is also more equitable, because it directs investment back into central cities that have lost tax bases and economic opportunities, and it offers more housing, transportation, and employment opportunities for the full diversity of the region's residents.

A Tool to Do Infill Well

The goal of this guidebook is to help local leaders encourage infill development that improves the quality of life in their cities and the region.

"This is an exciting time. Regional collaboration has been producing results. We're starting to see new funding sources for infill—funding that can help Bay Area cities create complete communities served well by transit."

– Kenneth Kirkey, Planning Director, Association of Bay Area Governments

Mayors, city council members, planning commissioners, and city staffers are on the front lines of development; the region's future hinges on their decisions. They need the best information available.

Smart Infill presents a range of policies, programs, and local examples these decision-makers can use to help the region "grow up, not out." It focuses primarily on residential or mixed-use development, because the Bay Area is suffering from a housing crisis, and because one of the best ways to revitalize downtowns and older neighborhoods is by bringing in residents. Even in times of slow economic growth, planning for this infill is important, to prepare the way for well-thought-out development when times are better.

This guidebook is laid out in four parts:

About Infill
The first part of this guidebook explains the concept of infill development and describes how it can help address many of the problems resulting from poorly planned regional growth.

Strategies
The second section provides actions local governments can take to promote well-planned infill. For each strategy, there is:

- A brief explanation of why the strategy is necessary,
- A list of methods to implement the strategy, and
- A few Bay Area examples.

Case Studies
The third section offers examples from Bay Area cities, where municipal action is helping infill development revitalize neighborhoods or entire towns.

Recommendations
The fourth part of the guidebook includes recommendations for regional and state action to support infill development, as well as further resources to consult.

This new edition of *Smart Infill* has been significantly rewritten since the first edition in 2002, and the local examples and case studies have been brought up to date.

Many thanks go to the city leaders, planners, design and building professionals, and others who contributed their expertise to the second edition.

"Our downtown is becoming more walkable and vibrant with each new project. Residents bike and walk more, have additional time with their families, and spend less time in their cars. Infill is creating a better Santa Rosa."

– Nick Caston, Planning Commissioner, Santa Rosa

Saying Yes to Good Development

The Bay Area is well known for its active citizenry. For decades, much of that activity has consisted of opposing ill-conceived development projects, and this has been a valuable tool in protecting the region's greenbelt.

But it is not enough to oppose bad development; we also need to support better alternatives, to create a more sustainable model for growth.

Neighborhood groups can play a crucial role in ensuring development is done well. They can work with planners and developers to ensure that projects are responsive to neighborhood needs, get involved in planning efforts to envision how their neighborhood or city will grow, and speak up in support of good development projects. Planners and local elected officials can also help by acting early in planning processes to reach out, inform, and involve citizens.

By making a concerted effort to encourage good infill, the Bay Area can become a leader in sustainable, climate-friendly development. This will take a commitment from residents and decision-makers, making use of all available tools—including, now, this guidebook.

Infill can help meet the Bay Area's growth needs and create inviting places to live, like this attractive residential street in Hercules.

About Infill

"There are so many different ways cities can promote infill. Once the city decides it wants to actively make room for new homes and jobs, it can use infill in a way that works for it."

– Marc Grisham, City Manager, Pittsburg

What is Infill Development?

"Infill development" does not refer to one type of building. It refers to finding room for new homes and jobs in existing urban and suburban areas, and designing them in a way that will work well with their surroundings. It can mean building on vacant lots, reusing underutilized sites (such as parking lots, old shopping malls, or industrial sites), or rehabilitating historic buildings for new use.

Infill development can bring together homes, shops, entertainment, offices, civic buildings, and public spaces to create pleasant neighborhoods that meet the daily needs of the people who live and work there. It can increase property values by making neighborhoods more attractive, provide starter homes so that young people can afford to live in the communities where they grew up, and offer a range of housing choices to seniors.

Through infill, communities can grow without expanding out into open space. This reduces the costs of new development by using existing infrastructure, reducing the need for taxpayers to subsidize new roads, sewers, water lines, and schools in remote areas. By reducing the need to drive, infill can also reduce air pollution and the greenhouse gas pollution that causes climate change.

Infill comes in a wide range of styles and densities. Commercial buildings vary widely, and homes can run the gamut from townhomes to "in-law units" and from live/work lofts to single-family houses. Infill buildings can have retail on the bottom floor, and offices or homes above.

Infill development brings together homes, shops, offices, and public spaces to create pleasant, walkable neighborhoods.

Infill development is important for suburbs as well as central cities. It can help create active downtowns and neighborhood centers where people can gather and connect. City leaders can consider what would benefit their town—such as customers for local businesses, well-paying jobs, grocery stores, or housing for singles or families or seniors—and use infill to meet those needs.

Infill must be combined with a suite of policies to effectively address the Bay Area's growth challenges. These policies include measures to protect the greenbelt, improve public transit, make streets more walkable, protect residents at risk of displacement, and provide affordable homes. Together with infill, these actions will create a Bay Area that becomes a better place to live as it grows.

The Need for Infill

The Bay Area is growing quickly. Between 2005 and 2035, the nine-county region is expected to add 2 million new residents and 1.8 million jobs.[2] Where and how this growth occurs will have a significant impact on the region's quality of life.

Since World War II, new development has largely occurred around the edges of the region's cities and towns, on farmland and natural areas. That pattern persists: the 2006 Greenbelt Alliance report *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* found that over 400,000 acres of Bay Area open space is threatened with sprawl development in the next 30 years. Nearly 1 out of every 10 acres is at risk.

Galen Rowell/Mountain Light

Encouraging development within cities helps protect the Bay Area's iconic hills and open spaces.

"Infill is better than suburban development because it maximizes space for housing and businesses. Infill development in Sebastopol will help to reduce sprawl and protect our open spaces for future generations."

– Jen Thille, City Councilmember, Sebastopol

The Bay Area's natural landscapes help to attract the workers and employers that make the region an international center of innovation. Protecting these landscapes is critical to keeping the Bay Area an attractive, vibrant place to live.

Infill provides an antidote to sprawl. Every home, office, or store built in an infill location is one less built on open space. Because infill tends to be more compact than sprawl development, the same number of homes, stores, or offices takes up much less land (and uses fewer other resources, such as water and energy). Increasing the Bay Area's infill development rate would preserve hundreds of square miles of natural areas and working farms.

Infill makes sense throughout the Bay Area, not just in central cities. The region is a mix of established urban centers, smaller towns with central business districts, and rural and suburban communities that may lack a central focal area. All types of neighborhoods can benefit from infill. Because infill comes in all shapes and sizes, it can be done in a way that enhances local character, whether it is by revitalizing historic areas, adding life and safety to urban streets, or creating a whole new gathering place for the community.

Vacant buildings or vibrant downtowns?

Today, while many of the Bay Area's older center cities are on the ascent (due, in large part, to successful infill development), others suffer from a host of urban ills: concentrated poverty, crime, disinvestment in city services, and a lack of jobs. While some areas are growing rapidly, other parts of the Bay Area have seen little new investment, resulting in low tax bases, deteriorating infrastructure, and accumulated social service needs and declining or stagnating property values.

Infill can help address these ills by bringing residents, workers, and visitors downtown, creating safer streets and spurring local investment in suburbs and central cities alike. New shops, restaurants, and offices can bring economic vitality. Examples of this kind of revitalization are visible all over the Bay Area, from Berkeley's art district to the downtowns of Petaluma and San Jose. In places with a "monoculture" of offices, retail, or housing, infill can also bring diversification and better enable the community to weather economic changes over time.

Stuck in traffic or strolling home?

Traffic congestion in the Bay Area ranks as the second worst in the nation.[3] Sprawling development has forced more people to drive longer distances, and has created more traffic. Study after study confirms that widening roads and freeways does not relieve congestion problems—more roads only lead to more congestion. In California, it only takes an average of four to five years for a newly widened freeway to fill with traffic.[4]

Sprawling development forces more people to drive longer distances and creates more traffic; Bay Area traffic is already among the nation's worst.

"If done well and in conjunction with public improvements, infill can increase property values for existing homeowners and provide new job opportunities."

– Dena Belzer, President, Strategic Economics

Well-designed infill creates homes that are part of walkable, mixed-use environments close to many transportation options, so that residents don't have to drive as much as they would if they were living or working in low-density developments. Providing more jobs, shops, and services near the places that people live means shorter commutes and fewer cars on the road. Compact development along bus lines and around train stations makes it possible for people to walk to public transportation, offering more commuting options and reducing transportation time for everyone. Infill that provides homes for families also enables people to stay in the city when they have children, keeping the community more connected and stable, and reducing the need for long commutes from the suburbs.

Housing crisis or housing choices?

Today, the region faces a housing crisis. Five of the top ten least-affordable counties in the United States are in the Bay Area, and only 15% of Bay Area households can afford the median-priced home.[5] Cities and neighborhoods are also increasingly being segregated by income. Many Bay Area workers cannot find homes they can afford here, and are forced to commute from homes in the Central Valley, in places like Tracy and Lodi.

Infill development, when coupled with strong affordable housing policies, can ease the Bay Area's housing crunch. Infill offers the opportunity to provide more different types of homes, offering more options than large single-family homes far from jobs. (See Make Infill Affordable, p. 26.)

Long commutes and unemployment or nearby jobs?

In recent decades, many new jobs have been created on the outer edges of urban areas. This is especially true for lower-wage jobs nationally; a report by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that in the 1990s, 87% of new lower-skill jobs were created in the suburbs; for example, retail jobs in big-box stores.[6] These jobs are difficult for prospective workers to reach; the jobs are not close to public transit, and many workers cannot afford cars. The reduced number of jobs in central areas drives down wages and exacerbates pockets of poverty and unemployment. The move of jobs out to the fringe affects higher-wage workers as well; office campuses in remote suburban areas force workers to drive to work and also to lunch and all their errands, as the campus developments are far from transit and other services. This forces people to spend more time in traffic.

Infill development can add needed jobs to central areas and shorten commutes. New commercial development in central urban areas can provide retail and service jobs for local residents, developing the local economy and providing jobs workers can reach without driving. Infill development can enable people of all income levels to spend less of their money and time on transportation.

Obesity epidemic or healthy communities?

Across the country and in the Bay Area, obesity has reached epidemic levels, leading to an increase in associated diseases. Soaring obesity rates are due in part to ever-lower levels of physical activity. People living in areas where it is difficult, unpleasant, or unsafe to walk are likely to weigh more than people who live in locations that invite walking. A large international study by several universities and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control found that residents of more sprawling communities are more likely to weigh more, be obese, and suffer from high blood pressure.[7, 8]

Well-designed infill development puts shopping and other destinations within walking distance of homes. This allows residents to enjoy the significant health benefits that are available simply by walking, biking, climbing stairs, and getting physical activity as part of everyday life. Mixed-use infill development with pedestrian-friendly street design can help combat obesity and help Bay Area residents stay healthy.

Climate change or sustainable development?

Transportation is the largest single contributor to climate change in the Bay Area, generating half of the region's greenhouse gas emissions. Sprawling development requires more driving, and over the past few decades, as development patterns have put homes, jobs, and other destinations farther apart, the average distance driven per person per year has increased. Although technological advances like hybrid cars and alternative fuels can help reduce greenhouse gas pollution, if people have to drive more, that will not be enough. If sprawling development patterns continue, the rise in greenhouse gas emissions from increased driving will overwhelm technological gains, and the Bay Area will create more global warming pollution, not less.[9]

To lower global warming pollution, development patterns must change. Americans who live in infill development with a mix of land uses, a range of transportation options, and pedestrian-friendly design, drive one-third fewer miles than those in car-oriented suburbs.[10] Infill development can play a critical role in reducing the Bay Area's greenhouse gases and providing a model for climate-friendly regional growth.

Opportunities

Many opportunities exist for fitting new development into the urban fabric within the Bay Area's cities and towns. New buildings can replace vacant lots and parking lots. Infill can clean up

"With gas prices skyrocketing and traffic worsening, Fairfield has been focusing on bringing more jobs to the city, so fewer residents will have to commute out of the area. We're planning higher-density housing and mixed-use development near regional transit, so residents can commute without a car. The city has made infill development a priority."

– Eve Somjen, Director of Community Development, Fairfield

and redevelop abandoned gas stations on the corners of major thoroughfares. Run-down strip malls can be replaced with mixed-use housing and businesses. New development can go in throughout an existing town, or can focus in key neighborhoods such as downtowns and areas around transit stations.

Opportunity sites for infill include:

- Commercial corridors dominated by strip malls and parking lots, and transportation corridors dominated by one- or two-story buildings. These can be retrofitted as pedestrian-friendly boulevards with three- or four-story buildings providing shops and additional housing. Rapid-bus service—which is in use along the East Bay's San Pablo Avenue, and planned for the South Bay's El Camino Real, both streets which run through several cities—can make points along the corridor easily accessible.

- Vast surface parking lots surrounding many bus and train stations. These are ideal locations for infill, where shops, offices, and housing can flourish, while multi-storied parking garages can still hold commuters' cars.

- Declining shopping malls, older industrial districts, and military bases. These may not be well integrated with the rest of the city, so good infill requires providing links to bus and rail lines.

- Brownfields, which are sites that have remained empty due to likely contamination from previous industrial uses. The federal Brownfields Tax Incentive encourages the cleanup of brownfield sites by making the cleanup costs fully tax-deductible; an update in 2006 expanded the law by including the cleanup of petroleum.[11]

A recent study by the Institute of Urban and Regional Development at the University of California, Berkeley concluded that the Bay Area contains 60,600 parcels suitable for infill development; 70% are in neighborhoods already dense enough that they are likely to be walkable, and approximately a quarter of these are now vacant.[12] This could translate into hundreds of thousands of new homes, stores, workplaces, and more.

"Doctors in America all tell their patients the same thing: Get moving. Start exercising. Become engaged with the world around you. Creating good city environments does all those things."

– Richard J. Jackson, M.D., Director, Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute and former California State Health Officer

Benefits of Infill

Infill is an increasingly popular development strategy with residents, businesses, and city governments. With infill, new residents can find homes. Older residents benefit from the shops and services that spring up to serve new residents. Local businesses benefit from increases in customers and in foot traffic. Cities benefit from increased tax bases and more efficient use of infrastructure.

Developers are seeing more benefits from infill as well. Recent years have seen a "return to the city," as buyers look for homes in central cities. The demand for smaller homes has also increased. Many developers find that projects in the city hold their value better in tough markets; while single-family housing tracts and shopping malls are often relatively indistinguishable from one another, each property and neighborhood in the city is unique. For these reasons, even historically suburban developers have been experimenting with infill.

Addressing Common Misconceptions

Infill is becoming more widespread and well-accepted, but concerns still arise, especially around specific projects that bring change to neighborhoods. Some of these are myths and misconceptions. Others are potential problems that can be avoided if infill is done well.

Below are some brief answers to common concerns about infill.

Will infill lead to more traffic and less parking?

Neighbors of new infill developments are often concerned that it will lead to more traffic and less parking. Though development that caters to automobile use can lead to more traffic and less available parking, good infill that helps to broaden transportation choices can attract residents with few or no cars, and can reduce existing residents' need to drive, decreasing overall traffic in the city.

Sprawling low-density development breeds traffic congestion. The average amount that each Bay Area resident drove each day grew by a staggering 61% between 1970 and 2000. During that time, development primarily took the form of vast subdivisions and low-rise industrial and office buildings—built far apart. By 2035, if current trends continue, each resident is predicted to drive two-thirds more than in 1970—and there will be nearly 2 million more people in the Bay Area than there are now, adding up to a massive increase in driving and in traffic.[13]

Infill development can reverse this trend. Well-designed infill enables people to walk, bike, or take public transit to the places they need to go. A 1995 study published by the California Air Resources Board found that people in newer, low-density suburbs drive almost twice as much as people living in more compact Bay Area cities such as Berkeley and Oakland, and four times as much as people living in northeast San Francisco.[14] Another study by the Air Resources Board concluded that for every doubling of density, the amount each resident drives annually drops by 25–30%.[15] People in neighborhoods that are well-supported by transit with neighborhood shopping also own fewer cars.[16]

New infill developments can also include spaces for shared cars through programs like City CarShare. These programs give people access to a car when they need it without having to own it. This ensures that cars and parking spaces are both used much more efficiently.

City of Redwood City

Before and after: Redwood City hopes to transform El Camino Real (above) into a Grand Boulevard (below).

"We can accommodate thousands and thousands of units—it's true of almost all cities—through the recycling of land. We just don't believe cities are built-out. There are creative ways that cities can plan for more housing."

– Laurel Prevetti, Deputy Director, Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement, San Jose

Often, communities respond to traffic concerns by requiring more parking. But parking spaces are magnets for cars. In fact, the less an infill project accommodates cars, the lower its traffic impact. When people know that ample parking is available, they are more likely to drive.[17] Excess parking also makes people less likely to take transit. For example, in a survey of ten California office sites within walking distance of a rail transit station, if parking was abundant, fewer than one out of ten workers commuted by train. But if offices provided less than one parking space per two workers, the percentage commuting by train more than tripled.[18]

The best way to reduce the traffic impacts of new development is to build neighborhoods, stores, and new homes that make it easier for people to walk, bike, and ride trains and buses.

Will infill lead to density and crowding?

Infill development often increases residential densities. For some local residents, "density" can be a four-letter word; they may even associate it with public housing projects or skyscrapers. But the reality is that well-done infill development blends into its neighborhood while it increases density.

Concerns about density often have more to do with unattractive development than with density itself. A given density can be built in many different ways, with many different effects on the way a street feels. While newer suburbs have densities of only four to six dwellings per acre, suburbs built in the early 20th century have densities of ten to 18 dwellings per acre—higher than many might think. Apartment buildings of three to five stories have been built in the Bay Area at anywhere from 30 to 150 dwellings per acre.[19] All of these can be built attractively, fitting into the neighborhood while adding a significant number of homes. Ultimately, people's experience of a given building has much less to do with density than design.

Density does not mean crowding, which is the feeling of not having enough space. Density can be built in a way that provides people with plenty of visible, usable space, and makes their environment more vibrant, safe, and inviting.

One way that planners and elected officials can deal with the problem of perception around density is to focus on what the density can achieve and how it can complement the neighborhood, rather than talking about units per acre. Adding residents and businesses to a community can reduce crime, support more services and transportation options, revitalize local businesses, and create more attractive public spaces.

To help people visualize the effects of increasing density, cities can undertake public workshops and design charettes. Visual preference surveys pioneered by Rutgers University professor Anton Nelessen have found that people prefer denser development—places like turn-of-the-century streetcar suburbs and well-designed urban infill projects—to contemporary suburbs, because denser places include more attractive streetscapes, local shops and restaurants, and a greater variety of housing types.[20]

Will this turn our city into Manhattan?

When some people hear the words "infill" or "density," they worry that the character of their city or town will be lost. But infill development comes in many shapes and sizes. Second units behind existing houses provide small, relatively inexpensive homes for students or the elderly. Studio and one-bedroom apartments and condominiums accommodate singles and couples. Larger apartments, townhouses, and single-family detached homes meet the needs of families. Infill can help add all these housing types to existing communities.

Infill should build upon the existing character of a town and be smoothly woven into the existing town fabric. The best infill is done under urban design guidelines that shape the appearance of new buildings to complement current structures, to knit together the old and new.

The character of cities and towns is created and maintained by the act of building and living there. Infill can bring the balance and the critical mass that cities need to flourish. Infill can restore dignity and life to old downtowns and main streets. In suburban areas, infill can provide a center and a focus, and help create a sense of place. Infill can infuse all kinds of communities with new energy and vitality.

"When people live and work close to public transit, they use it more. Cities that plan for more homes and jobs near transit are making the best use of our transportation dollars."

– James Corless, Senior Planner, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Will infill increase crime and reduce property values?

When some residents think of infill and density, they imagine their small town becoming a big city and suddenly having the worst problems of cities, particularly crime. But infill actually often reduces crime. An Urban Land Institute study in

Mountain View's Classics on the Square offers a quiet neighborhood ambiance along with more density than typical suburban development; its homes—15 per acre—are also close to Caltrain.

"Architects can design infill projects that fit almost any context. With attention to form, rhythm, massing, color and detail, projects can become part of the neighborhood."

– Kevin Kellogg, Principal, Kellogg+Associates Architecture & Urban Design, Santa Rosa

Connecticut found that burglary was significantly more frequent in single-family homes than in higher-density housing.[21] In Berkeley, a cluster of infill housing significantly reduced one neighborhood's per-capita crime rates.[22]

Infill can reduce crime for multiple reasons. First, converting abandoned or vacant properties into new uses can bring more people to a street or neighborhood, to provide more "eyes on the street." Mixing together housing and employment helps create around-the-clock activity that makes streets safer. Parking lots in particular are associated with higher crime; redeveloping them can reduce the risk of crime. Good design can also help prevent crime (see Design Housing to Meet a Range of Needs, p. 43).

Second, urban areas that suffer from the most crime have become dangerous because of stagnation, disinvestment, and neglect, not because of growth. These neighborhoods can be improved by increasing economic activity and encouraging a mix of income groups, and can be good focal points for infill if opportunity sites exist.

Many studies have been done on infill and affordable housing developments and their relation to property values, showing that property values increase when infill is built nearby. One study by the National Association of Home Builders[23] and another by Virginia Tech researchers[24] found that the proximity of higher-density apartment buildings increases the property values of single-family homes nearby. The researchers hypothesized that the infill development could indicate a vibrant local economy or could provide a larger pool of potential buyers for single-family homes; it could also simply be making the neighborhood more attractive.

Will infill bring in rich outsiders and change the neighborhood?

Neighbors may fear that new development will bring in affluent residents who are different from the current population and will "gentrify" the neighborhood: cause rents to rise, force current residents to move out, and irreversibly change the neighborhood's affordability and even its culture. Like many concerns about infill, this scenario can occur, but it does not have to. If a city builds a concentration of housing that only upper-income people can afford, that will shift the neighborhood's population. If a city upgrades a neighborhood's infrastructure, that area may become more expensive even without major new construction. But when paired with explicit efforts to maintain and create affordable homes, infill can improve the neighborhood for current and future residents.

Cities can address this in a number of ways. A fine-grained approach to infill, with individual, smaller-scale projects rather than large-scale transformation, will help. Cities can prepare for coming changes by stabilizing current residents' living situations with renter protections and homeowner assistance, and by doing significant community outreach and involvement. Plans for new development should have the explicit goal of creating a mixed-income community, and should use tools such as inclusionary housing ordinances to reach that goal. (See Ensure New Development Benefits the Community, p. 31.)

"Neighbors frequently make outrageous and unsupported claims about affordable housing in public hearings. These statements are rarely challenged. Decision-makers have an obligation to put them in context. For example, opponents claim that affordable housing reduces property values. Dozens of studies show otherwise."

– M. Timothy Iglesias, Professor of Law, University of San Francisco School of Law

"The emerging generation of the region's residents is eager to live close to the urban core where taking transit, biking, or walking to work is a viable option."

– Darin Smith, Principal, Economic & Planning Systems, Inc.

Do people want to live in cities?
The demand for housing in the Bay Area is high, and is increasing. The Association of Bay Area Governments estimated that between 2005 and 2035, the number of households in the Bay Area will increase by over 700,000.[25] That translates into an increased demand for homes in urban areas as well. A study by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development estimated that demand in the Bay Area for homes near transit will increase by about one-third, and together with the increasing population, that will translate into a need for 248,000 more homes near transit. Demand for this housing is also indicated by the many studies that have found higher property values around transit. A Bay Area study done in 1999 found that residential and office property values increased significantly with proximity to BART stations.[26]

A study conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California found that a majority of Bay Area residents would live in smaller homes if this meant they could have a shorter commute, and that a majority would prefer to live in a mixed-use neighborhood if it meant they could walk to stores, schools, and services.[27]

Singles, young people, empty nesters, the elderly, and couples without children are all growing demographic blocks that are especially likely to favor urban, high-amenity living, as are young families—if appropriate housing is made available. Developers who can take advantage of these markets are likely to do well with infill. Cities that actively improve and market infill districts can help build interest among potential residents and businesses.

The market for infill will be enhanced further as more cities focus their efforts on infill and work with developers to make urban locations more attractive to a wider range of potential residents.

Will infill overburden city services?
Another concern some have about infill is that bringing more people in could put additional demands on city infrastructure, such as roads, water and sewer services, and fire and police protection. However, infill is much more cost-effective than the sprawling alternative, and it can bring in new property and sales taxes to bolster these services. New state and regional funding mechanisms may also compensate cities for choosing infill.

Infill costs much less than comparable development built on open space. Infill development may require some infrastructure expansion—which can also mean modernization, benefiting existing residents. Infrastructure in some older cities already needs upgrading, and infill can provide an opportunity to leverage funding to make these needed improvements. But development on open space creates a demand where services do not exist at all, requiring them to be created anew. New housing tracts require new roads, water mains, sewer pipes, and other infrastructure: a very expensive undertaking.[28]

More and more people are attracted to living near downtowns that provide shopping and entertainment close to home.

Even in cases where installing new services on the urban edge is incrementally cheaper than upgrading old infrastructure in the urban core, the long-term operating costs of infill development will still be lower. Water and sewer demands are higher in sprawl than in compact development.[29, 30] The long extensions of roads and pipes will be expensive to maintain. A comparison of alternatives for the future of Utah's Greater Wasatch area found that a more compact growth scenario would save $4.5 billion in infrastructure costs from 2000 to 2020; this was for new development rather than infill, and so still required new infrastructure; the savings for infill would be even greater.[31]

"In an urban environment like this the services are already there—police, fire, sewers, etc. For us this makes a lot more sense than putting development out by the freeway."

– Mike Church, former Planning Manager, Redwood City

A Brookings Institute survey concluded that "public capital and operating costs for close-in, compact development [are] much lower than they are for fringe, scattered, linear, and satellite development."[32]

Infill can also bring income to cities by boosting the tax base, especially as part of a neighborhood revitalization strategy. Proposition 13 limits increases of property tax over time, but new housing is based on recent property assessments and so brings in fairly high tax revenues. Additional residents in an area make local retail more successful, raising sales taxes. Sales taxes also go up when revitalized neighborhoods attract new businesses, especially if there are homes nearby that their workers can afford.

There are a variety of methods cities can use to help finance infrastructure improvements. Cities can create Tax Increment Financing Districts to help pay for redevelopment, and Redevelopment Agencies can direct increased property taxes into infrastructure improvements instead of the general fund. Cities can also pass bond measures to fund improvements, or levy half-cent sales taxes whose revenue is dedicated to an infrastructure fund.[33] Developer fees are also an important tool.

Other new resources are now available to help cities to do infill. State bond measure Proposition 1C, passed in 2006, allocated $300 million to infrastructure for infill projects near transit stations. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission also offers funding for planning and infrastructure for infill near transit stations via its expanding Transportation for Livable Communities program, which includes the Station Area Planning/ Transit-Oriented Development program.

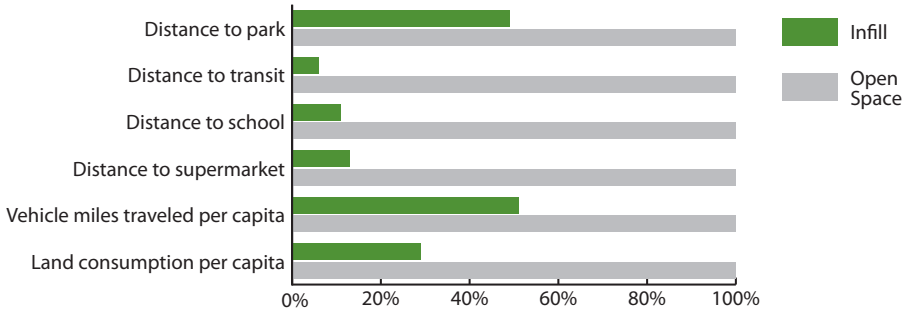
Regional revenue-sharing offers a tool to help spread the costs and savings of building infill, particularly housing, among jurisdictions. The Bay Area does not yet have a revenue-sharing mechanism, but the Regional Housing Needs Allocation process allows trades and transfers; one jurisdiction can accept housing units from another, in exchange for a package of incentives and resources. For example, for the 1999-2006 housing allocation cycle, Napa County provided funding to the City of Napa; in exchange, the city agreed to plan for some of the housing allocated to the county. Strategies like this can give more support to the cities that are accommodating more of the region's growth.

Aren't there better places in the region for this infill to go?

Every city in the Bay Area is likely to experience growth, whether it is from people moving there, or residents having children. Accommodating this growth with infill offers many benefits. It allows workers to live closer to their jobs. It can help young people afford to live in the towns where they grew up. It can enable seniors who can no longer drive, or no longer want a large home, to live near families, friends, and quality medical care. It can provide more customers for local businesses. Infill does more than provide for future residents and workers of a city; it can also meet the needs of the people who are there now.

Every town faces constraints of some sort, but every town also has its own opportunities for creating more places for people to live and work. When cities fail to meet their responsibility to accommodate new growth, jobs and housing are pushed out to the edges of the region, creating traffic and pollution that affects everyone. To keep the Bay Area a wonderful place to live, cities must work together to find room to grow.

Figure 1: **Infill vs. Open Space Development**



A 2000 study by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Environmental Characteristics of Smart Growth Neighborhoods," compared an infill subdivision in Sacramento and a greenfield counterpart—a subdivision built on open space. The infill neighborhood had much shorter travel distances and resulted in much less driving.

Strategies

Planning: Finding Room for Infill

The first step to encourage infill is to stop development from sprawling out onto surrounding natural areas and farms. An urban growth boundary does this by defining the limits of development. Within the boundary, development is guided by general plans, specific plans, and zoning codes. These public documents act as blueprints to define where and how development should occur, and how buildings should look and be used. These are powerful tools to focus cities' infrastructure investments into target areas such as the downtown and neighborhoods close to public transportation.

The City of Fairfield's urban growth boundary clearly marks where residential development stops and agricultural land starts.

Adopt an Urban Growth Boundary

STRATEGY

Every city that is bordered by open space should adopt an urban growth boundary. This prevents development on farmland and natural areas and refocuses growth into existing urbanized areas.

A strong boundary prevents the subdivision of farmland on the city's edge, and channels investment into the existing city. Adopting an urban growth boundary sends a clear signal that a city wants to direct growth toward improving existing neighborhoods, and that it will not support sprawl development. Urban growth boundaries are a tool for redirecting growth, not stopping it. They are most effective when combined with plans and zoning codes that encourage more intensive development inside the line, especially downtown and near public transit.

"Benicia's urban growth boundary protects Sky Valley's agricultural and watershed lands and focuses on infill development within the city boundaries. This means that we are developing a more active, walkable, healthy, and livable community."

– Elizabeth Patterson, Mayor, Benicia

WHY?

An urban growth boundary is a line that defines where new development should and should not go. Beyond this line, the city's urbanized area will not expand. An urban growth boundary should encircle the entire city, be adopted by voters, be geographically specific, and be long-lasting.

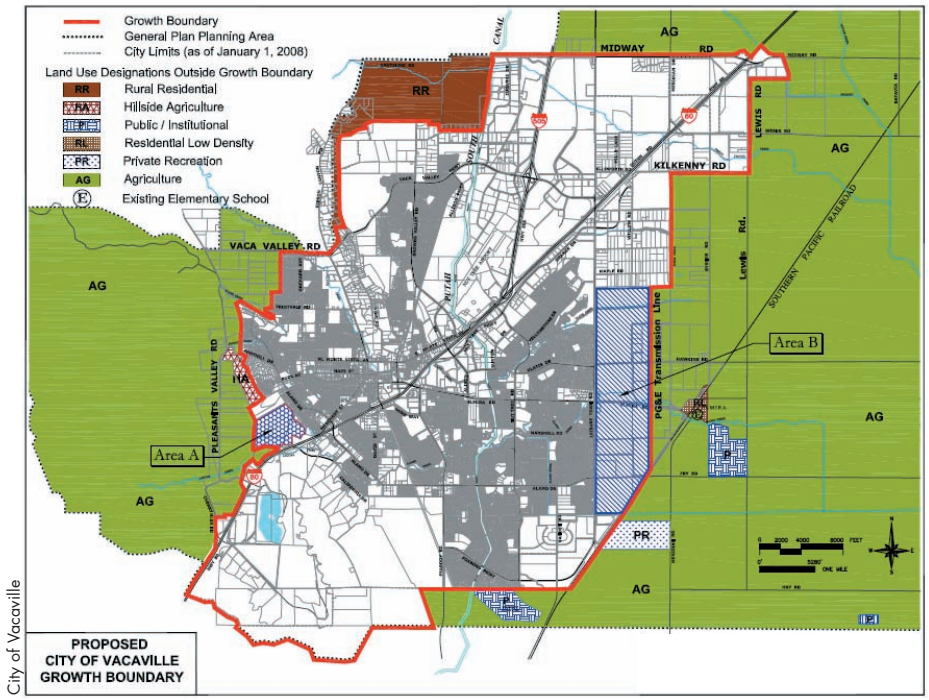
HOW?

1. Clarify the purpose and benefits of the urban growth boundary to unite the community around this goal. Show the effects of the boundary on the community's health, safety, and general welfare.

2. Bring together a diverse constituency to support the urban growth boundary, including civic, business, school, farming, environmental, and labor groups.

3. Follow a clear and consistent public process in defining where the line should go. Cities are likely to encounter ongoing pressure from landowners outside the urban growth boundary to expand the line.

4. Assess the growth coming to the city. The Association of Bay Area Governments' Projections list the number of homes and jobs a city



City of Vacaville

In 2008, Vacaville adopted an urban growth boundary to preserve rural areas and to focus development in already urbanized areas.

should plan for. Urban growth boundaries typically accommodate the growth projected for the next 20 or 25 years.

5. Estimate the amount of land needed for this growth and make the urban growth boundary as tight as possible. Often, the general plan and housing element already consider the question. Assume compact development, and plan for most new development to occur on under-used land within the city. It is possible that no undeveloped land needs to be included within the boundary.

6. Map where the urban growth boundary should be drawn. Consider roads, and natural and political boundaries. Exclude high-value open space: farmland designated by the State of California's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, key wildlife habitats, and potential parks or trail corridors. Be sure the boundary does not expand beyond those of neighboring jurisdictions; for instance, a city urban growth boundary should not be more expansive than a county urban limit line. Encourage neighboring cities and the county to respect the boundary and adopt their own.

7. Adopt the urban growth boundary in city documents. Add it to the general plan's text and map, and change land-use designations on either side of the line. Amend the zoning code to keep it consistent with the general plan.

8. Permanently secure the urban growth boundary with voter adoption. A City Council can initiate a referendum, or a community group can gather signatures for an initiative. Changing the urban growth boundary would then require another vote of the people, which protects the urban growth boundary against small shifts in the political winds.

9. Use phasing to ensure that development within the boundary is done in a balanced and deliberate way, and require an appropriately high density. This will help prevent leapfrog development; ensure that growth includes a balance of housing, jobs, amenities, and infrastructure; and keep the land inside the boundary from filling up rapidly with low-density development.

EXAMPLES

- In March 2008, Vacaville, one of the Bay Area's fastest-growing cities, passed an urban growth boundary. Because 10,000 residents signed the petition—more than voted in the last election—the City Council unanimously approved the boundary without holding an election.

Cities can help developers by identifying land appropriate for infill development and make this information publicly available.

"The more information cities give the developer about the site and the community ahead of time, the more the development can actually meet the community's needs."

– Kate White, Executive Director, Urban Land Institute San Francisco

- In 1998, voters in Petaluma adopted a 20-year urban growth boundary, creating an economic incentive to invest in the core area of the city. The 2003 Central Petaluma Specific Plan further encouraged investment in underutilized land downtown. Petaluma's new 2008 general plan includes the possibility of increasing residential densities to accommodate the next 20 years of growth within the boundary.

Publicly Identify Infill Land

STRATEGY

Identify land that is appropriate for infill development and make this information available to the public through an online database with maps. Include known characteristics of land parcels, such as building size, planning designations, or contamination.

WHY?

Compiling a list of infill opportunity sites in a publicly available database will streamline the process for developers and give them more sites to choose from. Potential infill sites are not always as obvious as a vacant lot or a parking lot. Cities can highlight underutilized sites, like declining shopping centers and strip malls, and sites that developers may not realize exist, such as parcels in office parks and corporate campuses where the city now wants to add stores and homes.

Regional studies have found that the Bay Area has significant amounts of land available for infill, and have pointed to the importance of reusing underutilized land. A study by Greenbelt Alliance and the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group found that in 1999 Silicon Valley had room for 74,300 additional homes, primarily in infill locations. Greenbelt Alliance is now doing research whose initial findings indicate that the vast majority of the Bay Area's new development can be accommodated in existing cities.[34] A 2005 report by UC Berkeley's Institute for Urban and Regional Development found that nearly 24,000 acres of land were available for infill in the Bay Area, making room for more than 650,000 homes. Approximately a quarter of this land was vacant; the rest was underutilized.[35] In using this land, of course, it is important to avoid displacing residents and businesses unfairly (see Prevent Displacement, p. 29).

HOW?

1. Gather data to conduct the inventory, like assessor's tax parcel data, aerial photographs, planning maps, or visual survey data.

2. Identify potential infill sites by looking for the following characteristics:
   - Is the parcel vacant?
   - Is the building vacant?
   - Is the assessed property-tax value of the land more than that of the building?
   - Does the building cover only a small fraction of the site? Are large parking lots present?
   - Does the building have fewer stories than surrounding buildings do?

3. Make this information publicly available. Organize it well and make it easy for developers to find and search through via online maps and searchable databases.

4. Consistently apply clear and objective standards when selecting sites. Otherwise, publicly identifying "underutilized" parcels could become somewhat controversial.

5. Make it clear that the land inventory is an informational resource for existing and future landowners, not a mandate or city plan.

The Bay Area is full of underutilized sites that present infill opportunities; new development in these areas could significantly improve the quality of life for neighboring residents.

6. Take action to discourage speculative holding of infill sites. Consider an "anti-speculation" tax or other financial mechanisms to encourage development of land that is vacant or underdeveloped.

EXAMPLES

- San Jose provides a detailed online Vacant Land Inventory. A high-resolution PDF map identifies individual parcels and their intended land use and density. San Jose acquires relatively recent aerial photographs, identifies vacant lands on those photos, enters those into Geographic Information System, then subtracts parcels that recently received building permits.

- Since 1996, the City of Emeryville has provided information about potential infill parcels, including available site locations and relevant environmental data, on a web-based mapping system. The response has been a high rate of commercial and residential infill development that has included the arrival of burgeoning biotech and software industries.

Update General Plans and Zoning Codes

STRATEGY

Update the general plan and zoning codes to allow increased densities and encourage a mix of land uses in areas identified as appropriate for infill development, particularly downtown and near transit stations. Involve residents in creating a vision for how the community will change and grow. Codify this vision in planning documents to create an official blueprint that potential builders can follow.

"The General Plan process can be a force for change. Here in San Rafael, it created a powerful idea in people's minds of what the city could become, and with some elbow grease from local officials, developers, and residents, we're actually getting there."

– Albert J. Boro, Mayor, San Rafael

WHY?

General plans and zoning codes are the blueprints for growth in a city. To create blueprints that will encourage infill, planning efforts should bring residents together to create a shared vision for growth by discussing concerns, reconciling different visions, and identifying solutions. A general plan and zoning code that clearly identify the community's desires for growth and are supported by the community will prepare the ground for developers and help a city move forward quickly to realize its vision.

If infill sites do not have appropriate land-use designations, or if the general plan and zoning do not agree, each developer has to do the political work to build public consensus around a certain type of growth in a particular location. Each project may open (or re-open) fundamental discussions about the city's future. Having the developer play this role is not good for either the developer or the public interest. "Entitlement risk"—when developers do not know whether they will be able to get permission to build a particular kind of development, or how long it might take to get that permission—is one of the biggest impediments to infill development.

San Rafael revised its zoning, increasing height and density limits and reducing parking requirements to bring more life to its downtown; it then revised its general plan to bring these changes to more of the city.

HOW?

1. Structure a democratic public process to involve the community in determining a vision for the city's future.

2. Focus initial efforts in key areas such as downtowns and around transit stations. Concentrating efforts will make benefits apparent more quickly.

3. Encourage the construction of more homes, particularly in downtown areas, and increase buildable densities for both residential and commercial lands. Allow housing in most general plan designations (except where residential uses are incompatible with the primary use, such as manufacturing).

4. Zone for a mix of uses throughout downtowns, in neighborhood centers, around transit stations, and along

Sprawling office parks use up large areas of land for parking and force workers to drive, often even to get lunch. Zoning for mixed-use development uses land more efficiently and offers more transportation options.

arterial corridors. Plan for a mix of homes and shops around workplaces, prohibit sprawling office campuses, and allow the integration of housing into existing office parks.

5. Plan how to provide employment opportunities and if necessary, preserve industrial land as part of a larger strategy to meet the city's needs for a range of jobs and homes. Consider regional projections for industrial growth, local residents' skills, the types of industry the city might attract, and the land and infrastructure requirements for those industries. Plan realistically for viable industries, and prepare facilities for them. "Industrial preservation" should not be used as an excuse to halt all growth.

6. Address and discuss historic preservation with the community early on to reduce the use of historic preservation claims to delay infill development. Do historic resource surveys as part of the planning process to identify and resolve issues before development applications start to come in.

7. Take a citywide approach to traffic and parking by reducing the need to drive. Create dense, mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods with many transportation options, including buses, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly streets.

8. Focus on long-term city prosperity rather than the isolated fiscal impacts of single land-use changes. New residents can boost sales at shops and infuse new money throughout the city. Promoting the success of the entire community will create a more prosperous city in the long run.

"It is so important to complete a vision and plan. You will probably only get one chance to do it right, so make sure you take the time on the front end because it will pay off in the long run."

– Pamela Torliatt, Mayor, Petaluma

9. Make sure the zoning code and general plan agree. Update the zoning when the general plan has been updated; this should be one process rather than two. This prevents confusion and delay, and helps the community's vision more quickly become a reality.

10. Clearly define what can and cannot be built, and allow buildings that obey the guidelines to be approved "by right." To reduce delay, controversy, and potential unfairness, try to avoid special hearings or case-by-case negotiations. Instead of requiring individual projects to go through design or historic review, use clear guidelines at the outset.

EXAMPLES

- In 2004, San Rafael's City Council and community adopted a popular general plan that will increase the downtown's capacity for dense, mixed-use development. The plan allows for housing to be built in any land-use designation; lowers parking requirements; raises building height limitations; and eases downtown density restrictions.

- In 2006, after extensive outreach involving thousands of participants, Walnut Creek adopted General Plan 2025, which takes the next step in making the city's downtown and BART station area urban, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighborhoods.

Create Specific Plans

STRATEGY

Use specific plans (also known as specific area plans, area plans, or precise plans) to indicate the intent to direct investment to a neighborhood. Solicit community input, do detailed planning and environmental review for a particular neighborhood, and establish a framework for coordinated infill development.

WHY?

A specific plan is a detailed plan created by neighborhood residents, public officials, and developers for a particular neighborhood, and is one of the most common and effective tools to promote infill. A specific plan helps to establish community consensus before development is undertaken. It provides more certainty for developers by signaling the city's intention to focus investment in the area, as well as detailing infrastructure needs and funding opportunities. In most cases, a city can conduct an environmental review of the entire area covered by a specific plan, which in turn simplifies environmental review of individual development projects that are consistent with the plan. (See Conduct a Thorough Environmental Review, p. 22.)

HOW?

1. Identify areas with substantial infill potential, such as downtowns and transit stations or corridors. Also consider declining neighborhoods, historic areas, and neighborhoods where significant redevelopment will occur (for instance, around a factory or mall that is closing).

2. Involve the public in the process, using consultants as needed to help. Ask residents to create a vision for positive neighborhood change to identify how the development can meet community needs. Hold public workshops and design charettes. Organize a citizens' advisory committee to serve as community liaisons over time. Identify other key stakeholders in the city and solicit their input.

3. With the help of design consultants, include design components and public spaces to ensure that new development creates walkable, attractive neighborhoods.

4. Adopt the specific plan and any related urban design guidelines as a general plan amendment. Update the zoning code to match the specific plan. Submit both to the City Council for approval.

5. Actively recruit and assist developers in building to bring the infill vision into reality.

6. Seek planning grants to defray costs. For example, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission currently offers grants through the Transportation for Livable Communities and the Station Area Planning grant programs.

7. Share the cost of the specific plan with developers seeking project approval. Large property owners looking to sell may also benefit from changed plan designations and may be willing to help pay for the plan.

Redwood City has transformed its downtown into a pleasing neighborhood through its specific plan process, which included significant input from residents.

EXAMPLES

- The City of Mountain View has used specific plans extensively to promote good development near transit, downtown revitalization, and other infill development. The city has prepared approximately 32 of these "Precise Plans," many paid for in part by developers.

- Petaluma, Windsor, and Morgan Hill, among many other cities, have created specific plans for their downtowns with the intention of accommodating growth while maintaining their small-town character.

Conduct a Thorough Environmental Review

"If the city does a competent job with CEQA up front, it makes it much easier for developers to go ahead on individual projects. That really makes a big difference."

– Arthur Evans, Chairman, AF Evans Company

STRATEGY

Fully evaluate the ways infill development could affect the environment and the community as part of overall planning efforts. Prevent costs and delays by conducting a thorough, overarching study that covers numerous small infill projects. Make use of exemptions provided for infill projects, if applicable.

WHY?

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is an important tool for environmental protection. It exists to increase awareness about the environmental impacts of development, and enable informed decision-making. Under CEQA, state and local public agencies must consider the environmental effects of projects that they undertake, fund, or allow, with environmental review documents such as Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs). This review is intended to disclose any potentially significant environmental impacts of the project, and identify feasible measures to mitigate those impacts.

CEQA is important for environmental protection, but can sometimes act as a deterrent to infill. Cities and developers can avoid costly CEQA challenges by clearly and explicitly stating all of a project's objectives in the EIR, and by using an open process in planning and developing projects.

HOW?

1. Get legal advice throughout the planning process to foresee and address environmental review issues.

2. Conduct thorough and overarching environmental review for the city's planning documents to analyze the cumulative and other environmental impacts of infill plans and speed the environmental review on individual infill developments.

3. Submit an EIR for the area covered by specific plans, and make sure these plans comply with state specific plan law. Certain individual residential projects within the area may be exempt from CEQA review if they are consistent with the applicable general and specific plans, do not have impacts unanticipated in that EIR, and other conditions are met.

4. Err on the side of conducting a full suite of studies about potential impacts that could occur. The purpose of environmental review is to generate meaningful information for the public and decision-makers. Cities should never issue a "Negative Declaration," unless they are certain that a plan has no potentially significant impacts.

5. Increase community participation in planning efforts to decrease the likelihood of a CEQA challenge. Before preparing an EIR, have early discussions with community members to find out what potential impacts of the project worry them and should be studied. If the city and the community can agree on the best mitigations for potentially significant impacts, the city might successfully adopt a "Mitigated Negative Declaration."

6. "Tier" the environmental analyses for separate but related projects. "Tiering" refers to the practice of applying the same analyses done for a broader Environmental Impact Report, such as one for a general plan, to later reports that address narrower, more specific projects that are consistent with that plan. This approach will avoid repeating general and cumulative analyses and instead focus on the specific environmental issues of individual projects that have not been previously analyzed.[36]

7. Finally, in the case of small infill redevelopment projects that are consistent with the general plan and

A thorough environmental review will address possible impacts of development on natural areas.

Marin County Bicycle Coalition

The impact of increased traffic can be mitigated with new infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians.

zoning, including projects providing affordable housing, cities may be able to apply CEQA exemptions for such projects, as long as the project has no significant project-specific or cumulative effects, and other conditions are met.

EXAMPLES

- Oakland's housing element makes it city policy to expedite environmental review by using CEQA exemptions and focused and tiered Environmental Impact Reports whenever appropriate. Oakland often uses the "Class 32" infill exemption, including once for a downtown high-rise. To make sure an exemption is appropriate, the city requires developers to conduct technical studies of possible impacts on, for example, traffic or cultural resources. Then, in an "infill exemption analysis," staff explains why the project qualifies, and why it does not fall into one of Class 32's exceptions. The analysis and supporting studies are public; people can comment during the project's hearing. Because Oakland already has environmental conditions of approval for all projects, many projects do not need mitigation. This approach speeds infill projects along while still enabling an informed public discussion and identifying and minimizing any environmental impacts.

Take Action with Redevelopment Agencies

STRATEGY

Designate neighborhoods that are particularly stagnant as redevelopment areas under the jurisdiction of a local redevelopment agency. Use the agency to assist in assembling infill parcels, cleaning up polluted land, adding infrastructure and amenities, and coordinating infill development.

WHY?

Redevelopment agencies are one of the most powerful tools a city can use to revitalize a neighborhood. Redevelopment agencies can generate funds through tax-increment financing, which means borrowing against the area's projected increase in future tax revenue. The city can use this money to install needed infrastructure or repair streets, and to purchase properties and then re-sell them without having to make a profit.

Redevelopment agencies have powers that other planning agencies do not. They can purchase and sell land, combine numerous small parcels into larger parcels. Redevelopment agencies have considerable control over the land they own or sell. They can develop land themselves or negotiate with potential developers about what will go there. The resulting public-private partnerships are often fruitful, with more combined expertise, and more access to public and private funding sources, than a single organization could have. Because of the city's investment in these properties, even when the projects are handed over to private developers, they proceed quickly.

HOW?

1. Establish a redevelopment agency and a redevelopment area that covers the entire location targeted for infill development.

2. Make use of the redevelopment agency's tax-increment financing power to raise funds for affordable housing and infrastructure, by passing bonds to be repaid with the expected future increase in tax revenues from a particular area. Require at least 25% of tax-increment funds to be used for affordable housing within city limits. (The state requires 20%.) According to the California Redevelopment Association, this is the second largest source of affordable housing funding after federal funds.[37]

3. Make a redevelopment plan, somewhat similar to a general or specific plan, which conforms to the general plan and any other community planning documents and helps to achieve city goals. Stay closely aligned with the city planning department.

4. Involve citizens by forming a Project Area Committee to provide an important bridge between the redevelopment agency and the community.

5. Create public-private partnerships to leverage funds. Negotiate "Disposition and Development Agreements" with

New construction can get under way with help from redevelopment agencies.

future developers to get access to private capital while ensuring that redevelopment meets city goals.

6. Be aware of any historic political controversy that may exist; use the powers of redevelopment scrupulously; and allay fears going forward by listening to and addressing community concerns and drawing attention to the agency's planned activities.

EXAMPLES

- To build 81 affordable homes in its downtown, Redwood City's redevelopment agency actively assembled seven parcels into a developable site and assisted developers in cleaning up contamination from a former gas station.

- To avoid past mistakes, such as displacement caused by "urban renewal," the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency is proceeding carefully in Bayview-Hunters Point. The city prohibited its own use of eminent domain power on any land currently used, or zoned, for housing. In lotteries for new affordable housing, the city gives first priority to past residents who were displaced and to current residents who are economically disadvantaged. Fifty percent of tax-increment funds goes to affordable housing, to meet a 25% affordable housing production goal.

- Emeryville's active redevelopment agency led the city's transformation from a decaying industrial enclave into a leading high-tech center. Virtually the whole city is a redevelopment district, enabling the city to assemble land for development and clean up brownfields. Improvements include street redesign, toxic cleanup, land assembly, and development of parks and infrastructure.

Community: Creating Better Places to Live

Before embarking on any infill project, cities should determine residents' goals for the neighborhood and listen closely to their concerns and hopes. Infill can bring temporary inconveniences of construction, as well as the more serious risk of displacing current residents. It is also important to ensure that any costs of development do not fall disproportionately on any one group, particularly low-income people or people of color. Infill will go more smoothly if there is proactive planning, good communication with neighbors, and clear benefits for the community.

"Get residents involved early. On the Station Area Plan, from early on, residents took it and ran with it. They wanted things like bike lanes, parks, and affordable homes. They moved the conversation further, and their participation made the result better and stronger."

– Susan Gorin, City Councilmember, Santa Rosa

Work Constructively with Neighbors

STRATEGY

Engage community residents early in the development process to involve them in decision-making. Use existing plans as a starting point for discussing project proposals. Work with existing community groups to gain support for infill projects.

WHY?

One of the biggest obstacles to infill development—and the single biggest concern of many developers—is community opposition. This opposition can stop project approval, prolong the process to the point of infeasibility, or deter developers from even proposing a project in the first place.

This also creates an uneven contest between greenfield and infill development. Outlying farmland and hillsides have fewer people living close by, and less potential opposition from neighbors. By actively helping developers work with the community in infill areas, while discouraging greenfield development (see Adopt an Urban Growth Boundary, p. 16), cities can help level the playing field for infill.

HOW?

1. Reach out to residents to involve them early and meaningfully in planning or development processes.

2. Prepare the way for individual development proposals by preparing a specific plan. Have neighbors help to create this and grapple with some of the tradeoffs involved. As new residents move in, let them know about the neighborhood specific plan and how it deals with traffic, parking, and other concerns. (See Create Specific Plans, p. 21.)

Meetings and workshops, like this one in Santa Rosa, invite input from community residents early in the development process.

3. When a development plan arises that falls within an already-created specific plan, consider reconvening the citizens' group that created the plan to review the project, and if appropriate, serve as its advocates.

4. Host an ongoing forum for education and discussion between the city and residents to discuss planning ideas and create a forward-looking dialogue about the city's direction, highlighting successful examples from other places. This can help build a common language and a cooperative working relationship.

5. Avoid planning jargon and numbers such as residential densities; instead, focus on design drawings or local examples that are more specific and easier to understand.

6. Encourage development by those who know the community well, such as community development corporations. Requests for Proposals can include local knowledge as a criterion.

7. Require developers to meet with neighbors before submitting plans for a project. This will help keep neighbors from feeling "blindsided," and often, designs can be changed to address neighbor concerns. Organize small meetings between developers and key neighborhood leaders before holding general public meetings or workshops; this is an important way to introduce plans to the community.

EXAMPLES

- San Jose's Strong Neighborhoods Initiative enables city planners to work with neighbors to build local leadership and identify and deliver on neighborhood priorities. Every month, San Jose invites local leaders to Neighborhood Roundtable Meetings to discuss current issues and listen to their concerns and suggestions.

- Oakland worked with one of the city's largest community development corporations, the Unity Council, to facilitate the Fruitvale Transit Village development next to the BART station. Community benefits included a health clinic and library branch, a senior center, and shops and restaurants serving the local neighborhood.

- The developer of the proposed Emeryville Marketplace project, TMG Partners, met with neighboring homeowners' associations as part of its public outreach. In response to the homeowners' concerns, TMG's architect created photo montages of the views from their homes and refined the building design to avoid seriously blocking Bay views. This garnered community support and helped advance the environmental impact report certification process.

Make Infill Affordable

STRATEGY

Provide policies and incentives, such as inclusionary housing ordinances and density bonuses, to include affordable homes in infill developments. Build a range of housing types of different sizes and prices.

WHY?

The Bay Area is one of the least affordable housing markets in the country. As of 2007, only 15% of Bay Area residents could afford the median-priced home.[38] In 2008, the California Budget Project reported that the top four most expensive counties to buy a home are in the Bay Area; two more are also in the top ten. A minimum wage Bay Area resident would have to work around 90 hours a week to affordably rent a studio apartment.[39]

Many Bay Area cities are falling far short of providing their fair share of homes people can afford. In *A Place To Call Home: Housing In The San Francisco Bay Area* (2007), the Association of Bay Area Governments found that across the region, Bay Area cities and counties only gave out enough housing permits to meet 47% of the need for affordable housing. Meeting the need will require extensive infill development, and cities must make active efforts to provide homes working families can afford.

HOW?

1. Avoid one-size-fits-all developments; instead, build a mix of homes of different sizes and prices, both for sale and for rent.

2. Update the general plan's housing element to meet housing needs; plan and zone for at least 133% of the housing needed, because on average only three homes are built for every four planned within the specified time period.[40] For affordable housing, plan for at least twice the need.[41]

3. Adopt an inclusionary housing ordinance, and require 20% of new homes to be affordable. Target very-low-income and low-income households. Apply the ordinance to both rental and for-sale projects, though the requirements for these may be different. More than half of all Bay Area cities have inclusionary ordinances; many have said this was one of their most effective actions to increase affordable housing.[42, 43]

4. Give developers flexibility about how they can meet inclusionary requirements, such as land dedication, in-lieu fees, offsite construction, or on-site construction by a nonprofit developer. These can offer greater economies of scale. Be sure, however, that these options will actually result in more

Providence Walk homes in Fairfield are attractive and 100% affordable.

Franklin Street Apartments in Redwood City are next to Caltrain and close to SamTrans light rail, with one- and two-bedroom apartments and townhomes at a range of prices.

affordable homes: often in-lieu fees are set too low to pay for construction. Fees and off-site construction may also run the risk of segregating affordable housing.

5. Provide density bonuses to developers who build affordable housing. State law requires these for developments that include a certain portion of affordable homes.[44] Provide additional bonuses for developers who exceed state and city requirements. Publicize these opportunities and encourage developers to qualify and apply.

6. To make all housing more affordable, reduce the uncertainty developers face about whether they will get permission to build and how long it will take. Create fixed entitlement timelines, and build a reputation for meeting them (see Streamline the Approvals Process, p. 48).

7. Create or expand a Housing Trust Fund for affordable housing. This can provide grants or loans for predevelopment, site acquisition, or construction, or can preserve existing affordable housing. Funds can come from federal Community Development Block Grants, in-lieu fees, jobs-housing linkage fees, sales tax measures, and employer donations for workforce housing.

8. In redevelopment areas, increase the portion of tax-increment financing that goes to affordable housing. Redevelopment agencies must set aside 20% of the tax-increment revenue—projected future revenue of the redevelopment area—for affordable housing. Sixteen Bay Area cities devote at least 25%.[45]

9. Adopt jobs-housing linkage fees so that new commercial and industrial developments help to meet the housing need they create, especially in cities that already have more jobs than homes. Require builders of these developments to either build homes affordable to workers, or pay an in-lieu fee to fund this construction.

10. Preserve existing affordable housing. This is often less costly than building it. Monitor affordable housing that may be lost or converted to market-rate housing, and prepare to take action to keep it affordable. This may include brokering deals between current owners and nonprofit purchasers, providing incentives for landlords to renew Section 8 contracts, or preserving housing during Hope VI reconstruction. Set aside funds for the maintenance and upkeep of affordable housing as well.

11. Use publicly owned land for affordable housing. Take an inventory of city-owned areas like underused parking lots. When privately owned land is available, use city funds to purchase it. Donate, sell, or ground-lease land to affordable housing developers.

12. Reduce costs and provide grants or low-interest loans for nonprofit housing providers. Waive or reduce city fees and reduce the amount of parking required at affordable housing developments; lower-income households tend to own fewer cars.[46]

"We raised $20 million for our affordable housing fund fairly quickly and we have raised an additional $15 million since then. It turns out the local people and businesses were just as excited about our goal as we were. It wasn't a niche issue."

–Taylor Dial, Executive Director, Housing Trust of Santa Clara County

EXAMPLES

- Petaluma has an inclusionary housing general plan policy, and in 2003, became the first city in Sonoma County to adopt a jobs-housing linkage fee. The city's business leaders support the policy, which helps provide housing close to jobs.[47] According to the Association of Bay Area Governments, from 1999–2006 the city produced more than its fair share of housing in every income category.

- Livermore's Down Payment Assistance Program provides low-interest deferred loans to help moderate- and low-income families buy homes. The program provides up to $30,000 or 20% of the price at a 3% interest rate. Households must earn less than 120% of the area median income, be first-time homebuyers, and provide a 3% down payment.

- The City of Walnut Creek charges a fee of $5 per square foot of commercial development to fund affordable housing. Mixed-use buildings are generally charged less. Developers can request the option of building housing or dedicating land instead of paying a fee.

- In 1996, voters in San Francisco passed a $100 million bond measure to fund the acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of affordable rental housing and loans to low-income homebuyers. This significantly boosted the amount of affordable housing produced, at lower income levels than other programs reach.[48]

"Walnut Creek's inclusionary ordinance has been quite successful. It has generated new affordable homes to rent and own, and has made infill development affordable to a wide range of residents."

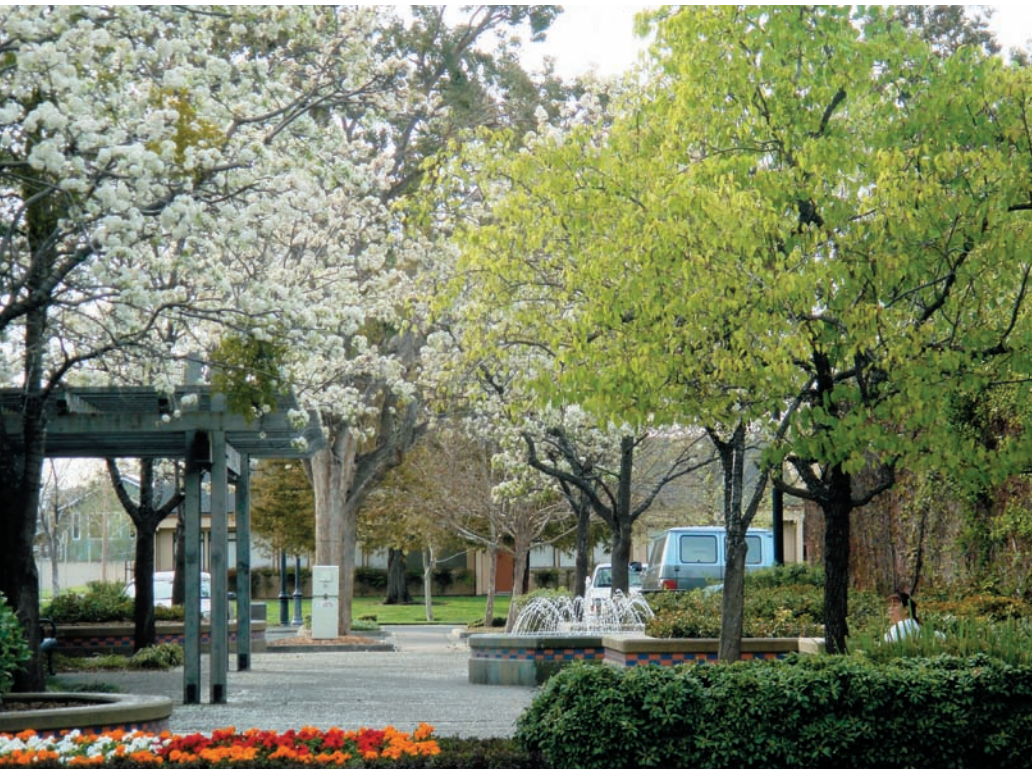
– Amy Hodgett, Housing Program Manager, Walnut Creek

- A consortium of public and private organizations established the Housing Trust of Santa Clara County in 1999 and reached its impressive $20 million goal in only two years. Contributions came from cities, the County, individuals, employers, and foundations. The Trust provides low-interest loans to first-time homebuyers, gap financing for affordable rental housing projects, and funds for homeless assistance.

Revitalize Declining Communities

STRATEGY

Encourage simultaneous investment into targeted neighborhoods from many different sources, including commercial ventures, housing developments, and public investment in public spaces and infrastructure.



Public investment in public spaces, such as this quiet plaza in downtown Pittsburg, helps attract retail and housing development.

WHY?

Some areas suffer from systemic problems with community decline. Resources may have drained away to newer suburbs, and in their place, problems with schools, crime, and unemployment have accumulated. These areas may have excellent access to transportation and jobs, but people may hesitate to move there. Racial and class bias may contribute to this.

Revitalizing a neighborhood often requires public investment as the first step. It is risky for one developer to invest if efforts are not also being made to improve schools, reduce crime, and improve amenities. It is far easier for developers to attract financing and also attract other developers if they can "sell" the city's own investment as well.

HOW?

1. Focus on specific neighborhoods with high infill potential where the city can add a broad range of amenities along with new development.

2. Create specific plans for target neighborhoods. This can signal that a neighborhood is a focal point for revitalization and attract new investment. (See Create Specific Plans, p. 21.)

3. Use a redevelopment agency's tax-increment financing ability to raise money for neighborhood improvements. (See Take Action with Redevelopment Agencies, p. 23.)

4. Catalyze development with street improvements and public buildings. Prepare a street for investment by redesigning and repaving the street, planting trees, and making pedestrian improvements. Build or rehabilitate public buildings to act as anchors for new development.

Before embarking on revitalization, cities should find ways to secure the neighborhood for local residents and businesses.

5. Seek funding from state and regional sources to pay for improvements in targeted neighborhoods. One such source is the Metropolitan Planning Commission's Transportation for Livable Communities program.

6. In building housing, first target people most likely to thrive in an up-and-coming urban neighborhood: artists, young professionals, singles, and couples without children. Then broaden infill housing options to accommodate families.

7. Work with similar cities on tax-sharing mechanisms and on improving the distribution of regional, state, and federal funding for infrastructure. (See Recommendations for Regional and State Action, p. 70.)

Prevent Displacement

STRATEGY

Before undertaking significant infill, take steps to stabilize the neighborhood for renters, current and future homeowners, and local businesses. Provide relocation support to any residents disrupted by redevelopment efforts. Ensure that new development includes affordable homes to preserve mixed-income neighborhoods.

WHY?

Infill development can increase property values and bring new businesses to an area. This has many benefits, but there can also be negative impacts, especially on those who rent their homes or businesses. This can result in the displacement of residents and businesses in favor of others that are more affluent or upscale. Proactive city efforts, tailored carefully to local needs, can help prevent these negative impacts. By stabilizing residents and businesses before beginning infill, moderating the pace of change, and taking steps to share the benefits of new development equally, cities can help residents stay and enjoy an improved neighborhood.

EXAMPLES

- Oakland's revitalization of its Uptown District includes a new city park and the renovation of the historic Fox Theater. Earlier amenities include a plaza in front of City Hall that acts as an "urban living room," a redesign of Washington Park, and extensive improvements at Jack London Square and along the waterfront. These public investments have catalyzed private investment to build new housing and open new businesses.

- Redwood City renovated its historic county courthouse along with Courthouse Square, a large public plaza in front of the renovated courthouse, to provide a focal point for new downtown development, including housing and retail. The square also provides a much-needed public gathering space for community events, drawing people downtown.

HOW?

1. In long-standing neighborhoods, encourage fine-grained infill rather than wholesale neighborhood redevelopment where possible, and help developers find and build on opportunity sites that are not currently occupied. Adding one new building at a time rather than redeveloping entire blocks creates slower, more organic change over time, is easier on residents, and is more likely to result in new development that fits in well with the neighborhood.

2. Require developers to do analyses and mitigation plans for displacement, as they would for traffic impacts.

3. Stabilize existing rental arrangements with landlord-tenant laws that limit how rapidly residential rents can rise.[49]

"If city leaders take action to prevent people from getting pushed out, infill development can lift up the neighborhood and everyone in it—together."

– Angela Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer, PolicyLink

Annual increases, generally of 1–5%, can be linked to inflation or can be flat percentages, with some exceptions allowed for major improvements or increased expenses.[50]

4. Pass "just-cause eviction" ordinances that require certain conditions for evictions, such as failure to pay rent, property damage, or disorderly conduct. This is especially important in cities with rent control, to prevent arbitrary evictions of longstanding tenants. Take other steps to prevent evictions, such as establishing emergency rental assistance funds and landlord-tenant mediation requirements.

5. Consider limiting condominium conversions, the sales of apartments as separate units. Although these can offer opportunities for affordable home ownership, they can also drive out renters and reduce the supply of housing open to lower-income people. An ordinance can limit the total number of units being converted, or can require landlords to give current renters certain privileges, such as the "right of first refusal" to buy, a discount on the purchase price, or reimbursement of moving costs. Oakland requires landlords who convert apartments in certain districts to create an equal number of rental homes to replace them.

6. Promote homeownership before major infill projects begin. Provide first-time homebuyer education. Give loans or grants directly to low- and moderate-income renters to enable them to buy, especially in case of condominium conversion.

7. Stabilize and support local businesses and nonprofit organizations. Help them convert "handshake leases" to fully documented leases, preferably with rates that are locked in for a number of years. Encourage developers, especially in large projects, to choose commercial tenants that complement rather than compete directly with existing merchants. Consider regulating commercial uses to support neighborhood preservation; if necessary, revise zoning to discourage uses, such as big-box retail, that could artificially inflate rental rates for other businesses.

8. Educate current residents about their legal rights as homeowners or tenants, and about the neighborhood's changing real estate market. Homeowners, unaware of rising values or of sales techniques like furniture "staging," may underprice their homes. Tenants may not know what to do if landlords break the law, or may think the law does not apply to them because of their building type or citizenship status.

9. Commit to making affordable housing part of new development in order to maintain a mix of incomes as housing changes hands over time. In the context of rapidly rising land values, cities should focus on preserving existing affordable housing and should act quickly to acquire land for future affordable housing.[51] (See Make Infill Affordable, p. 26.)

10. Consider creating a Community Stabilization Fund. This can pay for eviction prevention, down-payment assistance, rent subsidies, small business incentives, new business incubation, employment training, and other community programs.

11. Preserve the neighborhood's culture and social patterns during infill. Commit to outreach efforts, including language translation, to involve current residents in decision-making.

12. Mark local history and culture with memorials, historical markers, murals, or community art projects. Preserve existing hubs of activity while creating new opportunities for new and old residents to mingle, with community forums, movie nights, farmers' markets, or festivals.

Thiessen Homes

Opportunities for new and old residents to mingle can include farmers' markets and festivals.

EXAMPLES

- Oakland has both rent-control and just-cause eviction ordinances. The annual rent increase, linked to the local Consumer Price Index, was 3.2% in 2008. Owners who make substantial improvements or repairs can raise rents more, but residents can protest those increases. Oakland defines 11 "just causes" for eviction, such as disorderly conduct or failure to pay rent, or to enable the landlord or a family member to move in.

- San Francisco limits condo conversions to 200 per year. Condo lottery tickets cost $250; applicants can re-enter every year at a higher priority without buying another ticket. Residents get the first option to buy. Residents who do not want to buy can stay for an additional year, and elderly or disabled renters can remain for their lifetime. Residents who decide to move within 120 days qualify for $1,000 in relocation assistance.

- San Rafael requires financial relocation assistance for low-income renters being displaced by development projects. Renters who meet certain income limits can receive relocation assistance equal to twice their monthly rent.[55]

Development can bring new job opportunities for residents, especially if cities adopt policies that share economic benefits.

Ensure New Development Benefits the Community

STRATEGY

To increase community approval of infill development, adopt policies that share the economic and other benefits of new development with the surrounding neighborhood and the city.

WHY?

Infill can help meet community goals, such as providing more housing and jobs for local residents, supporting local businesses, bringing in more tax revenue, and raising the standard of living throughout the community.

This can require thoughtful consideration of economic and social justice issues. For example, a city might wish to reduce commute traffic by creating more local jobs. But traffic will only decrease if local residents have the skills to do these jobs, and if new businesses hire them; to achieve this, the city may need to do focused outreach and job training. Doing this analysis ahead of time will make the city's infill efforts more effective and better for residents.

HOW?

1. Include clear goals and policies in planning documents to ensure infill benefits the full community, and consider establishing citywide requirements to make sure all developments, at least those above a certain size, provide community benefits. These benefits can include affordable housing, childcare and health care, public open space, and funding for schools and parks.

2. In the general plan or a separate economic development plan, create a plan for good jobs. Just as the housing element specifies how the city will create affordable housing, do an analysis to show how the city will

"The economic impacts to the neighborhood have been powerful: new apartments; new, quality jobs; new businesses owned by local entrepreneurs; and significant tax revenue. The Fruitvale Transit Village is a win-win for the community and the city."

– Gilda Gonzales, CEO, Unity Council

create jobs with family-supporting wages and benefits.

3. For especially large projects or projects receiving city resources, require additional community benefits, and help community groups negotiate these. The community benefits agreement is a legal contract that lists benefits the developer will provide in exchange for community support, and is part of the development agreement between the city and the developer. If a redevelopment agency is overseeing the infill project, include community benefit requirements in the request for development proposals.

4. Help local residents find jobs from new development. First-source or local-hiring policies can direct construction and permanent jobs to local residents and contractors. Local job-placement services can give residents priority job notification. Large developments can fund job-training programs at local schools.

5. If necessary, consider limiting the conversion of light industrial or commercial lands to residential use to ensure a range of jobs are available, particularly in communities with more homes than jobs.

6. Prevent new development from endangering the health of local workers and residents. Use environmental safety laws to protect residents from toxic substance releases and protect the city from having to deal with brownfields. Use industrial safety policies to protect workers from injury.

7. In new projects, make sure some of the retail space provides services that local residents can use. Many neighborhoods lack grocery stores, banks, and shops with household supplies. Enabling people to shop within walking distance reduces traffic and parking demand, and is an easy way to provide local benefits from new development.

EXAMPLES

- In Santa Rosa's new Railroad Square development, the Request for Proposals included a broad range of community benefit requirements. Potential developers of this $150-million transit hub had to commit to: hiring union contractors with prevailing wages and apprenticeship programs; making a good-faith effort to hire half the construction workforce from Marin and Sonoma counties; using green building practices with LEED Gold certification; providing 15% low- or moderate-income housing and neighborhood-serving retail; and requiring businesses in the development to pay a living wage.[52] The Accountable Development Coalition, composed of labor, environmental, and housing advocates, helped negotiate these provisions and will negotiate a community benefits agreement with the future site developer.

- Hayward offers small business loans from a revolving loan fund; any business receiving a loan must sign a First Source Hiring Agreement to offer 51% of the resulting jobs to residents with low and moderate incomes.

- When planning the Bayer campus expansion in 1992–1993, Berkeley negotiated a development agreement that included creating and funding a biotechnology job-training program in local high schools. This gives local youth, particularly those from low-income families, access to well-paying jobs. The program, now also funded by other biotech firms, has placed almost 900 students in jobs and internships.[53,54]

Planning space for a grocery store will provide a clear benefit to local residents from infill.

Create More and Better Public Spaces

STRATEGY

To make urban living more pleasant and safe, provide well-maintained public spaces in each neighborhood, like parks, recreational facilities, and community gardens. Create safe routes children can use to walk to these places and to school, and safer streets for pedestrians. Provide adequate funds to keep parks and other public spaces safe and clean.

WHY?

Cities are not always seen as friendly, especially for families; when people leave cities for suburbs, one amenity they may be seeking is proximity to open space.

The Trust for Public Land estimates that across the United States, as many as two-thirds of people living in large cities do not live near a park, playground, or open space.

Cities can remedy this by providing amenities people expect from suburbs, such as open space and safety, while also providing uniquely urban amenities like vibrant streets and cultural attractions. Cities should design shared public spaces to meet residents' needs for open space, physical activity, and socializing. A neighborhood approach is more effective than a project-by-project approach; developers can help with funding, but privately built amenities cannot replace public improvements that serve the entire neighborhood.

Well-maintained public spaces, like this Concord plaza, can become outdoor living rooms.

HOW?

1. Require outdoor recreation opportunities within walking distance of all residents. This can include parks, schools, recreation centers, playing fields, and swimming pools.

2. As part of open space and land-use planning, plan for a variety of different types of open spaces. These can include urban plazas, small "pocket parks" or "tot lots," barbecues, sports fields, places for social gatherings, community gardens, urban plazas and promenades, and larger wilderness areas. Include playgrounds in local parks.

3. Plan for safe routes through neighborhoods. Pay special attention to routes between homes and schools, so children can walk or bike to school on their own.

4. Treat streetscapes as important public open space. Make room on sidewalks, and provide benches and other features to create a comfortable gathering space. Make streets safer with traffic-calming measures, as well as tools like curb bulb-outs, median refuges, and crosswalks that are raised or textured, or have flashing lights.

5. Design public plazas and parks for a full range of activities—eating lunch, walking, resting, people-watching, exercising, etc. Consider different ages, cultures, abilities, and inclinations. Make sure nearby destinations, such as businesses and lunch spots, will keep the area active at different times of day. Meet physical needs with benches, bathrooms, and water fountains, and take into account factors like wind, sun, and shade.

6. Provide adequate funding for maintenance, cleaning, and public safety services. If parks and streets are not clean, safe, and well-maintained, people will not use them.

7. Create regular programs in public spaces, to connect experiences to places and create a sense of community ownership. Holiday festivals, parades, weekly farmers' markets, outdoor movies, and other events can bring the community together and make its public spaces well-loved.

"Our restored theater and new plaza made a great public space that started a downtown resurgence. Surrounding storefronts re-invented themselves. New restaurants and shops sprang up. It's bringing people downtown, and not just for the movies."

– Stephen Scott, Principal Planner/Zoning Administrator, San Mateo

Santana Row

Public spaces stay lively when they are surrounded with varied destinations that create activity at different times of day.

8. Encourage schools to open up their buildings and recreational facilities to the public, or create shared parks using city land, on which schools agree to do the maintenance. This provides more open space for schools and the public, costs the city less in maintenance, and offers more opportunities for the community to engage with local schools.

EXAMPLES

- Tucked into one of the most densely developed parts of San Francisco, Portsmouth Square is sometimes called Chinatown's "living room." Two play areas provide separate spaces for children under five and for older children. Nearby benches allow parents to watch children while chatting with friends. Upper and lower courtyards offer areas to play card games and dice. Programs include afterschool tutoring and bilingual citizenship classes.

- To help keep San Francisco's city parks safe and clean, the Neighborhood Parks Council started ParkScan.org, an online reporting system for maintenance and safety issues in the city's 200-plus parks. Each report is tracked and forwarded to the appropriate city department. Anyone can use the website; the Neighborhood Parks Council also works with neighborhood groups to train volunteers. In 2007, over 1,500 reports were made, largely about graffiti and trash; 68% were closed, generally within a few days.

- In the North San Jose redevelopment area, all new residential areas must be within 1,000 feet of an existing or planned park. The city is also working to create a 100-mile trail network, and provides funding for the community organization Our City Forest, which involves Silicon Valley residents in tree planting and care, and has planted 40,000 shade trees around San Jose.

- Courthouse Square in downtown Santa Rosa is a central city park where tall redwoods encircle a plaza with tables and benches. Offices, cafes, shops, and brewpubs surround the park, attracting people from morning to night. Regular events include weekly lunchtime programs, a Wednesday night farmers' market and street fair, a First Friday Art Walk, and an annual El Dia de los Muertos celebration. The Recreation and Parks Department has also started a special project to bring arts and cultural events into public spaces throughout downtown.

Design: Making the Most of the Infill Site

When planning for infill, cities need to provide the conditions to make it successful. This includes making sure that new development will be dense enough to add life to chosen districts, create safe, walkable streets, and support local businesses and public transportation. This also includes dealing with parking in a way that will increase foot traffic, decrease car traffic, and free up land for better uses. Streets and developments can be made more attractive and more environmentally friendly with plantings that filter or absorb stormwater. After the planning for growth is complete, cities can use design guidelines to specify how new development will occur to make the neighborhood more attractive and preserve its character. These guidelines also can make sure that new housing meets the needs of diverse residents.

"It's gotten a lot easier to build the kind of projects I build. Density's come out of the closet."

– Patrick Kennedy, Owner, Panoramic Interests

Plan for Density

STRATEGY

Review and update plans and zoning codes so they allow appropriate densities, heights, setbacks, and floor-area ratios in infill locations. Eliminate maximum densities and set minimum heights and densities to make sure land is used efficiently in targeted districts. Integrate a variety of types of homes into existing areas. Give generous density bonuses and allow density credits to be traded among property owners.

Good design starts with planning for enough density to create walkable streets.

WHY?

Many Bay Area cities and towns have zoning codes and general plans that can actually work against creating good infill development. These counterproductive rules limit residential densities, prohibit mixed-use development, set one- or two-story height limits, and prohibit or limit secondary units in single-family-home districts. Regulations that require portions of a property to be devoted to parking, open space, or setbacks also reduce the amount of buildable space and make it less likely a project will "pencil out" (pay for its own construction and generate some profit), making it less likely that any developers will want to build there. But pleasant communities can be created through other means, including good design and making room for more residents.

HOW?

1. Allow more intensive infill development in appropriate areas, particularly downtown and near transit. Either raise densities directly in current districts, or use overlay zones to reduce restrictions.

2. Look for and revise various potential limits on density, from unnecessarily low dwelling units per acre maximums, lot coverage limits, or floor-area ratios, to unnecessarily high requirements for parking, setbacks, or open space.

Address this in both the general plan and zoning codes. (See Table 1, below.)

3. Eliminate density maximums and establish density minimums in targeted areas. For instance, Concord has a minimum density of 44 units per acre in its downtown.[55] Consider using design regulations to address projects' bulk rather than focusing on the number of housing units. (See Establish Urban Design Guidelines, p. 40.)

4. Review height limits and increase or eliminate them where appropriate, and establish minimum heights. Many traditional American towns and bustling "Main Streets" have taller limits than seen in many places today.

5. Reduce minimum lot sizes for lower-density residential development to use space more efficiently.

6. Allow a variety of denser housing types to be mixed in with single-family detached housing. (Design guidelines can help unify the neighborhood's appearance.) In Palo Alto and Mountain View, pockets of townhomes and apartments have blended gracefully into single-family neighborhoods. Large houses can be split into several flats.

7. Encourage second units on existing single-family properties in all residential districts, and allow them to be two stories high where possible.

8. Establish density bonuses beyond what the state requires, and encourage developers to apply for them. Density bonuses help builders provide affordable homes or public amenities by rewarding them with extra stories, extra units, or lower requirements for parking. Some cities have inclusionary housing ordinances that mean every project qualifies. Cities should encourage developers to qualify and apply.

9. Institute transfers of development rights. These allow developers to build above zoned densities in infill locations by buying rights from property owners whose land will be preserved as open space.

10. Encourage air rights leases or purchases of unused space above parking lots and low-rise buildings. These can be done as transfers of development rights. Consider height or density bonuses to make transferred rights economically attractive. These should be clear and simple, and include entitlements so developers can be certain they will be able to build. Air rights leases on publicly owned parking lots and other land can also provide income for public agencies.

Table 1: **Change Planning and Zoning to Promote Infill**[56]

	Typical current practice	Smart growth alternative
Maximum densities	Many suburban cities cap residential densities at 20–40 dwelling units per acre even in high-density districts, and at as little as 1–4 units per acre in low-density districts.	Eliminate maximum densities; instead, use height, bulk, and/or design restrictions. Institute minimum densities.
Minimum densities	Many cities have no minimum densities at all.	Establish minimum residential densities of at least 10–15 units per acre for single-family homes and at least 25–35 units per acre for suburban multifamily and downtown development; these should be much higher in central urban areas.
Minimum lot sizes	5,000 square feet or more	If any, 2,000 square feet for townhouse lots or 3,000 square feet for duplex or single-family detached lots, which is still large enough for a small backyard.
Dwelling units allowed per lot	Much urban land zoned for single-family detached housing (one unit per lot)	Encourage second units on existing lots in all residential districts. Allow multiple units in single-family districts if building design conforms to neighborhood context.
Height restrictions, downtown areas	Often 3–4 stories (36–45 feet) even in town centers; no minimum	At least 5–6 stories (55–70 feet) in downtowns and neighborhood centers; consider 10–20 stories. Also consider eliminating height restrictions in central areas. Institute a minimum of 2–3 stories or more.
Height restrictions, residential areas	2–2½ stories (24–30 feet)	At least 3–3½ stories (35–40 feet)
Lot coverage	Often less than 50 percent of the site	No maximum if parks and other public open spaces are nearby; encourage rooftop use for open space
Floor-area ratio	Often 0.5–0.8 maximum in downtown locations; often 0.3–0.4 in suburban locations	At least 1.0–2.0 maximum, 0.5 minimum in downtowns, or use height limits instead
Front setbacks	Often 15–30 feet minimum except in downtown areas; no maximum	No minimum necessary in many areas; consider adding a maximum setback (a "build-to line")

Reducing parking requirements can encourage biking and walking, especially if the development's design is pedestrian friendly and close to public transportation.

"You can't stop sprawl without making room for development in the city's core. That includes requiring less parking near transit—otherwise you won't get the density you need to make projects pencil."

– Carol Galante, President and CEO, BRIDGE Housing

EXAMPLES

- San Rafael has significantly increased its capacity for dense, mixed-use development downtown. Since 1993, the city has enabled housing in almost all land-use designations, cut parking requirements in half, doubled building height limits, and increased allowable downtown densities from 42 to 72 homes per acre.

- Redwood City's Downtown Precise Plan is a form-based code that focuses on buildings' size, shape, and design. It permits housing in any area of downtown and does not prescribe specific densities. It allows buildings up to 12 stories tall in the downtown's center, and steps the heights down around the edges to blend with existing neighborhoods.

- In October 2007, Santa Rosa passed a specific plan that increased densities in the downtown near Railroad Square. The plan allowed for a range of building heights, up to ten stories in several blocks of the downtown core, and did not restrict residential density, adding room for 2,460 more homes than originally allowed in the general plan.

- The U.S. Postal Service negotiated an air-rights agreement with the Chinatown Community Development Center in San Francisco to create Larkin-Pine Senior Housing, 63 affordable homes and two outdoor courtyards with roof gardens on top of a post office.

Reduce Parking Standards

STRATEGY

Update zoning codes and general plans to require fewer parking spaces per housing unit, which will provide more homes and reduce traffic. Ensure the costs of parking are paid by those who use it. Support this with policies that facilitate car-free living.

WHY?

Excessive parking requirements waste valuable land; discourage transit use, walking, and biking; and add enormous costs to infill development. Surface parking can cost $9,000 per space; more land-efficient garages or underground parking can cost $30,000–$50,000 per

Parking Concerns

Won't reducing parking requirements increase traffic and nuisance to neighbors?

Reducing parking requirements can actually reduce traffic. Parking spaces at both retail and residential locations are magnets for cars. For instance, a small San Francisco State University study commissioned by Livable City in 2005 found that parking spaces in residential developments each generated several car trips per week, and that residents of buildings with one space per unit drove considerably more than residents of buildings with reduced parking requirements.[57]

Competition for street parking is a different question. Inadequate parking throughout a neighborhood or poor management of existing parking can indeed lead to spillover into adjacent neighborhoods or drivers circling blocks looking for spaces.

Many solutions exist. Designing for pedestrians can help encourage foot, instead of car, traffic. Permit parking can guarantee street parking for neighborhood residents. Better public information about nearby garages can help reduce the number of drivers circling. Steps to encourage local employees to take transit, carpool, bike, or walk can free up spaces for shoppers or residents. Developments can give out free transit passes to all residents.

Cities can actively develop "transportation demand management" programs to implement these policies.

"Cities need to get more flexible on parking requirements. We have built over 6,000 homes and have a good database on actual parking needs. But you almost never get a break on parking requirements."

– Fran Wagstaff, former President, Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition

space, respectively. This drives up housing prices and may make entire developments economically infeasible. Easy parking also encourages more driving, prioritizing convenience for cars rather than the safety or comfort of people on foot. Many suburban Bay Area cities still require two or more spaces per home, even downtown. Some require three to five spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial development—the equivalent of having to provide as much space for parking as the entire store floor.

By discouraging parking and encouraging walking, cities can provide more housing and amenities for residents—with less traffic impact and less land wasted on parking lots. Bay Area cities as diverse as Half Moon Bay, Pittsburg, and Vacaville require only about one space per home downtown. Berkeley and San Francisco require even less. San Jose has low parking requirements downtown and near transit stations, and provides automatic reductions for low-income housing, senior housing, and housing near transit.[58]

HOW?

1. Significantly reduce minimum parking requirements in infill locations well-served by transit. (See Table 2, p. 39.)

2. Unbundle the cost of parking from the cost of housing: encourage infill developers and building managers to separate parking charges from rent or purchase prices.

3. Near transit, allow "car-free" housing, where buildings do not provide parking and cities do not issue residents on-street parking permits. This frees people without cars from paying to subsidize parking for others.

4. Allow stacked parking (see Parking Solutions, p. 40) and tandem parking spaces (where one car parks directly behind another car) to save space.

5. Reduce parking requirements on housing for populations less likely to own cars: lower-income people, students, seniors, and people with disabilities.

6. Promote "parking cash out" at workplaces. State law requires some employers to offer employees a monthly cash payment in lieu of parking. This reduces commuter parking demand by about 11% while helping businesses attract workers.[59] Require parking to be listed separately on leases (if not, employers are automatically exempt) or extend the requirement to all employers.

7. Require or reward other commute reduction strategies. These include tax-free Commuter Checks, direct transit subsidies, financial incentives for carpooling or biking, bike lockers and showers, or parking charges. Use lower parking requirements to reward businesses that use these strategies.

8. Support car-sharing and consider sponsoring a bike-sharing program near transit stations. Encourage developers of large infill projects to provide space for shared cars that residents or workers can reserve and use for an hourly fee.

9. Allow parking to be shared where appropriate, to be used by residents at night and office workers or shoppers by day. Analyze parking need and supply for the neighborhood as a whole, rather than project by project.

10. In town centers, allow developers to pay in-lieu fees to support a joint parking garage that will encourage visitors to park once and walk to multiple destinations.

11. Provide more on-street parking by limiting curb cuts and instead putting driveways in alleys behind buildings. On-street parking can make streets safer as drivers slow to park.

12. Institute permit or metered parking for street parking. Remove time limits but vary the price of parking based on demand.

Redwood City offers transportation alternatives to help residents get around without driving.

EXAMPLES

- Developer Panoramic Interests provides stacked parking in several Berkeley projects using German-made hydraulic lifts. Cars are stored in two or three levels, and can be retrieved within a few moments by pushing a button. Berkeley has parking lifts in 16 mixed-use projects.

- For its downtown revitalization, Redwood City replaced parking meter time limits with higher parking prices based on demand for the individual parking space. This generates higher turnover at more expensive "prime" spots, reducing the lost time and traffic caused by drivers searching for spaces.

- In San Francisco's new Rincon Hill neighborhood, the city has no residential parking minimums, and has set maximums of a half-space per unit or one space per unit if lifts or valet parking are used. These standards are coupled with a "transit first" policy and requirements to accommodate car-sharing. Some downtown districts constrain parking even more.

- San Mateo's Rail Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Plan hopes to eliminate one out of every four car trips. Large projects must mitigate driving needs as much as possible through measures such as bike lanes. The studies that set projects' parking requirements take into account this reduced need to drive.

Table 2: **Change Parking Standards to Promote Infill**[60]

	Typical current practice	Smart growth alternative
Downtown or transit-oriented locations	2 spaces per unit minimum	1 space per unit maximum. Allow car-free housing in locations close to transit. Encourage car-sharing and allow some required spaces to be used for car-sharing in large projects.
Residential neighborhood locations	2 off-street spaces per unit minimum	1 off-street space per unit minimum; require 1 additional on-street space for larger unit sizes. Consider parking maximums. Provide automatic reductions for affordable housing or housing for students, seniors, or people with disabilities.
Parking charges	None mandated	In residential settings, "unbundle" the cost of parking from the cost of housing by requiring separate fees for parking spaces in apartments and condominiums. In employment settings, require "cash-out" option where parking is subsidized.
Retail	3–5 spaces per 1000 square feet minimum, even in the downtown	No minimum downtown, near transit, and in neighborhood centers; elsewhere, 2 spaces per 1000 square feet. Allow businesses to pay in-lieu fee instead of providing parking on-site.
Office	3 spaces per 1000 square feet minimum	No minimum in downtown, transit-oriented, or neighborhood center locations; elsewhere, 1–2 spaces per 1000 square feet. Provide incentives to reduce commuter parking demand. Encourage local hiring.

Parking Solutions

Bay Area cities have come up with a number of innovative solutions to the parking challenge.

One approach is to save space with parking lifts. Parking lifts have been used for over 40 years in Europe to double or even triple parking garage capacity by "stacking" cars on automated lifts. The hydraulic lifts can be operated by car owners or parking attendants. Getting the car typically involves pressing a button or flicking a switch, then waiting a few seconds for the car to come up or down to ground level. Increasing garage capacity can relieve the need for additional garages, providing space for more attractive, productive uses like retail, entertainment, housing, and offices. The first lifts in America were installed in the Shattuck Avenue Lofts in Berkeley in 1995. Several hundred more have since been successfully installed in Berkeley, and additional lifts are being installed statewide at a rate of 300–400 per year.

Another approach is to reduce the need for parking by encouraging car-sharing. City CarShare is a successful Bay Area nonprofit car-sharing organization created in 2001. It charges usage fees based on time and mileage in exchange for car access any time of day. Several Bay Area developments provide City CarShare spaces in their parking lots. Because car-sharers rarely own cars and are more likely to use alternative transportation instead of driving, cities can reduce parking requirements for developments that make space for car-sharing.

Cities can use other strategies to provide daytime parking for downtown shopping. Sharing parking spaces is one option, between shoppers during the day, and restaurant and theater patrons at night. Funding for central parking districts and garages can come from parking fees or a downtown business association.

Cities can also reduce parking congestion through demand-based pricing. In this system, more desirable parking spots cost more, resulting in faster turnover and more availability. When properly employed, on average, only 85% of spaces are full, so drivers spend less time searching for spots and adding to congestion. In 2008, San Francisco announced a federally funded pilot project called SFpark. In addition to using variable pricing, SFpark will enable people to pay remotely with cell phones, and to check parking availability online and with cell phones, thanks to sensors beneath the parking spaces.

Klaus Parking System/parklift.com

Hydraulic parking lifts, a solution from Europe, have been installed in Berkeley and other Bay Area cities. Car-sharing is another great way to reduce parking demands.

- Palo Alto allows its planning director the discretion to defer up to half of the parking requirement if there is reason to believe it might not be needed and could be added later. At the city's California Park Apartments, near a Caltrain station, deferring 22 parking spaces made space for a playground, lawn, and barbeque area.

Establish Urban Design Guidelines

STRATEGY

Create street and urban design guidelines, and consider form-based codes, to ensure that new projects by different builders work together to create attractive, walkable neighborhoods, while maintaining local historic character.

WHY?

Design guidelines define the public face of the city. Design guidelines regulate how buildings look and how they relate to one another and to the street, orchestrating the efforts of numerous individual builders to realize the city's vision. They are a tool to ensure that infill is done well, preserving local architectural and historical context, making room for sun and views, and putting people first, instead of cars. They can also make sure individual buildings relate to the entire community, instead of just the people who live and work there. The past few decades have seen significant advancements in knowledge about how to design successful infill, based on research and the efforts of national movements such as New Urbanism.

HOW?

1. Begin with the city's own land, particularly its streets and sidewalks. For important streets, narrow roads and widen sidewalks, use trees to create a sheltering canopy, and put utilities underground. Add street lighting, benches, lights, and planter boxes to help the street serve as outdoor living space.

Street and urban design guidelines, governing things like the use of awnings, can unify diverse facades and maintain local character.

2. Adopt urban design guidelines for infill development in particular areas or citywide. Guidelines should include easy-to-understand graphics and photographs showing desirable building types and site planning goals.

3. Replace or augment the city's zoning with a "form-based code." This regulates the building "envelope"—size, shape, location, and relation to the street—more than the uses of the indoor space or the density. These give builders more flexibility to decide what uses to have or how many units to include.

4. Downtown buildings should create a solid streetfront with setback and build-to lines to keep buildings a consistent distance from the street and close enough that they create a pedestrian-oriented street environment. Allow higher-density buildings at intersections to create strong corners.

5. Make building entrances visible to pedestrians in commercial and residential areas. Welcome visitors with awnings and front porches.

6. Ensure that streetscapes and building facades have variety and interest. Avoid blank walls or long, uniform building fronts. Window space on street-facing walls provides interesting window shopping. On large buildings, break up facades and create the appearance of several smaller buildings. Encourage building owners to enliven sidewalks with outdoor seating and clothing racks.

7. Avoid making pedestrians walk past a long parking lot or look directly into a parking garage. Place parking out of sight, behind or under buildings, not in front of buildings or on the ground floor. If the ground floor must be used, screen parking from view.

8. Fit new buildings to the neighborhood context. Building heights can be "stepped down" to create transitions between taller buildings and lower surrounding developments. If desired, create a characteristic "look" for a particular neighborhood by requiring particular materials, colors, roof slopes, signage, or architectural details.

9. Strive for flexible designs that can accommodate other uses as neighborhoods change.

10. Preserve and restore natural features wherever possible to create focal points and a refreshing feel. During infill, restore creeks or natural areas, preserve heritage trees, and plant native vegetation.

EXAMPLES

- In 2001, Hercules was the California's first city to adopt a form-based code.[61] In redeveloping 426 acres of a former explosives factory, the code laid out a plan for buildings with defined fronts in local architectural styles,

Hercules has paid careful attention to urban design to create inviting, walkable streets.

facing central streets. The result has been a neotraditional street grid, with more than 500 homes whose density supports public transit. The city has also used redevelopment funding to create two transit terminals, which will anchor denser development close to regional rail, ferry, and bus services.

- Cloverdale completed an excellent pedestrian-oriented redesign of Cloverdale Boulevard in its downtown. The 67-foot-wide street was converted from four travel lanes and two parking lanes into two travel lanes, a mix of parallel and diagonal parking, and sidewalks 12–18 feet in width, enough for sidewalk sales, planters, and seating. Street trees and lampposts separate pedestrians from the street, and bulb-outs and textured crosswalks protect pedestrians while crossing.

Manage Stormwater Wisely

STRATEGY

Plan for and proactively manage the city's stormwater to reduce the likelihood of flooding and keep local waters healthy. Use design strategies that deal with stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. Assist developers in meeting stormwater requirements.

Curbless streets and swales are design strategies that treat stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. Permeable paving without curbs allows rain to flow into the ground before going to the Bay, cleaning the water and reducing flood risk.

WHY?

When rain falls on streets and parking lots, it picks up pollutants and carries them to streams and the Bay; this runoff is the Bay's leading cause of pollution.[62] Unlike in natural landscapes where water is absorbed and filtered by plants and soil, on paved surfaces, water flows faster and at much greater volumes. The water that runs along these sealed surfaces is called stormwater, and it can cause flooding, erosion of stream beds, and reduced water quality.

Many cities are now required to minimize stormwater-related pollution. Under the Clean Water Act, pollution sources—including city storm sewer systems—must receive a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit from the Regional Water Quality Control Board.[63] To receive this permit, cities must require development projects to install and maintain measures to minimize stormwater runoff, minimize stormwater contact with pollutants, and treat runoff on-site.

HOW?

1. Develop a citywide plan for stormwater that considers the city's rainfall and watersheds. Identify opportunity sites that could be restored or used for stormwater absorption or filtration.

2. Design city streets and parks to catch and filter stormwater. Tree wells and median strips offer good opportunities to clean or absorb stormwater. Parks and soccer fields can double as areas for water detention or infiltration.

3. Inform and educate developers about stormwater management early in the planning and design phases. Early information can help reduce costs. In addition to the minimum legal requirements, inform developers about "Low Impact Development" measures like rooftop gardens, and how these can make projects more effective at managing stormwater and more attractive as well. Educate city staff so they can help.

"People get too focused on density, as if that's the only thing that counts. The goal needs to be creating pieces of the landscape—urban or suburban—that you'd want to spend time in, or live in, yourself."

– John King, Urban Design Writer, *San Francisco Chronicle*

4. Ensure that stormwater mitigations will be maintained after the project is built. Permeable paving, for example, may not work well if leaves block the pavement openings.

5. Make use of appropriate exemptions. Regional guidelines affecting most Bay Area cities to be released in late 2008 may provide exemptions from some rules for certain brownfield, low-income housing, senior housing, and transit-oriented development projects, though careful site design is still required.[64]

EXAMPLES

- Emeryville requires developers to go beyond current state stormwater requirements by requiring the use of plants rather than mechanical filtering where feasible. The city also requires developers to meet with a city staff person about stormwater to discuss site design early during the planning process. The city's website and stormwater guidelines list stormwater management ideas for development projects in dense areas, including flow-through planter boxes, gardens, bio-filtration swales, and roof plantings.[65]

- The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is creating watershed plans for the city, integrating stormwater-friendly design into the city's Better Streets Plan. The PUC provides technical assistance to developers, and has already made it legal to harvest and reuse rainwater for irrigation or toilet flushing.

- Livermore used its South Livermore Valley Specific Plan to require the inclusion of stormwater best practices, using native grasses, in each development. In the new El Sevillano development, swales with native vegetation mimic natural creeks to channel and filter stormwater.

- Palo Alto has integrated stormwater management requirements into its municipal codes. In 2003, the city banned copper roofs and gutters to help prevent water pollution, and it is launching a grant program to help create permeable pavements and green roofs.

Design Housing to Meet a Range of Needs

STRATEGY

Encourage the creation of a range of housing and outdoor spaces to accommodate diverse populations of different ages, cultures, and stages of life. Include design features that incorporate research findings about how people use space.

"I'd like to live closer to my job, but there aren't many places that are affordable for me and my family. I know a lot of my fellow caretakers feel that way too."

– Amy Hall, Homecare Worker, SEIU United Long-Term Care Workers Union Local 6434, Fairfield

WHY?

Good infill housing is about more than units and square footage. The design of a place can have a significant impact on the well-being of its residents. This requires planning for a diversity of people and uses, and providing a range of housing types and sizes, with open space included. Thoughtful design can build community, and make developments safer, more pleasant, and more inviting. Good design will help create developments that are well-loved and well-used by generations to come.

HOW?

1. Plan for a range of housing sizes and types. Consider the housing needs of singles, families with young children or teenagers, extended families, and elders.

2. Provide a range of outdoor spaces in multifamily housing. Include private outdoor spaces, such as small patios or balconies, for storing equipment, hosting small gatherings, or sitting alone outside. Include semi-private space, such as a courtyard shared with neighbors, for allowing children to play outside safely or hosting larger gatherings.

3. Create clear transitions between public and private spaces, like porches, stoops, or half-story elevation changes. Transition zones allow residents to interact with the outside world—to watch passers-by, welcome guests, or talk to strangers without inviting them in. They help separate people's personal lives from the bustle of the street, making both passers-by and residents more comfortable.

4. Promote safety by requiring design elements that create a clear sense of ownership of and care for semi-public spaces and promote a sense of community. Allow people to modify their homes and the surrounding areas in a way that claims and personalizes the space. Encourage frequent windows, and doorways and porches that face the street or courtyard, to put more "eyes on the street" and help people meet their neighbors.

5. Work with, and encourage developers to work with, architects and urban designers whose designs are informed

Neighborhoods look and feel safer when residents can modify their homes and the surrounding areas in ways that personalize their space.

by research about how people actually use space, including post-occupancy evaluations.

EXAMPLES

- In Mountain View, The Crossings, an 18-acre site that was formerly a shopping center, is a neighborhood with 358 townhouses, condominiums, and single-family detached homes near a Caltrain station. Front porches and doorways face onto community open spaces, including a bandstand and a tot lot; pedestrian pathways enable residents to walk to the nearby grocery store. Residents report they know their neighbors, feel safe, and think the neighborhood is a good place for families.[66]

- Saint Francis Square is a well-designed three-story affordable housing development in San Francisco's Western Addition. Approximately 300 apartments wrap around three semi-public courtyards that are the heart of the complex with tall pines, basketball courts, a garden, and a playground. They host everything from dance classes to weddings. The apartments' orientation allows parents working inside to watch children playing outside. The development is very popular, and many of its original residents still live there, more than four decades after its creation.[67]

Development: Strengthening and Streamlining the Process

Development is an inherently complex and risky activity. Small changes can sometimes push a profitable project into bankruptcy: if a short delay pushes a project's construction into a long rainy season, for example. When deciding whether to build in a particular city, developers consider many factors related to both risk and cost. Although more and more developers are embracing infill development, many are still daunted by the challenges of financing complex mixed-use developments, spending more time and more money on permitting, and facing the financial risks associated with developing in a busy urban area. To help make infill development more attractive than greenfield development, cities need to mitigate these additional risks and costs.

Amanda Kobler

(Left) Private and public partnerships can help restore brownfields; Emeryville has cleaned up contaminated lots, making room for new homes. (Right) Emeryville brownfields before redevelopment.

Clean Up and Redevelop Brownfields

STRATEGY

Take an active role in bringing together landowners, regulators, consultants, and technical resources to clean up brownfields. Seek technical assistance and funding sources, and make them available to landowners. Encourage the involvement of the private sector and engage in public/private partnerships to restore the environmental and economic health of brownfield sites. Involve the community throughout the process.

WHY?

Brownfields are urban lands that go underutilized because of real or perceived toxic contamination from earlier uses, such as gas stations or factories. Because brownfield cleanup is often complicated and expensive, and may involve liability risks, developers often avoid brownfields and landowners may not even try to sell them. Without city intervention, brownfields will persistently depress surrounding land values. Brownfields are most common in less affluent neighborhoods, where their negative impacts fall on already underprivileged populations. By cleaning and redeveloping these sites, city planners can improve local residents' health and safety, address issues of environmental justice, make unproductive spaces useful again, and promote local economic growth.

HOW?

1. Address brownfields head-on. Brownfield cleanup often appears more daunting than it is. Inventory and prioritize all brownfield sites, and help make information available about contamination.

2. Seek technical assistance early for city staff. The Center for Creative Land Recycling, a San Francisco nonprofit, regularly holds brownfield workshops and awards smaller grants and technical assistance for local projects with public benefit.

3. Signal a willingness to work cooperatively with current landowners, and help them find resources. Many brownfields are cleaned through public-private partnerships. Reach out to both "mom-and-pop" and larger landowners, and match them with developers, particularly those with brownfield experience. Help landowners find technical expertise and financial resources for assessment and cleanup. Provide staff or financial assistance, connect owners to government funding programs, or help convene a technical assistance panel.

Cities can encourage the rehabilitation of older buildings by helping developers finance projects.

4. Take a team approach that brings together the city, landowners, state and regional regulators, state or federal technical assistance programs, and consultants. The International City/County Management Association and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sponsor a free annual National Brownfields Conference where cities can find potential partners to help with everything from financing to toxicology.

5. Involve the community throughout the process. Form a Citizens' Advisory Committee so residents can help guide cleanup and redevelopment, and address any health concerns neighbors have.

6. Encourage site assessment and the planning of future land uses early on. The degree of contamination may be less serious than anticipated, and information can help dispel fears. In some cases, the city can get permission to do the site assessment itself. Knowing future uses is important for the cleanup plan, since different uses require different levels of cleanup.

7. Draw attention to future land uses, redevelopment potential, and market opportunities. A market-savvy reuse plan can catalyze private land cleanup. Rezoning industrial land for more profitable uses can make cleanup more financially viable.

8. Consider creating tax incentives to discourage "mothballing" (preserving a production facility but keeping it out of use) and to encourage property owners or developers to clean up brownfields.

9. To fund brownfield redevelopment, use tax-increment financing and seek federal and state funding. The EPA provides grants and low-interest loans to local governments for brownfield assessment and cleanup, and for job training in brownfield redevelopment. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Agency also have applicable grant and loan programs. The California State Water Resources Control Board and the California Department of Toxic Substance Control both have their own grant and loan programs for brownfield remediation.

10. As a last resort, have the redevelopment agency use the Polanco Redevelopment Act to compel the cleanup of privately held brownfields. The city can require an owner to either clean the property or pay the bill for work performed by the agency.

EXAMPLES

- With the help of an EPA brownfields cleanup grant, the Fremont Redevelopment Agency has begun to redevelop its historic Niles District. Once a railroad switching yard, the 5.3-acre Niles Square was contaminated by heavy metal and petroleum substances. Following soil cleanup, Niles Square will be transformed into a vibrant community plaza with shops and affordable homes.[68]

- Over $1 million in EPA brownfield revolving loan funds were provided through the City of Emeryville to GreenCity LLC to redevelop a former paint factory site. GreenCity LLC was able to recycle 95% of the demolition waste and divert over 20,000 tons of contaminated soil from disposal to be used as cover soil at a local landfill. In 2005, 62 condominiums were constructed on the 0.9-acre site.[69]

Improve Financing Options

STRATEGY

Establish funding mechanisms to support infill development, subsidize affordable housing, and reduce the risk to developers for complex rehabilitation projects. Reduce permitting fees for development in infill areas and charge higher fees for greenfield development. Identify and assist with other funding challenges.

WHY?

Financing is at the core of development. To build, developers must get a series of loans: one to get started, one for the land, one for the construction, and a long-term mortgage for as long as they manage the property. Financing can be the biggest obstacle to infill development,

"Here in Windsor, we ranked areas of town in terms of development priority. We ranked our new downtown #1 and ranked the outer edges of our town last. We wanted to make infill easier than sprawl."

– Debora Fudge, Mayor, Windsor

particularly for affordable housing or mixed-use projects.

Infill development is frequently more expensive and complicated to finance than greenfield development. Land in the center of a city may be more expensive than land on the edge. Affordable homes and mixed-use development, two components of good infill development, can be difficult to finance. Preserving and rehabilitating existing structures and supporting infrastructure may incur additional costs not encountered in new development, as developers are required to upgrade buildings to meet current construction and fire codes, costs that can increase with surprises behind the walls, like dry rot, termites, or hazardous materials. A unique risk factor in development is that firm principals often have to personally guarantee the construction loan, unlike other businesses where the individuals are shielded from personal liability.

HOW?

1. Convene a roundtable of infill developers and local lenders to identify specific challenges and opportunities around financing infill development in the community.

2. For larger projects, consider designating the neighborhood as a redevelopment area so that some improvements—like streets, lighting, and parks—can be provided through tax-increment financing.

3. Provide more funding for infill projects that include affordable housing. Funding can come from housing trust funds, jobs-housing linkage fees, and higher inclusionary in-lieu fees. (See Make Infill Affordable, p. 26.)

4. Provide support to developers doing risky brownfield or rehabilitation projects in infill areas. Since much is unknown when beginning these projects, having a "backup" source of subsidies or loans can encourage developers to take these on.

5. Make sure the cost of greenfield development is higher than that of infill. Developer fees and exactions should be greater on greenfields, as edge development costs the city more: it creates more traffic, requires more new infrastructure, uses existing infrastructure less efficiently, and has greater environmental impact.

6. Consider allowing developers to defer paying some fees until the development is ready for final approvals and certificates of occupancy. Sewer, school, and other impact fees can be significant; developers should not have to pay these long before a project has restrooms or potential students. Use a lien on the property or a clause in the development agreement to ensure payment.

7. For city permit and inspection fees, create a tiered or sliding-scale fee structure based on density and proximity to the downtown, which

Matt Jalbert/exuberance.com

The cost of developing open space, due to fees and exactions, should be higher than that of infill, as its long-term costs to the community are far higher.

"Affordable housing developments that meet local design and zoning standards should go ahead by right, saving time and money for all concerned."

– Mary Murtagh, President and CEO, EAH Housing

can make infill projects easier and cheaper to evaluate or inspect, making lower fees appropriate.

8. Be aware of other financing issues and look for ways to assist. For example, costs and revenues don't always move in sync; construction costs constantly rise, but if the housing market goes down, revenues can fall, leaving developers in a tough situation.

9. Support state, federal, and regional action to improve financing options for affordable housing and urban infill. (See Recommendations for Regional and State Action, p. 70.)

EXAMPLES

- Palo Alto charges lower park, community center, and library impact fees for multifamily homes than for single-family homes.

- Oakland issued revenue bonds that supported brownfield cleanup, site acquisition, parks and other street and infrastructure improvements for the new Uptown project and adjacent affordable Fox Courts.

Streamline the Approvals Process

STRATEGY

Encourage infill development by making it simpler, faster, and less uncertain for developers to acquire permits to build in infill locations. This can be done by coordinating inter-departmental efforts, dedicating city staff to shepherd projects through the process, and shortening permitting timelines.

WHY?

Lengthy, complex permitting processes work against infill development. They can require expensive studies or project redesign. Developers face increased risk and cost when approval requirements are unclear. Every month of delay increases expenses to developers, as construction costs rise and loan interest accrues. The more defined and rapid the infill permitting process, the easier it is for developers to understand and manage their risks, and the more likely they will be to undertake projects.

City of Sunnyvale

With dedicated staff and e-permitting, Sunnyvale makes it simpler and faster for developers to acquire permits to build in infill locations.

In the Bay Area, it can take years to get permits to build infill projects. A 1999 study by the Housing Leadership Council of Silicon Valley found that approvals and construction for a typical large apartment building often took up to three to four years, and this number has likely gone up in some areas.[70,71] In contrast, in suburban locations motivated to build, projects can get entitled and in some cases finish their environmental review in one to two years.

HOW?

1. Create a culture that encourages infill development. City leadership can encourage city staff to be accessible and proactive, and to make infill happen.

2. Reduce entitlement uncertainties by allowing more infill projects "by right"—meaning that permission to undertake a project does not require a conditional use permit. Avoid allowing a small infill project to re-open public debates about the city's future.

3. Make the rules that govern fees, exactions, and community benefits as transparent as possible. Developers are often willing to pay higher prices in exchange for reduced risk, uncertainty, and delay. Also, make sure these add up to a lower cost for infill than for greenfield development, as greenfield development costs the community more over the long run.

4. Minimize the number of hearings, special reviews, and opportunities for a legal challenge or referendum to individual projects after giving the public ample opportunities to comment at the specific plan stage. If a project requires a change to planning documents, adopt needed changes—general plan amendments or a specific plan, zoning amendments, and a development agreement—all at the same time.

5. Expedite plan review for projects in focal areas for infill, particularly downtown and near transit.

6. Do pre-application reviews with developers to minimize the amount of time and money they need to invest before hearing feedback.

7. Assign specific staff to shepherd infill projects through different departments' approvals processes.

8. Require the planning and building departments to process development applications within a set period of

time. Track the length of time projects spend in the pipeline.

9. Allocate enough resources to make these timelines feasible; many cities are unable to meet their own standards because they do not hire enough qualified staff.

10. Work with builders and developers to find ways to expedite the process.

EXAMPLES

- Long a leader in permit streamlining, Sunnyvale instituted a One-Stop Permit Center in 1985. It has adopted an expedited permitting process under which the city gives builders a firm schedule and assurance of complete review, including planning commission and City Council hearings, within about two months. The city has also pioneered "e-permitting" for many minor building permits.

- Palo Alto has a Development Center where customer service representatives of many city departments—building and planning, public works, fire, and the utilities—issue permits and schedule inspections. The Development Center staff can issue many minor permits over the counter.

- In San Francisco, the planning and building inspection departments use a Priority Permit policy to expedite the applications of projects that either are 100% affordable or meet the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold standard.

Get the Whole City Working Together

STRATEGY

Ensure all city documents, such as zoning codes and capital improvement plans, are consistent with the goals outlined in the general plan or specific plans, especially around infill development. Include all government departments in plans to promote infill development.

Fire truck access is an important part of infill planning; coordination with fire and other city departments is best done early on.

WHY?

At every step along the road to a finished building, developers need approval from a confusing maze of different city departments. Builders must get their plans approved by the planning department, building department, department of public works, the fire district, and public or private utilities. Even within the planning department, plans, codes, and decision-making bodies may not be consistently supporting infill. Some policies may support infill, while others might work against it. Fire districts' need for building access can significantly impact development plans. Then, during construction, the building methods must be inspected. While plan checks and building inspections are critical for quality control, if department guidelines conflict, or if staff are unavailable, delays ensue. Any step could become a roadblock.

HOW?

1. Coordinate the efforts of the planning department, the building department, the department of public works, and other city departments whose work collectively affects infill development.

2. Provide clear direction to all city departments, as well as appointed and elected commissions, regarding the importance of infill and the need for city policies that facilitate it.

3. Undertake a comprehensive review of general plans, specific plans, zoning codes, building codes, public works plans, construction requirements, and fire codes to determine whether policies related to infill are consistent.

4. Conduct trainings for planning staff and commissioners to ensure everyone is up to date on guidelines, requirements, and procedures.

5. In pre-application reviews, involve all municipal or city departments—planning, building, public works, fire, police, city-owned utilities, and the finance department—and possibly outside agencies such as the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the county Congestion Management Agency, utilities, or natural resource agencies. This resolves potential conflicts between different departments as early as possible.

6. Create interdepartmental working groups on issues of mutual concern. For example, street design is relevant to general and specific plans, urban design guidelines, as well as the needs

"Mayors should be on the forefront of transit-oriented development. You've got to take a real leadership role: talk about it wherever you go."

– Anthony Santos, Mayor, San Leandro

of the public works and fire departments and city utilities.

7. Periodically assess whether planning commissions, zoning boards, design review commissions, and other review bodies are acting consistently with the general plan and other city regulations and policies regarding infill development.

8. Convene local infill developers, planners, public works staff, and others to identify obstacles to infill and strategize about improving city policy consistency.

9. Adequately staff all departments to meet target timelines and keep projects moving.

EXAMPLES

- Hayward coordinates a multi-department dialogue with applicants before they submit their full application. Applicants submit plans at whatever detail they would like, typically site plans and elevations, for early feedback. A week ahead of the pre-application meeting, invited departments receive the plans for review.

- When Concord receives a completed development application, staff send out a "request for comments" to numerous city departments and certain outside organizations, like PG&E. At biweekly interdepartmental Development Advisory Committee meetings, staff discuss upcoming projects. The project planner compiles all responses and sends the applicant a comprehensive letter noting any potential issues—all within 30 days.

- The San Francisco Better Streets Plan will create citywide standards for street design and maintenance by bringing together the many departments with jurisdiction over some aspect of public streets and sidewalks. These include the planning department, which controls building design and signage and undertakes holistic street design; the Public Utilities Commission, which oversees underground utilities and stormwater drainage; the Municipal Transportation Agency, which governs transit, auto traffic, bikeways, pedestrians, and parking; and the Department of Public Works, which deals with street and sidewalk maintenance, street lighting and street trees.

Facilitate the Building and Construction Process

STRATEGY

Facilitate the construction process within infill areas by making it easier and less costly to temporarily close sidewalks or streets, providing additional police support at construction sites, and ensuring timely building inspection.

WHY?

One of the biggest challenges for infill developers is the cost of operating in busy neighborhoods full of pedestrians, traffic, and parked cars. Many cities charge developers high fees for closing off sidewalks to create more room on the construction site, or for prohibiting street parking to enable deliveries. Permit fees can add to the overall cost and adds delays as permit requests are processed. Potentially higher risks of theft and vandalism on infill construction sites can also increase costs, either directly or through the need for overnight security services. These situations put infill at a disadvantage compared to greenfield development. Cities can help level the playing field for infill by supporting the needs of developers during construction.

HOW?

1. Ensure staff is well-trained. Train staff and local professionals when significant changes to the building code occur.

2. Accelerate construction plan checks by outsourcing them during busy periods. Enable the building department to accept outside consultant reports from approved experts certifying the plan's compliance with the building code, particularly for complicated plans or for issues outside the city's expertise.

3. Create clear and simple procedures for developers to follow when they need to temporarily close traffic lanes for construction access.

4. Reduce or eliminate the cost of permits for street and sidewalk closures and for prohibiting parking in front of construction sites, and ensure the permit process is easy and efficient.

5. Create linkages between permitting and the police department that will support developers in their efforts to reduce vandalism and theft from construction sites.

6. Ensure adequate and appropriate training for building inspectors, and hire enough inspectors to accommodate the volume of work, particularly as new laws require inspectors to take on additional stormwater monitoring duties.

EXAMPLES

- In March 2007, Mayor Chuck Reed promised San Jose would make measurable improvements in the development process. Since then, builders' and property owners' overall project satisfaction has measurably increased, according to surveys done before and after. When the state updated the California Building Standards, San Jose prepared guides to construction changes for staff and builders, and educated 450 people in free public training sessions.

Cities can ease the construction process by making it less costly to temporarily close sidewalks or streets and by providing police support and timely inspections.

- The San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing staff includes a construction manager; this position requires a background in construction to help vet plans, costs, and estimates. The construction manager also helps developers troubleshoot permitting challenges.

- In Oakland, Mayor Jerry Brown's 10K initiative—to bring 10,000 people to live downtown—clearly directed staff in every department to keep moving projects through the pipeline, resulting in a rapid increase in downtown development.

Case Studies

San Francisco

Rob Clevenger

Infill in central areas like San Francisco's Mission Bay can help reduce development pressure on Bay Area open space, including the foothills of Mount Diablo.

Heart of the Region

San Francisco is the cultural heart of the Bay Area and a major job center. With the densest transit infrastructure in California, the city can support significant increases in population and jobs. According to the Association of Bay Area Governments' regional housing allocations, over the next several years San Francisco should add more new housing than any city but San Jose. Several large infill projects are now underway, although unfortunately, the city's neighborhood plans have been plagued by delays, slowing the creation of needed homes. An ambitious plan for a new downtown core around a major new transit hub could serve as a model for large-scale growth.

San Francisco's Mission Bay project is one of the Bay Area's largest infill developments. When completed, the former Southern Pacific railyards will include about 6,000 homes, a quarter of which will be affordable to low-income families and seniors. There will also be commercial space, a hotel, and public parks—all close to a Caltrain station, a new light-rail line, several bus routes, and future Central Subway and statewide high-speed rail lines. So far, more than 1,500 homes have been built, as well as part of the UCSF research campus, a new park along Mission Creek, and a new public library.

To the northwest of Mission Bay, the addition of new housing and office space has transformed the historically industrial South of Market (SoMa) area, and will continue to do so.[72] To the east of SoMa, the new Rincon Hill and Transbay neighborhoods are also slated for major new development, including the 60-story residential towers of One Rincon Hill rising up at the base of the Bay Bridge. Plans for these neighborhoods include up to 8,000 homes; in the Transbay area, an impressive 35% of these will be affordable.

The Affordability Gap

Despite this, many new homes remain out of reach for local workers and residents. A 2008 study by the California Budget Project found that to afford a median-priced home, a San Francisco family would need an annual income of

$196,878; the city's median household income in 2005 was $73,180.[73, 74] Developments like One Rincon Hill have raised concerns that units are being purchased as "pied-à-terres" or second homes, or are affordable only to wealthy Silicon Valley workers and retirees.[75] The city has a strong inclusionary housing ordinance, but a wide gap remains between those it helps and those who can afford million-dollar homes. Meeting this need will require building much more new housing and making a concerted effort to ensure more San Franciscans can afford it.

To help create more homes, the city has undertaken several neighborhood planning efforts. The Eastern Neighborhoods program could potentially create a total of 10,000 new infill homes in four historically industrial areas—the Central Waterfront south of Mission Bay, Eastern SoMa, the Mission, and Showplace Square/Potrero Hill. The Better Neighborhoods program includes the Market and Octavia neighborhood, Japantown, the Central Waterfront (also part of the Eastern Neighborhoods plan), and the Balboa Park BART station area.

Both of these programs have model goals. But although the Market and Octavia Plan was recently adopted, the progress of the other plans has been stalled in an arduous process stemming largely from neighbor opposition.

Concerns about housing affordability and displacement understandably make planning efforts and development proposals highly contentious. But the lack of adopted plans does not stop new development; it simply makes it more haphazard. Plans could ensure that new projects meet goals the community has agreed upon. Opposition to individual projects, compounded by delays due to the city's understaffed planning department, make it difficult for developers to predict how long the building process will take. This uncertainty can in turn drive up housing prices; the delay also results in fewer new homes each year to meet the demand.

Urban Bay Properties/www.ubayp.com

The Beacon is directly across from a Caltrain station, bringing homes and a grocery store into an area that had few of either. Even with well-located new homes like these, San Francisco is still struggling to stay affordable to people with modest incomes.

A Major Transit Hub

The city is now planning for a new high-density neighborhood around one of the largest multi-modal transit stations in the entire country. Under the Transit Center District Plan, the aging and underutilized Transbay Terminal will be transformed into a major transportation hub, where MUNI, BART, and the future high-speed rail will connect with the Caltrain line that now ends several blocks away. The entire surrounding neighborhood will fill with new offices and homes. Coupled with the nearby Transbay and Rincon Hill neighborhoods, this has the potential to create a vibrant urban neighborhood while making transit more efficient for riders all over the region.

San Francisco is a world-class city that has been doing infill development for a long time. If it can achieve growth that balances the needs of current residents with those of new residents, it could offer a model of sustainability to the region and the nation.

San Mateo

A Central Focus

San Mateo has embraced its central location at the intersection of three Caltrain stations, three freeways, and the job centers of San Francisco, Silicon Valley, and San Jose. It is actively working to meet the need for more housing and jobs on the busy Peninsula. The city is using transit-oriented development as a guiding framework for long-term growth, and with specific plans already in place, it is focusing on their successful implementation.

Transit-Oriented Development

Surrounded by adjacent cities and the San Francisco Bay, San Mateo could only grow inward and upward. The city decided to focus new development around its Caltrain stations and along El Camino Real, a major thoroughfare and planned Bus Rapid Transit line. In 2005, the City Council adopted a Rail Corridor Transit-Oriented Development Plan, to create mixed-use neighborhoods within easy walking distance of several transportation options.

San Mateo's plans for transit-oriented development will help more parts of the city become walkable.

The city's clearly defined vision for transit-oriented development has helped it work with developers and residents. Developers appreciate the certainty of the plan, and residents agree that it makes sense to build new homes near Caltrain. Residents were involved throughout the planning process and raised common concerns about traffic, parking, and neighborhood character. The plan area largely skirts established residential neighborhoods, however, which helped to minimize opposition to the plan.

Reducing Driving

San Mateo is also carefully addressing parking and traffic issues in the plan area. Minimum parking standards are noticeably absent. Instead, every development project above a certain size must prepare a transportation demand management study to determine parking needs and traffic mitigation measures. The cost of the study is likely to be outweighed by significant savings to developers from not having to build unnecessary parking spaces. This innovative method ensures each development comes with a plan to encourage alternatives to driving. A new housing project might improve adjacent streets to make them attractive places to walk, or have public transit passes for all residents, paid for by the homeowners' association or the developer. The city anticipates these efforts will reduce residential car trips by up to 25%. The

Bay Meadows is a new mixed-use development whose first phase is shown here. Replacing 17 acres of parking lots and a closing racetrack, it will make better use of the nearby Hillsdale Caltrain station, one of three in San Mateo.

City of San Mateo has also established an agency through the county to monitor developer implementation of the mitigation measures, ensuring that they continue through the life of the development.

A number of developments are well on their way under this plan. The largest is the redevelopment of Bay Meadows. In 2005, the City Council unanimously approved replacing Bay Meadows, an aging horse-racing track, with a new mixed-use community close to the Hillsdale Caltrain station. The racetrack's closing was controversial, but it withstood the threat of a referendum. Phase I of the development, around the racetrack's periphery, has been completed, and has won awards for design, planning, and landscape architecture. Phase II covers the racetrack itself, replacing the track and large parking lots with a mix of office, retail, and several housing types, with more than the city's minimum of 10% designated as affordable homes.

"I think the residents have generally liked the concept of transit-oriented development. They may not always agree with developers' plans on how it gets implemented, but they can agree it makes sense."

– Lisa Ring, Senior Planner, San Mateo

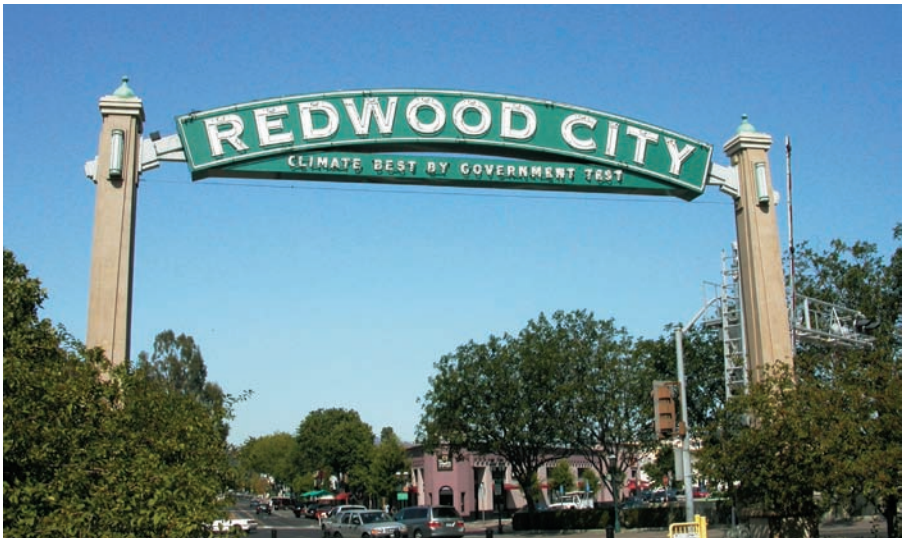
Another interesting transit-oriented project under consideration is the redevelopment of a site with a Kmart, a former Shell gas station, and a large parking lot next to the currently little-used Hayward Park Caltrain station.[76] EBL&S Development has proposed a mixed-use project called Station Park Green for the 12-acre site. The development would include 599 homes, retail and neighborhood amenities, and an emphasis on green building methods, as well as a transit kiosk and free Caltrain passes for residents. New bike trails would link the development into the San Mateo Regional Bike Trail System.

Pedestrian Promenade

San Mateo has invested significant effort in its downtown; this too falls under the heading of transit-oriented development. The city's Downtown Transit Center includes a bus stop, restaurants, and a police station clustered around the San Mateo Caltrain station. The city has revitalized its historic "Main Street" area with a first-run movie theater and a pedestrian promenade lined with murals and old-fashioned streetlights. San Mateo has also stepped up housing density in the downtown with attractive buildings of four stories or more, most of which are mixed-use.

The City of San Mateo met its limits to outward expansion earlier than some other Bay Area communities. It has demonstrated that not only can it continue to grow, but it can use growth to increase transit use and reduce driving. San Mateo's innovative approaches to reducing traffic and encouraging good development will help its plans for livable, walkable neighborhoods to become reality.

Redwood City



Redwood City is starting to live up to its town motto by planning for walkable, climate-friendly development in its downtown and around its Caltrain station.

The County Seat

Redwood City has made rapid strides to fill in its downtown, whose past emptiness prompted some to call it "Deadwood City." Today, thanks to the city's strong commitment to infill and downtown revitalization, the historic city center is on the rebound. In mid-2007, the City Council adopted a Downtown Precise Plan that lays out a comprehensive vision for development over the next 10–15 years. Redwood City has also gained national attention for its innovative approach to parking.

A Civic Center

With a vision of becoming a regional center and restoring its position as San Mateo's county seat, Redwood City set out to create a more attractive public area downtown—and add housing to give it life. With the construction of a new City Hall in 1997, the city also made the more unusual move of coordinating the creation of affordable homes next door. To do this, the redevelopment agency assembled seven parcels and teamed up with nonprofit and for-profit partners, including Mobil, to clean up a former gas station site. These efforts resulted in 81 new affordable homes over restaurants, shops and a community college extension. The city has also recently restored its historic 1930s courthouse and built an attractive, fountain-lined public pavilion called Courthouse Square.

A new movie theater was a key element of Redwood City's strategy to attract people to the downtown, where they could then visit restaurants and other businesses. Previously, residents had frequented a theater on the other side of Highway 101, accessible only by car. The city brokered a deal to bring a cinema and retail complex downtown, and prepared a specific plan to build 500 apartments and condominiums nearby. The well-designed new theater blends in with the historic downtown, and an underground parking area allows people to park, then get around on foot. Residents of the new homes nearby can also walk to shops and entertainment easily.

The overarching framework for Redwood City's infill is its far-reaching Downtown Precise Plan. The planning process involved community residents from start to finish, with four public hearings and two tutorials—all in less than six months. Once adopted, the plan replaced all existing downtown zoning. The plan includes four major changes: it allows housing throughout the entire downtown; it increases heights up to 12 stories, which step down to 3 stories to blend into residential neighborhoods; it focuses on the forms of buildings rather

High-tech parking meters charge varying prices based on demand, which helps fund downtown sidewalk maintenance and safety.

Redwood City has encouraged infill with major investment in its civic center.

result is more parking available downtown, with less traffic caused by drivers searching for spots. The surplus meter revenue goes to making the downtown more safe and walkable, by funding increased police presence and sidewalk maintenance; this is one reason that local merchants and property owners supported the new system. The new system is also popular because it has eliminated parking time limits.

The city has even succeeded in making urban planning into entertainment, with a monthly "Forum at Redwood City" at the Little Fox Theater, next door to the historic Fox Theater downtown. The educational series brings nationally known speakers to discuss city planning and design; it costs $10 per person and is well attended.

Redwood City's downtown is not yet fully transformed, but as residents continue moving in, the city's center will continue to come alive. Redwood City's comprehensive planning, focused investment, and creative ideas offer valuable lessons for cities seeking to revive ailing downtowns.

than prescribing specific densities; and it makes pedestrians a priority with street and sidewalk improvements. Although the plan's environmental review is not yet complete as of mid-2008, the city has already begun discussions on five new residential projects to implement the plan.

Connecting to Caltrain

The Downtown Precise Plan also includes a detailed plan for Depot Circle, a new public space next to Redwood City's Caltrain station. Funded by two grants from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Depot Circle plan envisions a walkable area full of homes and shops, which creates a needed link between the downtown and the train station. Currently, a car-oriented strip mall occupies the site, with a large wall that causes the stores to face away from the station, making poor use of the location.

"The Forum at Redwood City has helped elevate the urban planning discussion in our community. It has given Council members, Planning Commissioners, staff, and residents exposure to the best ideas in the business. This knowledge helped us adopt infill-friendly zoning, create great public spaces, and begin a robust downtown revitalization program. The Forum has really helped Redwood City raise the bar."

– Daniel Zack, Downtown Development Coordinator, Redwood City

Pricing Parking

Redwood City has also implemented a novel demand-based parking system that has been written up in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. New, solar-powered meters have prices that vary to reflect the relative demand for each parking space. As drivers make price and location tradeoffs, cars become more evenly distributed and turnover is higher at more expensive "prime" spots. The

San Jose

The Growth Leader

From the 1950s to the 1970s, San Jose was the Bay Area's poster child of sprawl development. Today it is leading the region in infill. According to the Association of Bay Area Governments' regional housing allocations, in the next six years, San Jose—the region's largest city—should build more new housing than any other city. Over the last two decades, San Jose has made a concerted effort to encourage infill. Now, a broad range of strategies are transforming the city.

Growing Within the Greenline

To turn from sprawl to infill, San Jose's first step was to limit outward expansion. In 1970, its City Council defined an urban service area boundary. In 1996, it adopted an urban growth boundary—the Greenline—in its general plan. In 2000, over 70% of the city's voters locked in the rules governing the growth boundary, which means any changes to these rules now require a vote of the people. The city also created a strong policy framework for infill within the general plan. To focus on strategic locations, eight specific plans lay the groundwork for building almost 28,000 homes. To date, almost 12,000 homes have either been built or approved.

2000 and largely completed by 2005, exemplifies its aggressive approach. The study's goal was to encourage appropriate high-density and mixed-use development along light-rail corridors. After city analysis and thorough public involvement, the city identified vacant or underutilized sites, amended the general plan, and did environmental reviews for the general plan changes. Together, these changes made room for up to over 8,000 new homes. This effort saved developers the time and expense of having to apply for policy changes before being able to build.

"The success of infill isn't just about bringing the housing, it's about creating high-quality neighborhoods with schools, parks, grocery stores, walkable streets, a good transit system, nearby employment, and more."

– Laurel Prevetti, Deputy Director, Department of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement, City of San Jose

San Jose uses other proactive means to help developers find potential infill locations and smooth the way for their projects. The city's Housing Opportunities Study, launched in

This study built upon the success of an earlier effort: San Jose's 1991 Housing Initiative. The city and its consultants identified vacant and underdeveloped sites, finding room for 10,000 more homes than originally expected. The city not only then changed its plans to make this building possible, it conducted two additional studies: one demonstrated the market demand for multifamily housing in San Jose, and one tested the financial feasibility of four housing prototypes of different densities. These extra steps showed developers that people would rent or buy these homes, and that they could "pencil out" profitably.

Santana Row

Santana Row is one of San Jose's best-known infill efforts; the city is leaving its sprawling past behind and planning for thousands of new infill homes, especially along the North First Street light-rail corridor.

Bernard Andre Photography

Rincon de Los Esteros Apartments is an affordable development with several different outdoor spaces, within walking distance from VTA buses. The developer gives Eco Passes—free transit passes—to residents.

Embracing Density

Today, developers need no convincing. Four of every five homes built in San Jose are townhomes, apartments, or condominiums.[77] San Jose has embraced density: development downtown must be at least 25 homes per acre, and mid-rise residential buildings over 15 stories are now on the market. In areas outside the central downtown, the city is finding that modest increases in density and height over large areas can add up to significant amounts of new homes.

San Jose has also worked to make the process easier and more transparent for developers, after March 2007, when Mayor Chuck Reed promised measurable improvements. The city started an annual customer satisfaction survey for developers, set targets for application timetables, reorganized planning staff to improve efficiency and consistency, and streamlined permits.[78] The Building Division reduced the amount of time required for a construction plan check, allowing builders to hire third-party consultants at their own expense. A year later, the Planning and Building Divisions were meeting their timetables more of the time, and development customers indicated higher levels of customer satisfaction.[79,80] Through regular Neighborhood Roundtables and Developer Roundtables, builders and neighborhood leaders stay up to date on changes to city policies, and the city gets early feedback on changes it is considering.

Looking Ahead

An ongoing challenge for San Jose is the cost of services needed by an increasing number of residents. San Jose has more homes than jobs, and is taking steps to protect commercial and industrial lands that provide room for jobs and generate the tax revenue it needs to pay for services. In October 2007, after completing an employment study, San Jose adopted a policy requiring no net loss of industrial land or overall employment capacity.[81] While this policy could act to discourage infill, it is offset by the city's ongoing commitment to building new infill housing.

To San Jose, good planning for infill is a matter of long-term regional competitiveness. The city is beginning to create alliances with nonprofit groups and businesses that have a shared interest in making San Jose a more attractive place to live and work. San Jose's position as a national hotspot of technology innovation is not guaranteed forever; maintaining that position will mean building many homes, welcoming new jobs, and creating truly livable neighborhoods. The entire region can learn from San Jose's approach to tackling this challenge.

Morgan Hill

City of Morgan Hill

Sidewalk improvements, especially around Morgan Hill's Caltrain station, will help increase foot traffic and transit use.

A Small-Town Approach

Morgan Hill's experience demonstrates how efforts to preserve a small-town atmosphere can evolve over time. In the 1970s, rapid suburban growth overwhelmed local water and sewer services and threatened surrounding rural lands. In response, voters in this southern Santa Clara County city passed a growth cap. But the cap actually favored low-density housing on the very greenbelt the community had wanted to protect. Investment drained away and stores closed along the historic main street.

Recently, Morgan Hill has made efforts to turn that pattern around by encouraging development downtown and protecting open space around the city. The city has already made good strides on implementing its 2003 Downtown Plan, which it is now updating.

Reconstructing the Downtown

Good urban design is central to Morgan Hill's strategy. With redevelopment agency funding and grants from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the city is upgrading sidewalks and building facades along the streets that connect the Caltrain station to the main street. This will make the area more pedestrian-friendly and help boost transit use.

In trying to bring more people downtown, the city has had to work around the growth cap and modify it when possible. Measure F, approved in 2006, borrows 100 housing units from future allotments and requires them to be built downtown. Updates to the growth cap include incentives to build downtown, and the city recently approved nine projects with 386 homes near the Caltrain station.

Morgan Hill has also made a commitment to affordable housing. The city requires 20% of new development to be affordable, and proposed developments are evaluated partly by how much affordable housing they include. One example of a recent all-affordable development is Murphy Ranch, completed in 2004 by nonprofit developer First Community Housing. This attractive development created 100 affordable, compact townhomes within walking distance of the downtown, with "eco-passes" enabling all residents to take public transit for free.

Protecting the Greenbelt

Morgan Hill is also actively working to protect its greenbelt. The city purchases open space for permanent protection. Its urban growth boundary keeps the city from sprawling out onto surrounding farms and hillsides—like nearby El Toro Mountain, a prominent feature on the local landscape. The city has also encouraged the transfer of development rights from El Toro Mountain into the town center.

Challenges still remain, like a new "lifestyle retail center"—a big-box mall—recently built east of the city, and 1,200 acres of farmland to the southeast that the city wants to open to development. Hopefully this will not derail Morgan Hill's impressive efforts to revitalize its downtown. Together with open space protection, these strategies hold the most promise for preserving Morgan Hill's small-town character as the city grows.

Walnut Creek

A Retail Center

Infill is not new to Walnut Creek. Located in Contra Costa County just east of the hills, the city is surrounded by 3,000 acres of permanently protected open space, concentrating development in the existing urban area.

"Public attitude has definitely changed. People understand that if everyone lived in a single-family house, the freeways would be jammed tight. People see that it makes more sense to build higher and build denser near transit and downtown."

– Valerie Barone, Community Development Director, Walnut Creek

The downtown has been the city's focus since its first general plan in 1961. In 1967, the city turned down the Sun Valley mall, built in Concord in 1967, to protect its traditional downtown and outdoor shopping mall, Broadway Plaza. Today, Walnut Creek's vibrant downtown attracts residents and office workers as well as shoppers from neighboring cities.

Encouraging Foot Traffic

Walnut Creek has used several tools to make its downtown successful. In the "pedestrian retail zoning district," curb bulb-outs slow traffic, some passages are pedestrian-only, and street trees and sidewalk tables encourage outdoor gathering.

A free trolley, subsidized by the city, carries people between the BART station and downtown, with frequent trips and extended hours. A city ordinance encourages shared parking by allowing private companies to lease parking lots when stores are closed and offer that parking for a fee to downtown patrons.

Community priorities drove the city's new General Plan 2025. It emphasizes growing in a managed, deliberate way, focusing development around the BART station and downtown, improving key pedestrian and bike routes throughout the city, and protecting natural resources. Many residents participated in its creation.

To encourage housing development, Walnut Creek's zoning code allows residential development in commercial zones; in the last decade, this represented the majority of the infill development. Residential densities are determined in the permit process, so the developer does not have to apply for a general plan amendment or zone change. Projects receive approval if they meet the city's design guidelines and help improve the surrounding neighborhood.

Tackling Affordability

However, between 2000 and 2006, Walnut Creek issued permits for less than half its fair share of affordable housing. Two new tools will start to address this. A fee on new commercial development, adopted in 2005, will fund homes for workers. The city's 2003 inclusionary ordinance has already resulted in the approval of 100 workforce housing units. A housing trust fund has also funded several fully affordable developments.

Walnut Creek's downtown is a regional success story. Its challenge now is to ensure that residents of all incomes can share in the benefits.

Rafat Raie, City of Walnut Creek

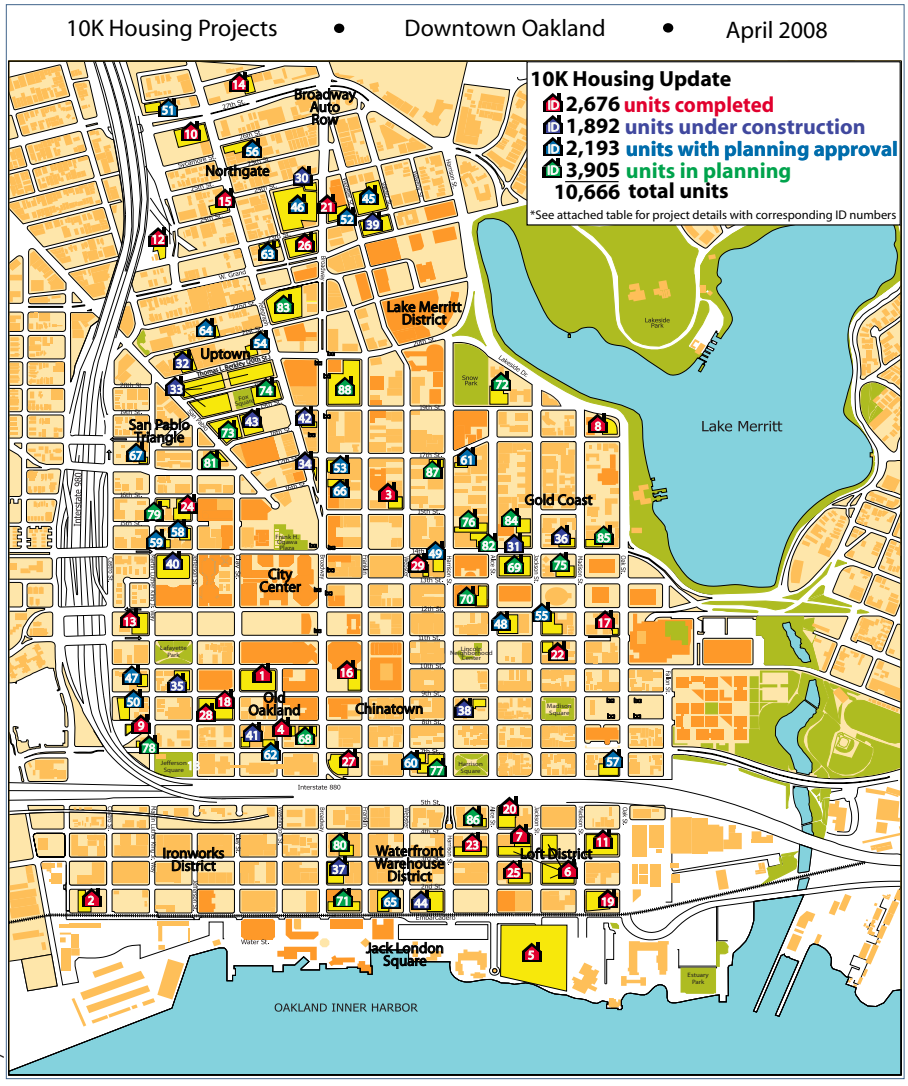
Walnut Creek has a "park once" philosophy and a free shuttle in its downtown.

Oakland

Downtown Leadership

The third-largest city in the Bay Area, Oakland has a central location and eight BART stations that make it ideal for infill. In recent years, Oakland has made headway on a major initiative to bring new life to its downtown.

When he took office in 1999, Mayor Jerry Brown envisioned a vibrant downtown for the city, but for retail and entertainment to thrive, more people had to live nearby. This was the genesis of the city's "10K Initiative," to bring 10,000 new residents (or 6,000 new homes) downtown. By April 2008, this had resulted in plans for more than 10,000 homes downtown, with 4,500 homes built or under construction, and the first residential high-rise built downtown in 20 years.



City of Oakland

Oakland's 10K plan illustrates the power of city leadership to bring homes to the downtown.

Leadership and proactive efforts have fueled the city's success with the 10K Initiative. Oakland has no specific plan to direct development into the downtown, though its general plan and zoning do allow high densities there. Rather than using a neighborhood plan, City leadership has encouraged infill by creating a sense of shared purpose and action.

Oakland built a foundation for downtown revitalization with investments in civic buildings and community spaces, such as the 12th Street City Center BART plaza and Jack London Square. In the mid-1990s, the new Federal Building, with its distinctive towers, brought office workers downtown, while the renovation of City Hall helped create an attractive civic center. A few years later, the restoration and conversion of the historic Swan's Market in Old Oakland by a local nonprofit also helped to draw people downtown.

Active Redevelopment

Oakland has used its redevelopment agency as a powerful tool to facilitate infill. The agency oversees ten project areas, covering almost all of the city's neighborhoods except North Oakland and the eastern hills. It took a very active role in coordinating recent developments around Old Oakland and the 12th Street BART station.

The redevelopment agency also helped in the transformation of one of Oakland's biggest infill developments, the Uptown project. The site's location and size made it unique: 10 acres within walking distance of downtown and the 19th Street BART station, a central hub of the entire BART system. The city had tried for 20

years to redevelop the area, a brownfield with few residents.

The Uptown plan that finally succeeded was the result of creative partnerships and input from numerous community groups. The primary partnership was between developer Forest City and the City of Oakland; the city provided significant funding. The East Bay Community Foundation facilitated negotiations with community groups such as the Coalition for Workforce Housing. This 20-group alliance advocated for affordable housing, as well as a park, childcare, and a local grocery store; all of these are now part of the project. In keeping with the city's emphasis on sustainable development, Forest City also made the Uptown project the first residential building in Oakland to be LEED-certified (Silver). Another partnership, with the Center for Creative Land Recycling, helped the city get a federal grant to estimate the extent of brownfield cleanup needed, giving Forest City more certainty about costs. Cleanup and neighborhood improvements were also partially funded by a redevelopment agency bond measure and City Capital Improvement Program.

Development is also building 80 homes nearby that are affordable to very-low-income families.

The area's revitalization is attracting new art and entertainment and retail venues. The redevelopment agency is helping rehabilitate the historic Fox Theater, and the Oakland School for the Arts, a charter high school, is planning to move into the theater. A sister restaurant to Temescal's famous Doña Tomas, Flora Restaurant & Bar, has opened in the historic Floral Depot building nearby.

Looking Ahead

Oakland's infill development will continue beyond Uptown and beyond the 10K Initiative. The Association of Bay Area Governments' draft Regional Housing Needs Allocation requires the city to plan for 14,629 homes by 2014, the third-highest number in the region. Thus far, Oakland's redevelopment efforts, especially the 10K Initiative, have not emphasized affordable housing. Community groups have to negotiate for affordable homes in each new project, as Oakland has no inclusionary housing ordinance and no mandatory community benefits.

Forest City Residential Management

The Uptown project is a large-scale redevelopment that is creating a whole new neighborhood in Oakland's downtown.

"The Uptown project is an outstanding example of what a public/private partnership can accomplish: a mixed-use, transit-oriented project that has transformed the Arts and Entertainment district and improved the economy."

– Susan Smartt, Senior Vice President, Forest City Residential West

The long-planned development is now coming to fruition. Uptown's first phase is four full blocks with 665 apartments, neighborhood-serving retail, and a public park. Twenty-five percent of the apartments will be affordable. As part of the development agreement, nonprofit developer Resources for Community

Oakland's future growth will need to include affordable homes. The city will also need to find a way to update its infrastructure to keep pace with growth. But for now, Oakland's experience illustrates the power of leadership and focused investment to transform a long-struggling urban center into a vibrant destination.

Berkeley

Making Infill Work

Berkeley's infill program has recently come to life. In just the past eight years, Berkeley has built almost 800 homes and permitted another 1,250—thirteen times more than built in the 23 years prior. By focusing infill downtown and near transit, the city has created clusters of new development that enliven street life while maintaining the quieter character of Berkeley's residential neighborhoods.

For decades, Berkeley's high quality of life, lively intellectual scene, and pleasant neighborhoods have attracted new residents. But because the city's housing supply did not grow to meet this demand, Berkeley's attractiveness now comes at a cost. Housing prices have skyrocketed, recent UC graduates cannot afford to stay in the city, and lower-income residents find it necessary to move. Between 1990 and 2000, southwest Berkeley lost more than 20% of its non-white population. To maintain the diversity that made it what it is, Berkeley needs to build new housing quickly. Fortunately, the city is working to do just that.

Clustering Development

The city's efforts focus on downtown and major transit corridors; in these areas, four out of every five new homes have been built. A new Downtown Area Plan would accommodate 4,000 additional homes while leaving historic resources intact. Adoption is expected by May 2009.

Berkeley has accelerated its infill building thanks in part to a flexible zoning code. Berkeley has no residential density standards in most zoning districts. In multi-family and commercial districts, the city regulates the sizes and shapes of buildings but allows the market to determine unit sizes, resulting in a higher number of living spaces per building. Downtown, project-specific densities have reached 275 dwelling units/acre, and major transit corridors average densities of about 100–125 dwelling units/acre, allowing Berkeley to grow significantly while maintaining the quiet feel of the surrounding residential neighborhoods. In addition, this new high-density downtown development has largely consisted of buildings only 3–5 stories tall.

Requiring Less Parking

Another tool making these high densities possible is the city's low parking requirements along transit corridors and downtown. Generally, in downtown mixed-use projects, the city requires only one parking space per 1,000 square feet of residential space, or up to 25–100%

Keith Baker/Panoramic Interests, panoramic.com

Before and after: The Bachenheimer Building is helping to create more housing in Berkeley's downtown; it also includes a roof garden and stacked parking.

less with a permit. Berkeley is well-served by public transit and has numerous City CarShare locations, where members can rent cars for short trips. These efforts, and the city's walkable downtown, help explain a recent finding by UC Berkeley Professor Betty Deakin: downtown Berkeley residents own half as many cars as the average Californian, and occupants of new housing own even fewer.

Despite low parking ratios, there are still empty parking spaces in buildings. For example, the Gaia Building, built by Panoramic Interests, has 91 apartments and approximately 235 residents. It has 40 spaces available for residents' cars, plus two City CarShare spaces—roughly only one space per six residents. But the parking spaces were never fully rented. The Gaia Building, along with 15 other mixed-use projects, use another innovative approach to reducing space needed for parking. Lift parking stores cars in moveable lifts, stacking up to three cars in the floor space needed for one car, and is now a regular feature in almost all new mixed-use development throughout Berkeley (see Parking Solutions, p. 40).

The city has other flexible regulations. Every new building must provide open space, but it can be provided on rooftops or patios. Rooftop gardens are not windy and abandoned, as some feared; instead they are attractive and actively enjoyed by residents.

Berkeley faced its share of citizen opposition to infill. But as more mixed-use projects have been built, many people have come to see the benefits. For instance, the corner of University Avenue and Acton Street used to have one of the highest crime rates in the city. After the construction of the 71-unit mixed-use Acton Courtyards on that corner, the per-capita crime rate dropped dramatically within a year. With new residents to provide "eyes and ears" on the street, the rates of crime and litter decrease, new businesses pop up, and neighborhoods become desirable, in turn attracting more new activity.

Keith Baker/Panoramic Interests, panoramic.com

The Gaia Building is close to BART and to UC Berkeley.

Dealing With Opposition

Berkeley has also made an effort to ensure that infill developments benefit diverse members of its community. The city's inclusionary housing policy requires 20% of units in new developments to be affordable, making projects automatically qualify for the State Density Bonus Law, which allows up to a 35% increase in density. These additional market-rate units and concessions have allowed developers to accommodate increasing construction costs and high land costs.

"Probably the most effective way to minimize one's carbon footprint is to get someone out of his or her car. Successful examples of this abound in Berkeley."

– Patrick Kennedy, Owner, Panoramic Interests

Berkeley is learning how to use infill to balance the potentially competing demands of working with residents, building needed homes, preserving historical buildings and quiet neighborhoods, and maintaining a lively and diverse cultural hub. Its recent successes offer a useful model for communities around the region.

Emeryville

Kim Harrington/Kim Harrington Photography

The Terraces at Emery Station, one of the many new developments changing Emeryville.

The Redevelopment City

Emeryville offers one of the Bay Area's most dramatic examples of how a city can use infill development to redefine itself. Its entrepreneurial approach has transformed a decaying industrial area into a center of regional commerce.

Emeryville's location at the junction of three highways and several rail lines made it a mid-century manufacturing hub, until changing economics made businesses move away, abandoning industrial buildings and often toxic sites.

In 1976, the city created a redevelopment agency and declared almost the entire city a redevelopment area. It then bought and assembled large and small properties, and began attracting developers.

In 1996, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency selected Emeryville for a pilot program of brownfields cleanup. Emeryville created an online information database to provide environmental and planning information for potential developers. Using the Polanco Act (see Clean Up and Redevelop Brownfields, p. 45), the City even cleaned one area itself to catalyze the development of what is now the Bay Street Shopping Center.

"More than twenty years of 'smart infill' has transformed Emeryville from a moribund toxic city burdened with closed factories and warehouses to a thriving mixed-use city."

– Nora Davis, Mayor, Emeryville

A Regional Job Center

The result of these efforts has been a surge of development, including stores, offices, hotels, and homes.[82] The city's central location makes it especially attractive to businesses, and many biotech and software companies have moved there, as well as businesses like Jamba Juice and the high-profile Pixar Animation Studios.

As of 2007, Emeryville had four jobs for every household, meaning that many workers commute into the city. But the city is continuing to add multi-family housing and mixed-use projects. Most new housing has been for people with incomes at least 20% above the median. The city has not met its need for lower-income housing, and so recently amended its inclusionary ordinance to make more homes, especially apartments, affordable to very-low-income households.

Emeryville's dense development is good for public transit, and it has buses and a train line. It lacks a BART station, but the business improvement district and several larger apartment buildings fund a free private shuttle, called the Emery Go Round, which connects to Oakland's MacArthur BART station. Emeryville is also encouraging development around its Amtrak station and its AC Transit hub on San Pablo Avenue.

The Need for Livability

Until recently, the city's planning had largely focused on attracting development to the city. Its big-box developments draw shoppers to Emeryville, but they also worsen traffic and make portions of town less safe and inviting for pedestrians. The city is now refining this approach and adding parks, local retail, and pedestrian pathways. An update to its general plan offers a new opportunity to improve Emeryville's quality of life as it continues to grow.

San Rafael

Marin's Hometown

San Rafael, Marin County's largest city and job center, has maintained its celebrated "hometown character" while injecting new life into its historic downtown. These achievements occurred thanks to the city's strong commitment to infill development and community involvement.

"People wanted a more vital downtown, and the master plan process helped them understand that would mean more housing. Doing this specific plan was incredibly valuable in making that clear."

– Robert Brown, Community Development Director, San Rafael

Community Participation

The 1993 Downtown Community Plan set the foundation for San Rafael's downtown revitalization. In creating the plan, the city held three community workshops with 250 participants, and took the unusual step of involving 270 children and their parents to make sure it would meet the needs of families. Participants agreed on the goals of upgrading the downtown's image and identity, promoting diverse architecture and cultural activities, and making it more walkable.

Encouraging Housing

A fundamental strategy for meeting these goals was to build more housing downtown. In 1996, key zoning changes made this possible. For example, in some areas the city doubled height limits from three to six stories, halved residential parking requirements to one space per apartment, and increased density limits from 42 to 72 homes per acre. The downtown plan's urban design recommendations, including height transitions to surrounding neighborhoods and improvements to streetscapes and pedestrian areas, guided this new development. Between 1993 and 2006, nearly 400 homes were built downtown, adding 50% more housing.

In 2004, after extensive community participation, the City Council adopted a new general plan. This plan extended the 1996 zoning successes into other neighborhoods. The zoning adopted concurrently with the general plan now allows housing development in all commercial and office zones.

The general plan also promoted home affordability by requiring that 20% of the homes in larger developments be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. San Rafael was one of the first cities to implement the state density bonus law, which increases the number of units developers are allowed to build if they make a certain portion affordable.

To manage traffic while accommodating new development, San Rafael hopes for voter passage of the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) train, which would offer another much-needed transportation option near the city's downtown.

San Rafael's downtown transit center is a countywide hub for buses; the SMART train may increase transit options. The city has changed its general plan and zoning to make more homes available downtown.

Downtown Satisfaction

In 2007, a city survey found that 86% of residents felt "the revitalization effort in the downtown area has been a good thing for San Rafael" and 74% felt that San Rafael was "maintaining its unique character and hometown atmosphere." San Rafael's efforts have been remarkably successful in accommodating change while preserving small-town charm.

Petaluma

Jessica Aloft/aloftphotography.com

Petaluma created a specific plan for its downtown to focus development there while taking advantage of its historic character.

A Historic Revival

Petaluma is one of the oldest cities in Sonoma County, with a downtown that is on the National Register of Historic Places. But the historic downtown is only a portion of the city center. Nearby, where Petaluma's aging industrial core straddles the river, recent planning efforts could expand the downtown's charm.

This area is the focus of the Central Petaluma Specific Plan. Discussions began on the specific plan shortly after voters renewed the urban growth boundary in 1998, and so from the start, the community agreed that growth had to be focused downtown.

A Form-Based Code

The specific plan was adopted in 2003. It encourages smart growth by allowing mixed-use buildings, doubling residential densities from 30 to 60 units per acre, requiring only one parking space per home, and improving roads and sidewalks. It draws from the SmartCode, a copyrighted form-based development code (see Establish Urban Design Guidelines, p. 40), that aims to create pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and pleasant community gathering spaces. Petaluma was one of the first cities in the country to use this code.

In the plan area, several projects have been built. One, a movie theater, was the brainchild of a group of teenage girls who wanted a theater they could walk to; they campaigned for it for years, and finally won.[83] In addition to the theater, which opened in 2005, an old auto showroom and garage were transformed into housing, shops and restaurants, and office space. Near the theater and right next to the Petaluma River, Eden Housing's Downtown River Apartments also opened in 2005, offering 81 affordable apartments above retail.

Meeting the Housing Need

Petaluma's focus on planning well for growth has enabled it to do an exemplary job of providing homes for new residents. The city awarded permits to more than its fair share of housing (its Regional Housing Needs Allocations) in every income category between 1999 and 2006—an accomplishment few cities match.[84] The city's success in affordable housing comes from a jobs-housing linkage fee and an inclusionary housing program that requires developers to make 15% of homes affordable or pay an in-lieu fee. While many cities' in-lieu fees are too low to fully fund construction, Petaluma has leveraged these fees to build more homes than the 15% that would have been created. Affordable homes enable downtown workers to live nearby.

Petaluma's new 2008 general plan continues these efforts by accommodating the next two decades' growth within the city's urban growth boundary.

Petaluma's thoughtful planning is helping this historic city make the most of its past and its scenic natural setting while it continues to change and grow.

Windsor

A Whole New Town

Windsor has not even been a town for 20 years, but has undergone two major transformations in that time. Once a small farming community, in the 1980s, Windsor experienced the county's fastest growth as it ballooned into an unincorporated bedroom community. In 1992, the residents responded to this uncontrolled growth by voting for incorporation, forming the Town of Windsor. This gave local residents more of a say in how their community grew. It also catalyzed the second transformation.

In 1996, the town adopted a general plan, and in 1997, a downtown plan; both envisioned focusing development in an area called "Old Downtown"—though the vision was to create something entirely new.

Windsor's Old Downtown is bike- and pedestrian-friendly; the buildings face onto a large Town Green—a public park.

Creating a Downtown

The Town quickly and methodically made the vision a reality. Building on the county's efforts to have the downtown designated a redevelopment area to raise money for public improvements, the Town's first improvement was to purchase 4.5 acres of land in the middle of downtown and create a park called the Town Green. Then, surrounding sidewalks were widened to 16 feet. New signs went in to point the way to downtown, and new entry monuments welcomed visitors and residents once they arrived.

Town Green Village

In 2000, Windsor chose Thiessen Homes to build a mixed-use project on 14 acres in Old Downtown. The result, Town Green Village, created a vibrant, small-scale downtown with a traditional Main Street feel. Restaurants and shops, with homes above, are arrayed around the Town Green, which hosts community events throughout the year.

In less than 10 years, Old Downtown has blossomed into an attractive village center, and the work continues today. The downtown plan has been amended to increase residential densities, and additional phases of the Town Green Village are moving forward. Windsor has also completed a transit station with local and intercity bus stops, ready for a future SMART (Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit) line.

Overall, Windsor's experience shows that with commitment and focus, even a small town can move from sprawl to smart growth—in an impressively short time.

"There are amendments [to the downtown plan] every year. It is a living document. We also change the general plan and zoning on a regular basis. That is what you have to do—change is inevitable and you have to accommodate it. Windsor has been successful because we have tried to accommodate change."

– Peter Chamberlin, Planning Director, Windsor

Recommendations for Regional and State Action

Leadership at the regional and state levels, as well as by local governments, will help encourage well-designed infill.

To achieve state and regional goals of addressing climate change will require changing development patterns to reduce driving. The state's biggest source of greenhouse gases is transportation.[85] Largely because of sprawling development patterns, Californians are driving more and more: in recent years, vehicle miles traveled have increased nearly twice as fast as the population has grown.[86] State and regional land-use policies can also act as a powerful tool to combat climate change.

The region and the state can take several steps to focus growth in city centers close to public transportation, and help reduce California's impact on the climate.

"Infill development is a tool to make our region and country more competitive, economically. It focuses investment and supports local entrepreneurs."

– Matt Regan, Housing Director, Bay Area Council

At the Regional Level

Link transportation infrastructure funding to good land-use planning that supports infill and reduces greenhouse gases.
As part of the statewide regional blueprint planning process, the Association of Bay Area Governments invited jurisdictions to submit applications for priority areas for development and conservation. Cities responded enthusiastically; 50 cities submitted 100 applications for priority development areas. Cities will have the opportunity to create specific plans for the chosen priority development areas using Station Area Planning funds from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). This is part of MTC's newly adopted goals to reach by 2035: reducing traffic congestion to 20% below 2006 levels; reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 40% below 1990 levels; and reducing the share of income spent by low-income households on housing and transportation to 10% below 2006 levels.

This is a good start, but more focused funding is needed to meet these goals and make the regional blueprint a reality. The Bay Area's $100+ billion Regional Transportation Plan for transportation spending over the next 25 years, should explicitly employ land-use policies as a mechanism to meet those targets. Communities that take a greater share of the growth, and therefore have a greater need for infrastructure and transportation improvements, should receive a greater share of the infrastructure funding. The region's transportation dollars should be spent strategically, in cities that are planning for growth that meets the region's environmental, economic, and equity goals.

Establish a regional Smart Growth Planning Fund to provide incentives for infill development planning.
One of the most effective actions regional agencies could take would be to create a regional Smart Growth Planning Grant Fund. This would be similar to the MTC's existing Transportation for Livable Communities and Station Area Planning programs, but would offer larger grants to create plans for designated infill or smart growth zones, such as designated priority development areas. Existing state and federal transportation money could be used for this purpose.

Create a regional revolving loan fund to get infill projects moving.
Infill developers and public agencies often miss opportunities because they do not have the capital to move quickly enough to secure desirable infill sites. Revolving loan funds, at both the regional and state level, would be extremely useful in providing needed capital for site acquisition and pre-development costs.

Build infrastructure that supports infill.
Regional agencies and utilities should direct investments, particularly for transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure, into existing urban areas as opposed to greenfield locations.

Keep regional statistics on the amount of infill development.
The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) should track infill development information and make it available to guide local and regional policy. This information would include vacant land (on a parcel-by-parcel basis), redevelopable land, actual built densities, and annual percentages of infill versus greenfield development. ABAG's Local Policy Survey already collects data about vacant land to project future infill. Expanding this to include data about the recent past would provide valuable information for regional planning and forecasting efforts.

At the State Level

Establish land use-related greenhouse gas reduction targets for each region and tie infrastructure investment to plans that meet those targets.
In response to Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) is developing plans to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions. For each region of the state, CARB should establish a target for reducing greenhouse gases through better land use. State agencies should use capital funding as an incentive for cities and developers to adopt plans and create projects that meet the region's targets for reducing greenhouse gases.

Senate Bill 375, introduced in 2006 by Senator Darryl Steinberg, would use housing and transportation planning to reduce greenhouse gases. To do this, it would: require the state to establish greenhouse gas reduction targets for each region; require regional transportation agencies to adopt a "preferred growth scenario" to meet the targets; provide funding and CEQA incentives to implement the preferred growth scenario; and require modeling of the effects of land-use planning on transportation. Passing this bill or one like it would be a major step forward to improve land-use planning and reduce California's climate impact.

Provide guidelines for factoring climate impact into the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
The state should give local governments the guidance and tools they need to do three things: quantify greenhouse gas emissions at the local level; determine what constitutes a significant impact from emissions; and reduce emissions through better land use.

Require comprehensive land-use plans to include plans to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and develop guidelines for how to do so.
The state should require cities to include strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in their general plans, and should assist city officials in setting goals and developing guidelines.

Add climate impact to the criteria for state financing programs.
State agencies with fiscal, technical, and regulatory programs for local land use and infrastructure should add climate change considerations to program guidelines, standards and criteria. This will ensure that the state's funding decisions support its climate goals along with its housing, energy, water, and transportation goals.

Tie infrastructure investment to regional blueprints.
Regional analyses identifying priority areas for smart growth should result in investment in those areas. State programs, such as Housing and Community Development programs funded by Prop 1C, should send infrastructure investment to areas designated for development in regional blueprints.

Reduce the "fiscalization of land use" by reforming the state tax structure.
The single most important and difficult step to support infill development and smart growth in California would be to revise the tax framework established by Proposition 13. The measure limited the ability of local governments to raise money through traditional means of taxation, and most local officials acknowledge it has been a disaster for cities and for schools. While it may not be possible to repeal Prop 13 directly, the state can lessen its harm. Methods to do this include: equalizing funding for schools and infrastructure across jurisdictions; allowing or requiring local governments to share tax revenue; closing loopholes in or raising commercial property taxes, or repealing limits on property tax rates or tax increases in general.

"In our public opinion surveys in recent years, we've seen many Californians voicing a preference for living in compact, urban communties where residents are less dependent on their cars and can take transit, bike, or walk to work, shopping, and entertainment."

– Mark Baldassare, President and Survey Director, Public Policy Institute of California

Enforce current mandates that cities accept affordable housing.
If local governments refuse to accept their fair share of regional housing needs by adopting state-approved housing elements and implementing them, the state should withhold funding for infrastructure.

Increase funding for affordable housing.
The state should create a permanent source of funding for affordable housing, rather than relying on periodic bond measures. State tax credits have been extremely useful in supporting the creation of affordable infill housing, and the state should increase the supply of these, while researching additional mechanisms.

Expand the flexibility of local redevelopment agencies and increase housing requirements.
Redevelopment agencies are the vehicle most often used by Bay Area local governments to promote infill development. These agencies acquire sites, assemble developable parcels, put infrastructure in place, and sell or lease the sites to infill developers. But recent changes in state law have restricted redevelopment areas. Allowing redevelopment to be used not just in "blighted" areas, but also in transit station areas and other key infill opportunity areas, would greatly increase local flexibility to promote infill.

Require "as-of-right" approval for infill housing that meets planning and zoning requirements.
If infill projects meet carefully established municipal policy, code standards, and design review guidelines, the state should require that cities approve them quickly through an administrative process, without extensive hearings for a conditional-use permit.

Require infill development to be considered an environmental benefit within CEQA-related environmental analysis.
In CEQA analysis, infill projects are compared with a "no project" alternative, which naturally has fewer impacts. In reality, the likely alternative is sprawl development somewhere else. The environmental benefits of infill should be acknowledged in CEQA analysis.

The state and the region can tackle climate change and high gas prices by investing in better land use around public transportation.

Recent State and Regional Initiatives

- MTC's Station Area Planning Grant program provides funds to help cities create development plans around transit stations. Funding from this program was recently made available to areas designated as Priority Development Areas under ABAG's FOCUS regional planning process.

- Prop 1C, the Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2006, issued bonds to provide $750 million for affordable homeownership and $1.35 billion in funding for transit-oriented development, infill development, and housing-related park and infrastructure improvements.

- SB 375 (2006) would require the state to establish greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets for each region, require regional transportation agencies to adopt a "preferred growth scenario" that would achieve those targets, and provide funding and CEQA incentives to implement the preferred growth scenarios. As of mid-2008, the bill is still under consideration.

Resources

For additional recommendations on regional and statewide action, see *California 2020: Responsible Land Use, A Path to A Sustainable California by 2020*. Urban Land Institute, San Francisco chapter, 2008, available at www.ulisf.org/Content/10034/policypractice.html.

For additional recommendations on statewide action, see *Restoring the Balance: Managing Fiscal Issues and Land Use Planning Decisions in California*, California Planning Roundtable, 1997, available at www.cmcaplans.com/cprwww/docs/fiscal.htm.

Conclusion

Moving Toward Infill

As the examples in this guidebook illustrate, smart infill can be done anywhere, from Petaluma to Hayward, from San Rafael to San Jose. The scale of development can vary to reflect the community's identity and character, and offers an opportunity for neighbors to agree on and achieve goals for growth and change.

The demand for infill is clear. Children are growing up and looking for homes they can afford. Parents are aging and seeking smaller, lower-maintenance homes that are close to restaurants and shops and to their children. More people than ever are choosing not to start families, and people are living on their own until more advanced ages.

The Time is Now

For too long, development has been one-size-fits-all, with tract homes that paved over open space and required people to "drive until they qualify." This has increased traffic, air pollution, and greenhouse gases, and has reduced the quality of life for the region's residents. With an additional 2 million residents on the way—and in the context of a changing climate and rising gas prices—this kind of growth is clearly unsustainable.

It's time for a better, more flexible, more sustainable way to grow—and it's time for the San Francisco Bay Area to lead the way.

When they grow up, will these girls be able to afford homes in the Bay Area? For the sake of Bay Area residents—current and future—the region's cities must step up their commitment to smart infill.

Endnotes

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