

## City Council agenda report: Sept 27, 2017

### Agenda Item: Proposed update to the City General Plan for the South Hills Area. City of Santa Clara, applicant.

#### **General Plan: Update for the “South Hills Sub-area Plan” a portion of the City General Plan**

Acres: approximately 1,680 acres

Project location: South of the Santa Clara River and west of the St George – Santa Clara city boundary.

**Background:** The land area referred to as the “South Hills” is mostly under federal ownership and managed by the BLM. Within the South Hills Plan area approximately 1,440 acres are under BLM jurisdiction and approximately 240 acres are in private ownership. Much of this BLM managed area is designated by the BLM for disposal, but the actual area to be disposed of will not be known until a detailed environmental analysis is done on the BLM land. That detailed study has yet to be done. However, the city is updating the South Hills Land Use Plan to be prepared for when such property is put up for sale. It is important for prospective buyers of this property to be aware of the city’s land use plan for the area and the infrastructure needs for the proper development of the area.

The proposed Land Use Plan is a refinement of the current South Hills Sub-area plan which is part of the overall Santa Clara City General Plan which was adopted in 2014, although much of the work for that plan was done between 2006-2010.

The South Hills area has potential for development but also has significant constraints such as;

- expansive soils that increase the cost of development,
- steep slopes, and visible hillsides that are important to views from Santa Clara,
- a large number of existing and planned recreation trails that crisscross many developable areas,
- environmentally sensitive lands (ACECs) which the BLM will likely not offer for sale, but which will require development to work around,
- dependence on new roads, including the Western Corridor and extension of Plantations Drive in order to make the area accessible and to avoid over-congestion on Santa Clara Drive.

**Public Input to Date:** In addition to the direction given by the members of the city Planning Commission, the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, appointed by the Mayor has met a number of times to discuss plan issues and provide input to the Plan. A public Open House was held on June 20, 2017 and approximately 50 people attended and 39 comment cards were submitted providing additional feedback to the plan. The PC will hold a Public Hearing on August 8, 2017 for additional public input prior to the PC making a recommendation to the City Council.

**Plan Proposal:** Residential development is clustered into either low-density pods, or medium density pods for various reasons; it is a less costly way to develop on the shrink/swell soils that are located throughout the area, and the clustered pods also avoids development on steep slopes and preserves important open space areas such as washes and steep slopes for trail corridors and other recreation use.

**'Low Density / Single Family Dwellings'** is proposed along the lower areas near the Santa Clara River and on hillsides which are visible from the valley floor, and more specifically as viewed from the intersection of Santa Clara Drive & Gates Lane. Low Density / Single Family is defined as 2-4 single family detached dwellings per acre. Some of this visible area is presently zoned Residential R-1-10 which requires a minimum lot size of at least 10,000 sq. ft. per dwelling. However, another development option for this area is to cluster homes (up to 4 detached dwellings / acre) in a compact manner where the remaining land area is in permanent open space.

**Medium density pods** (5-8 dwellings / acre, with up to 12 du/acre possible with density bonus) are dispersed in the area further south and generally not visible from Santa Clara Drive in areas with more gentle slopes. These areas total approximately 270 acres which could result in approximately 1,350 dwellings if developed at 5 du's per acre, or if developed at an average of 7 du's /acre could result in 1,890 total dwelling units.

**City park** plans include a 50-acre area around the existing water tank on the west side of the Plan area. The city is in process of acquiring the 50 acres from the BLM for a public park through the BLM's "Recreation & Public Purpose" land program.

**Street alignments** for both the Western Corridor and Plantations Drive extension have been refined somewhat from the previous General Plan map, but will likely require considerable further refinement once engineering begins for these road alignments. Also, Chapel Street is proposed to be extended southward with a new bridge over the Santa Clara River. This street and bridge development will likely happen within the next two years.

**Neighborhood Commercial** pods are proposed around the intersection of the Western Corridor and Plantations Drive. The Plan proposes 3 NC pods totaling approximately 20 acres for future commercial development.

**Employment areas** (approximately 63 acres) are also designated near the future intersection of the Western Corridor and Plantations Drive and generally located behind the Neighborhood Commercial pods. The updated plan refers to these areas as "Employment" areas rather than as "Industrial" areas because the desired type of development is that which can be conducted primarily indoors in an office or business park type setting, rather than the typical industrial park which often poses various negative impacts such as noise, and aesthetics.

**Annexation:** An additional 188 acres located adjacent to the current south city boundary is proposed to be annexed into Santa Clara. The property is under the jurisdiction of the BLM but can be served with municipal services by Santa Clara and therefore annexation to the city may complete the South Hills development area.

In summary, the proposed South Hills Land Use Plan update is best characterized as a refinement of the current plan for the area. The plan does not propose any major deviations from the current plan but rather provides adjustments based on more recent information about the location of major road corridors, park areas, and environmentally sensitive lands.

**PC Action:** The PC recommends approval of the update to the General Plan map & text.