

3. Local Agency Planning Efforts: City of Auburn Domes Infill Area () (Est. Time: )



## Land Use & Natural Resources Committee

Meeting Date: April 6, 2023

[[!Agenda Item No. 1!]]

### City of Auburn Planning Efforts: Form-based Codes and the Domes Redevelopment Area

#### Information

**Prepared by:** Greg Chew

**Attachments:** No

**Approved by:** Clint Holtzen

**Referring Committee:** Not Applicable

#### 1. Issue:

The city of Auburn is currently developing and implementing a form-based code to streamline the city's development process while supporting compatible higher density development and design. The city also has plans to redevelop a 17.5 acres Domes Infill area into a multi-modal center with higher density housing.

#### 2. Recommendation:

None; this is for information only. Committee members will hear a presentation from the City of Auburn and have the opportunity to ask questions and engage in a dialogue about how the city is making progress on implementing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS) alongside local priorities.

#### 3. Background/Analysis:

Periodically, SACOG invites member agencies to update the committee on innovative or best practice planning efforts that implement Blueprint planning principles and the regional MTP/SCS. The purpose of these updates is to share examples of how to revitalize commercial areas and corridors and encourage infill housing development in a variety of contexts that are relevant to jurisdictions throughout the region. The city of Auburn has two simultaneous planning efforts that may serve as such examples by turning challenges into opportunities for the city.

First, the city is undertaking the development of a form-based code for two of the city's most economically important districts, Old Town and Downtown, which comprise the core area of the city. The city's zoning code was established in the 1970's and has been identified as an impediment to development in the community. The outdated code has inflexible parking standards, a lack of incentives for development, preclusion of residential uses, no provision for mixed uses, subjective design criteria and restrictive development standards. Equally important, the code lacks a truly updated vision for Auburn.

Form-based codes are land development regulations that foster predictable results and high-quality public space by using physical form (rather than separation of uses), as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted by a city.

The City of Auburn intends for the form-based code to streamline the development process and provide incentives for higher density uses that demonstrate conformity with the city's vision and design guidelines for

the city's core area. The code would make many uses, including residential, subject to a by-right process. Ultimately, the code will provide a guide for development that is clearly defined, reasonable, and commensurate with the identity of the city. The intent is to eliminate the need in most cases for a use permit or design review permit, thereby making the development of projects more streamlined and even over-the-counter. The developer will have a clearer understanding of what the vision is for the community and the requirements for approval.

The city of Auburn's second featured planning effort is the revitalization of the Placer County-owned Domes site at 175 Fulweiler Avenue. The city is preparing a master plan for the 17.5 site with a concentration of high-density housing options with direct access to the city's multimodal transit hub (including rail) located feet from this site. The site is also located within walking distance of Auburn's central commercial core area, has easy transit access to the Auburn Municipal Airport and is located in proximity to regional job centers. A barrier to the infill housing in this Green Zone area is the city's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance that limits the city to only commercial use classifications, such as apartments, a limited maximum unit area size and off-street parking requirements of two spaces per unit. The city is looking to increase the maximum density unit from 15 dwelling units to acre to 20 du/acre, and allow for a housing mix of apartments, condominiums, townhouse and accessory dwelling units. This area would also implement many of the design elements from the aforementioned form-based code.

#### **4. Discussion/Analysis:**

The city of Auburn's planning efforts provide two examples of a major revisioning and planning initiatives for commercial areas in the region. Auburn is a historic city with a varied topography and surrounded by county development limiting potential growth areas outside its city limits and necessitating that the city focus on infill development and redevelopment. The lessons from Auburn have relevancy to other small or medium-sized communities in the region that are seeking to revitalize their commercial corridors or downtowns whether due to land constraints such as topography, flood plains, or surrounding development, or as part of efforts to implement the regional MTP/SCS by reinvesting in existing communities with infill potential.

This presentation is part of an ongoing effort to bring more opportunities for shared learning across jurisdictions in the region and provide members of the committee with greater insights into local land use development activities that contribute to the SACOG board's goals and objectives for catalyzing urban, suburban, and small-town infill and revitalization. As SACOG works to update the [2025 Blueprint](#) with a focus on advancing coequal goals in equity, economy, and environment, it is important to understand and learn from local experiences, strategies, and projects that support and implement our region vision. Understanding these efforts not only provides useful case studies for cities and counties looking to tackle similar challenges, but also helps SACOG identify implementation and assistance activities that we can take on to support member agencies.

Both of Auburn's efforts are part of SACOG's Green Means Go program that the Land Use and Natural Resources Committee is overseeing this year. The Green Means Go funding program aims to catalyze infill development that will improve housing affordability through non-transportation infrastructure and planning activities in locally adopted Green Zones. At its March 16, meeting, the SACOG board conditionally approved (subject to final approval by the State Housing and Community Development Department) a list of recommended grant applications from local agencies. Both Auburn planning projects are on the recommended list for conditionally approved funding. For more information on the Green Means Go program and the application materials, visit: <https://www.sacog.org/reap-2-green-means-go>

**5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

SACOG's housing and technical assistance programs a combination of sources including state Sustainable Communities Formula Program Funds and Transportation Development Act-Local Transportation Funds. The Green Means Go program is funded through a combination of state Regional Early Action Program and Strategic Growth Council funds.