



How the Comprehensive Plan Was Developed

The City Council was involved in the development of the plan from the beginning. The Council established the Work Program for the Plan and appointed the CPAC. Council members attended and participated in CPAC meetings and workshops. The Council held study sessions and public hearing to review the visions and goals, policies and programs. The Council reviewed and approved the final plan.

Palo Alto has a long history and tradition of planning. The Planning Commission was founded in 1916 and master plans for the City were prepared as early as the 1920s. The City adopted a General Plan in 1963, after more than 33 public meetings by the Planning Commission. The 1963 Plan was replaced in 1976 and was revised again in 1981. Major revisions to the 1981 Plan took place throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, as conditions and issues in the City changed. By 1992, it became apparent that a new Plan was needed to guide the City into the 21st century. This document is the outcome.

Between January 1993 and October 1995, the CPAC held more than 20 public meetings to develop ideas and obtain public input. Two newsletters describing the Comprehensive Plan effort and soliciting ideas and suggestions were distributed to Palo Alto households. The CPAC also conducted educational forums to explore topics relating to the Plan. Further input was provided through a telephone survey administered to 400 randomly selected Palo Alto households.

The CPAC developed a video summarizing the Visions and Goals they had developed. The video was packaged with questionnaires and other materials into "Outreach Kits" that residents were encouraged to borrow and use to conduct their own workshops with neighborhood and community organizations. Over 600 people participated in this way. The mailing list of persons interested in the Plan eventually grew to more than 2,000 names.

Four weekend workshops were added to the process in response to strong community interest and the addition of new topics to the Plan. One of the four workshops addressed transportation while the other three focused on geographic areas where significant change is expected. These workshops were intended to develop physical design concepts and to test new ways to involve the public in land use and development decisions. About 100 people participated in each workshop.

Because the Comprehensive Plan is the primary tool for Planning Commission actions and recommendations, the Commission was an essential part of the development of the plan. Commission members attended and participated in the CPAC process and workshops. Early in the process, the Commission held study sessions and public hearings to review the visions and goals proposed by the CPAC. Later the Commission met more than 20 times to review and finalize the goals, policies and programs, text and maps before forwarding the Plan to Council for final action.



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