

TOWN OF LOS GATOS

General Plan Update



COMMUNITY PANEL

FOCUS AREA WORKING PAPER

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

The Town of Los Gatos is conducting a focused update of its General Plan that addresses four key focus areas in the Town: Environment and Sustainability, Parks and Recreation, Youth Needs and Senior Needs. As part of the update process, the Town hosted a series of community panel discussions on Saturday, May 2, 2009, for each of the focus areas. The goal of the panels was to engage residents, experts and service providers in conversations about the community's needs and to identify potential solutions. This summary provides an overview of the discussion and suggested strategies that came out of the panel on Environment and Sustainability.

Panelists

Six panelists participated on the Environment and Sustainability panel discussion.

Barry Cinnamon, CEO, Akeena Solar. Mr. Cinnamon, Akeena Solar's founder, is a widely recognized expert and long-time advocate of solar power based in Los Gatos. He began his career in solar energy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, he designed and installed active solar, passive solar and ground coupled heat pump systems. He is a NABCEP Certified Solar Installer, a licensed California C-46 Solar Contractor, an active member of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Solar Energy Industries Association and California Solar Energy Industry Association.

Regina Falkner, Community Services Director, Town of Los Gatos. Ms. Falkner has served as Community Services Director for the Town of Los Gatos for nearly 20 years. In this role she has managed programs as diverse as paratransit, solid waste management, rent control and affordable housing, earthquake recovery, grants to local non-profit agencies, youth services, special events, music and the arts, and senior services. Ms. Falkner currently staffs the Town's Sustainability Committee and is overseeing the Town's efforts to inventory current greenhouse gas emissions in coordination with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and Joint Venture Silicon Valley.

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Ken Hejmanowski, Senior Sustainability Analyst, Natural Logic. Mr. Hejmanowski is a Senior Sustainability Analyst at Natural Logic, a strategic management, performance metrics and eco-efficiency consulting firm. He has consulted on a wide range of sustainability issues with public and private clients, including the City of Berkeley, the City of Sonoma, the State of California, and Wal-Mart.

Jennifer Smith Grubb, Board Member, Sustainable Silicon Valley

[Not in attendance, but provided input by email to Town staff and consultants]

Ms. Smith Grubb previously served as founding President and Executive Director of Sustainable Silicon Valley (SSV). SSV is a business, government, and non-governmental partnership whose mission is to lead the Silicon Valley community to a more sustainable future. Recently, Ms. Smith Grubb has worked in the Los Angeles region, helping various organizations build their own climate action network. She was recognized for her sustainability leadership work in 2007 by the Multi-State Working Group on Environmental Performance, and also in 2001 by the Pacific Industrial Business Association, after conducting the California EPA Environmental Management System Project. She has also participated internationally with the United Nations Environmental Program Best Practices Network. Locally, Ms. Smith Grubb serves as a board member for Ecology Action in Santa Cruz, California.

John Townsend, Founder and CEO, Build by Design. Build By Design, Inc., is a sustainable energy systems integrator. Since the 1970s, the company has been involved in the research, design and installation of passive solar, photovoltaic, solar thermal, wind, and geothermal systems. As CEO and founder of Build By Design, Inc., Mr. Townsend has long been concerned about fossil fuels and their use. This is reflected in Build by Design's building designs, which have focused on incorporating environmentally-friendly solutions. Mr. Townsend is an expert in energy efficiency in the built environment and cost/benefit analysis of different energy strategies.

Dan Zack, Downtown Development Coordinator, City of Redwood City. Mr. Zack has been with Redwood City since 2003 and is currently working on implementation of a new form-based code, the creation of a new General Plan, the development of new Downtown housing and retail, and various urban design issues in the Downtown district. Mr. Zack led Redwood City to being the first city in the nation to adopt the innovative performance-based parking system advocated by UCLA Professor Donald Shoup, and has spoken extensively about parking management, downtown revitalization, transit-oriented development, and sustainable urbanism. Prior to coming to Redwood City, he worked in Fresno, California in both regional transportation planning and local land use planning.

Discussion Summary

This section summarizes the key topics discussed during the panel on Environment and Sustainability. The panel was conducted informally. Panelists responded to questions from the moderator, Joanna Jansen of Design, Community & Environment, and community members in attendance.

Sustainability Focus Areas

- ◆ Typically sustainable efforts are encouraged through incentives; use more “carrots” than “sticks.”
- ◆ The sustainability and health of the environment is a quality of life issue.
- ◆ The Town should take initiative on promoting sustainability.
- ◆ Town has two roles:
 - Showing leadership by example; for example, the new library will be LEED certified with a “Silver” rating and the Town is currently making green investments.
 - Holding a regulatory role; this role is more difficult and the Town has to find ways to get people to change behavior through incentives and promoting walkable land uses.
- ◆ Energy efficiency has the most impact because it is easier to implement than most other sustainability efforts. The Town should leverage what is out there by utilizing other organizations to promote public awareness.
- ◆ Prioritize areas important to the community as a whole, such as water, traffic, and waste.
- ◆ Buildings should be more efficient; consider providing housing stock for a changing demographic. For example, “empty nesters” are looking for a townhouse or flat. Approximately sixty percent of urban water use goes to lawns of single-family homes. Townhouses drastically reduce water use.
- ◆ Compact housing types with shared walls or floors/ceilings are more insulated and use less energy for heating and cooling.
- ◆ Educate people on household behaviors with respect to energy and water and how much of this energy and water are wasted and/or saved.
- ◆ Make sure that residents are aware of rebates/incentives that are available to support alternative energy improvements.

Energy Use

- ◆ Title 24 sets minimum energy efficiency standards. Developers can easily build 30-40 percent more efficiently than Title 24 standards without additional cost to the homeowner.
- ◆ Net zero energy usage is reachable. Zero energy houses are not that difficult to do because of the cost curve of improvements/benefits. The cost upfront may be high, but homeowners are able to

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quickly recoup that cost over time through resulting energy savings from investing in energy efficient equipment and systems.

- ◆ Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Version 2 is coming out this summer. HERS is an index that rates the energy efficiency of the design of a home. The lower the HERS index score, on a score of 0 to 100, the more energy efficient is the home's design.
- ◆ Find ways to rank a whole building or structures for better efficiency. Consider the whole building – insulation, envelope, air filtration, electrical loads – when looking at overall energy efficiency.
- ◆ People need to be educated in order to change their behavior. For example, when water and electrical meters are placed at prominent, visible locations inside the home, people will see how much energy they are using and modify their behavior accordingly.
- ◆ Provide activities for high school students to educate them on how much energy appliances use.
- ◆ Solar power will transform the energy industry over the next five years. Prices will lower by one-half in the next 2 to 3 years; the revolution in solar energy will happen because of the falling price of silicon.
- ◆ Real estate agents need public information about how buildings perform, such as having last year's PG&E bills when selling a home.
- ◆ Look at Google's online smart meter program, called PowerMeter. PowerMeter takes electricity consumption data from a smart electricity meter installed at a home and places the information on the user's iGoogle home page.
- ◆ Follow PG&E's mandatory energy audit and other mandatory energy requirements.
- ◆ Consider collecting more detailed metrics on energy consumption in Los Gatos.

Land Use

- ◆ Look at projects such as the Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas and the Sonoma Mountain Village in Sonoma, CA as models for sustainable city programs.
- ◆ Improvements to traditional neighborhoods and downtowns require minimal cost and effort.
- ◆ Progress from technological advancements such as electric cars will be overwhelmed if land use is inefficient.
- ◆ Established neighborhoods in most cities do not need to change, so efforts should focus on appropriate target areas. Los Gatos Boulevard has lots of potential, for example. Corridors connecting eastern and western Los Gatos are also important.
- ◆ Condominiums are more efficient than low-density built environments.

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- ◆ Street trees increase shade, make a more appealing pedestrian environment, absorb carbon dioxide, and increase property values.
- ◆ A 5 percent population growth can be equivalent to a 15 percent increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) because people live farther from jobs, schools and services.

Water Resources

- ◆ Under current land use trends, landscaping can be used to treat stormwater runoff – landscape areas can double as bioswales.
- ◆ Rainwater collection systems should be accommodated within building setbacks.
- ◆ Prioritize water issues. People are not aware of the actual cost of water; consider pricing of water and make water more expensive. Price signals are powerful measures to change behavior.

Emerging Economy

- ◆ Changes in our lifestyle can result in economic opportunities. Although one in ten jobs is currently related to cars now, 80 years ago one in eight jobs were related to the railroad. Economies can change, so that Los Gatos should not feel dependent on auto retailers.
- ◆ The Town is keeping positive relationships with the business community. The main message from the Town to businesses is, “We want you to be sustainable.” There are two types of relationships formed between the Town and local businesses: 1) “Organized and methodical” relationships and opportunities to work in conjunction with other jurisdictions to give clear guidance. An example would be to adopt shared regulations between cities. 2) Informal relationships, which involve a dialogue between individual businesses and the Town to learning what their business needs are. The conversation must go both ways.
- ◆ AB 32 has driven lots of venture capital funds into California. Industries will grow to approximately \$600 billion in the next 10 years.
- ◆ Focus on balancing jobs and housing now to reduce energy costs associated with driving.
- ◆ We need to look at the economic sustainability of the community. Auto dealers = tax dollars.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- ◆ SB 375 is a regional planning issue. Changing the car-oriented mindset is tough. People want to change but they need the tools to change.
- ◆ Joint Venture Silicon Valley is using the ICLEI – Local Government for Sustainability model to conduct greenhouse gas emissions analysis. ICLEI offered a discount rate to Bay Area communities to conduct their GHG inventory, which is almost done.

Transportation and Parking

- ◆ Most of the Town should not change. However, there are some areas that are too auto-focused, and changes should be made in these areas. Change can be done in a way that does not negatively affect the community's character.
- ◆ The Town owns a natural gas car fleet and fuel station.
- ◆ In most places VMT is increasing faster than population growth. However, Portland has improved its transit options, so that 50 percent of Portland commuters now get to Downtown without driving. Placing housing in the right area can give people more transit options. Higher density tends to produce lower VMT.
- ◆ A big part of pollution is manufacturing cars. Even electric cars have toxic batteries and other components. Impacts from auto manufacturing and driving can be reduced by:
 - Giving people the option to not have a car
 - Giving people the option for shorter trips
 - Making cars cleaner
- ◆ Half of vehicular trips are under 2 miles – we need to integrate services into the community, so that people can walk more.
- ◆ Shift from car ownership to car usage – people really want service and mobility, not to own car that sits idle for most of day. Car share programs are increasing in popularity.
- ◆ Think about the amount of parking in Los Gatos – paved surfaces are problematic because asphalt is a petroleum product.
- ◆ In the Gaia building in Berkeley, CA, there are 100 residential units and 40 parking spaces. Only 20 of the parking spaces are used. Fewer parking spaces reduces the total building cost.

Transit and Non-Motorized Transportation

- ◆ VTA has long term proposed projects to extend mass transit through Campbell and into Los Gatos.
- ◆ Improve walking paths such as alleyways, sidewalks and other connections to neighbors will promote walkability throughout the Town.
- ◆ Youth won't want to ride their bikes because they will be teased as a "bike nerd."
- ◆ Schools are too big in Los Gatos and are major traffic generators. Where and how we build schools makes a big difference – schools were formerly not traffic generators because students could safely walk to small neighborhood schools.
- ◆ Buses are more efficient than single occupancy vehicles.

- ◆ Look at increasing parking rates to deter driving.
- ◆ Make bike routes safer and more kid-friendly.

Suggested Policies and Action Items

This section summarizes the panelist’s suggestions for policies or actions that may be considered for inclusion in the General Plan Update process. These suggestions are organized by the topics discussed in the Panel Discussion section above.

Sustainability Focus Areas

- ◆ Create a pop-up display to market sustainable strategies for the community – how to be green, “cool to be green,” and low-cost strategies.
- ◆ Support organizations like Sustainable Silicon Valley that share information, set targets, and create a cross-sector approach to sustainability.
- ◆ Demonstrate leadership by signing onto the Urban Environmental Accords, a declaration of local governments who have committed to an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable future for their residents. Los Gatos would become a ‘certified green’ establishment. The policies and practices to obtain the certification could be posted as model documents for businesses and other organizations in Los Gatos to follow, and the progress toward meeting the goals of the Urban Accords could be posted on the Town website and published periodically in the local paper.
- ◆ Promote the Town’s certified green business program.
- ◆ Facilitate community feedback and comments – particularly around energy efficiency, renewable energy, building retrofits, recycling and waste management, pedestrian and bike safety and convenience. Make sure that creative and helpful suggestions for improvement are recognized and acted upon as resources permit.

Energy Use

- ◆ Ensure policies and regulations, such as building codes and fee structures, do not limit the adoption of renewable sources of energy.
- ◆ Implement energy efficiency projects such as lighting retrofits in all Town buildings.
- ◆ Consider the installation of smart meters, which provide more detailed electricity consumption data and monitoring, or other better measuring tools and make these tools free and available to the public: Five to six meters are currently available at the Los Gatos Library and one is set up as an example there.

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- ◆ Use material resources responsibly. Offer yard waste collection, composting, and recycling services.
- ◆ Ensure that planning and building officials and staff have the tools and knowledge to assist residents and ensure that Los Gatos codes and standards enable energy efficiency, renewable energy, water efficiency, and other sustainability standards to the maximum extent possible.

Land Use

- ◆ When a building transfers ownership, require that it meet new energy efficiency standards.
- ◆ Shift to a mandatory green building ordinance for new construction or remodels.

Water Resources

- ◆ Require graywater systems and implement policies to promote such systems; Redwood City implements these policies throughout commercial uses, parks and public facilities.
- ◆ Promote permeable pavements with filtration. Limit the amount of area that may be covered with impermeable surfaces.
- ◆ Set up demonstration areas for innovative, efficient landscaping techniques such as bioswales.
- ◆ Limit lawns in the hillside areas of Los Gatos.
- ◆ Convert ball fields to artificial turf.

Emerging Economy

- ◆ Support cleaner fuel models.
- ◆ Create pilot projects for new technologies.
- ◆ Develop a marketing strategy to target more green industries and providers.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- ◆ The Town should consider disclosing how much VMT is generated, water consumed, and energy consumed. These are easier to measure than GHG emissions.
- ◆ Participate in helping to meet Sustainable Silicon Valley's regional target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, which is a more ambitious reduction target than that of the State.
- ◆ Conduct energy, water and waste audits for all Town operations and facilities. Facilitate the same for any Los Gatos residents and businesses, perhaps on a community or neighborhood basis. Post results on the Town's website and/or publish in the Los Gatos community newspaper.

Transportation and Parking

- ◆ Use municipal purchasing power to promote more efficient products in the energy market (e.g., Clean Fleet standards).
- ◆ Consider requiring school bussing of kids to schools.
- ◆ Provide preferential parking and charging stations to accommodate new electric cars.
- ◆ Make the Town's natural gas station available to the public.
- ◆ Increase car-share options – get connections to car-sharing organizations in Town.
- ◆ Paint dedicated parking spaces for electric cars.

Transit and Non-Motorized Transportation

- ◆ Require complete streets or develop programs to increase pedestrian connections, provide street trees, and narrow streets.
- ◆ Work with Campbell and the VTA to improve transit through to Los Gatos.
- ◆ Ensure that bike and pedestrian infrastructure is maintained and improved.
- ◆ Focus on creating and developing bicycle and pedestrian corridors.
- ◆ Take advantage of federal and State Safe-Routes-To-School programs and funding to develop bike and pedestrian facilities in Town.