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### San Jose City Council endorses city's new general plan

By [Tracy Seipel](#), San Jose Mercury News

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After almost four hours of discussion, including plenty of enthusiastic feedback from the public, the San Jose City Council gave a unanimous thumbs up Tuesday night to a new blueprint that outlines the way San Jose should grow over the next three decades.

In a 9-0 vote, the council accepted the Envision San Jose 2040 General Plan -- a report that will guide the city's future land use by emphasizing jobs before housing and retrofitting much of the city's 180 square miles to reduce the public's reliance on cars.

The council's decision followed a four-year public study process with input from up to 5,000 residents that began in 2007 with piles of Lego blocks and maps placed in several libraries around the city and a sign asking residents for ideas about how the city should grow.

Watching it all come to a satisfactory end with Tuesday's vote "was almost anti-climatic," Planning Director Joe Horwedel said after the meeting.

Councilmen Pete Constant and Kansen Chu were out of town on city business.

The report lays out a long-term vision for how the city will look and feel, and what is needed to meet the city's social, economic and environmental goals.

But many hope that the principles of the vision -- like preventing the conversion of industrial land for

housing -- will remain strong because of the years-long, communitywide effort that included a 33-member task force co-headed by City Councilman Sam Liccardo and former City Councilwoman Shirley Lewis, as well as seven community workshops and 125 "outreach sessions."

"What we saw after four years of effort was that we've got a community that is very passionate about the future of San Jose," said Liccardo. "I'm grateful for their hard work."

It's because of that input, Horwedel told the council, that the plan has received little criticism.

"I think the success of being as bold as we have been with this plan is the result of common sense and helping people to recognize it was possible to do great things," he said.

About two dozen speakers addressed the council on the Envision 2040 goals that include: adding as many as 470,000 new jobs and 120,000 new housing units; encouraging growth in North San Jose, North Coyote Valley, Evergreen and Edenvale, among other areas; building a high-density mix of housing, office and retail near transit corridors and commercial centers; creating "urban villages" designed as central places where people live, work and shop; and increasing the number of trails and bike paths, and protecting urban reserves in mid-Coyote Valley and South Almaden Valley.

San Jose resident Davide Vieira told the council that his Five Wounds/Brookwood Terrace neighborhood task force has already planned four such urban villages that it hopes to forward to the council for approval in 2012. He proudly offered it as a template for other San Jose neighborhood groups.

The new general plan complies with state law that requires each city and county to prepare and adopt a comprehensive and long-range plan for its physical development. The plans must be updated periodically, usually every 10 to 20 years. This general plan is the city's fourth since the mid-1970s. It goes into effect Dec. 1.

Mayor Chuck Reed seemed impressed by the plan, but voiced a few concerns about how some of it would work. In particular, he recalled how anticipated job growth in North San Jose had failed to occur as much as he and others had hoped over the past 10 years.

He wondered if the city's permit policies and zoning ordinances were getting in the way. A well-known developer recently told Reed about his company's interest in building 1 million square feet of office and industrial space in North San Jose. But when the developer discovered he would have to pay \$13 million in traffic impact fees, he began looking elsewhere.

"It's clearly an impediment to their decision," Reed told the council. "If our policies are not helping us and are in the way, I would say we need to look at that."

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