



Community Engagement Report Diridon Station Business Case

Prepared by the City of San José with support from Winter Consulting
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A. Introduction

With recently electrified Caltrain service, and BART, high-speed rail, and other increased transit service coming in the future, San José Diridon Station is poised to become one of the most significant transit hubs in the western United States. To accommodate many more people, trains, and other transit service, five public agencies have been working together under a cooperative agreement to redesign the station. The five agencies (partner agencies) include Caltrain, the City of San José, the Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority (VTA), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA).

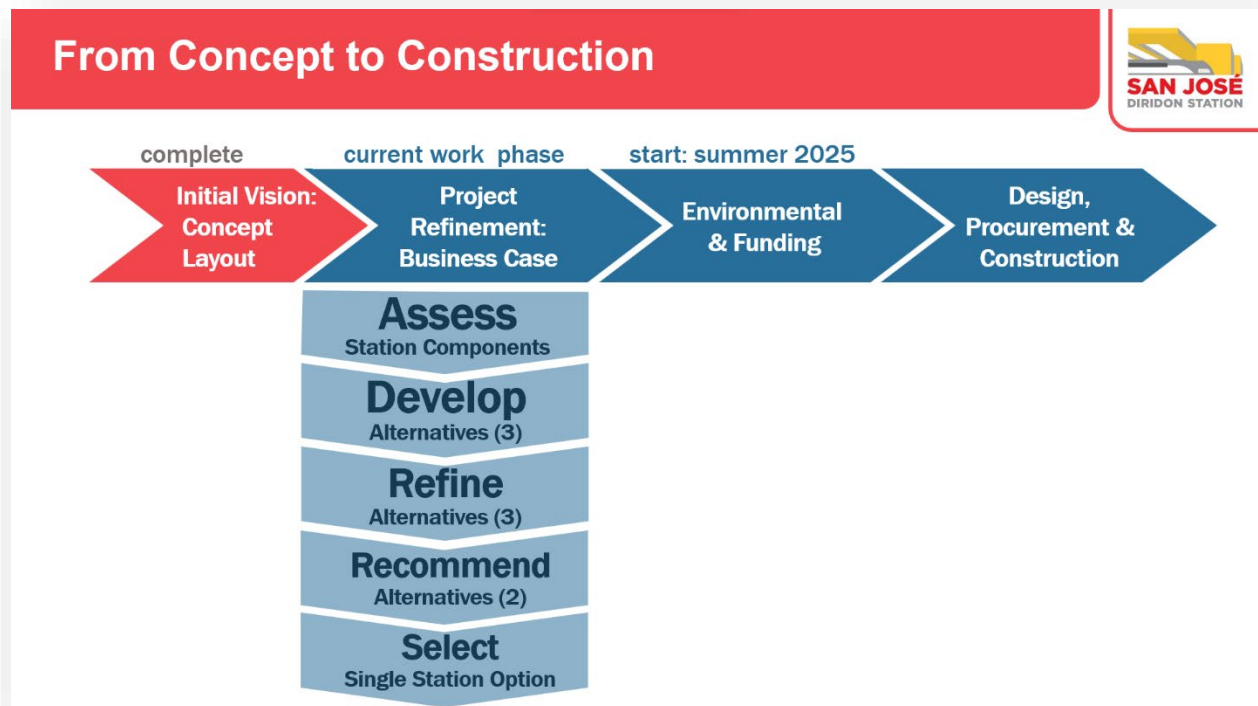
As shown in Figure 1, the effort began in 2018 with the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan (DISC). DISC produced a “Concept Layout,” which the governing bodies of the five partner agencies each accepted in 2020. The partner agencies then worked together with adjacent property owners to refine the Concept Layout through 2022. In 2023, they began the current phase of work, the Business Case. This effort aims to identify a cost-effective and implementable preferred alternative, one that aligns both with goals of the community and of the partner agencies. The Business Case will conclude in spring 2025 with the selection of a recommended station alternative.

The Business Case has included significant community engagement, beginning with select stakeholders in late 2023 and then expanding to include the broader community in 2024 and 2025. All engagement work for the Business Case has built off prior efforts under DISC and under the land use planning effort for the Diridon Station Area, the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP).

The following report presents feedback from engagement conducted from late 2023 through April 2025. It is divided into the following sections:

- Outreach goals and strategies
- A summary of completed activities
- Promotion of activities
- Engagement takeaways

Figure 1. Timeline for the Diridon Station Project



B. Outreach Goals and Strategies

Key goals for the engagement process included building on prior input (from both DSAP and DISC), gathering community feedback on station alternatives, fostering excitement and ownership, and shaping the single preferred station alternative that will be advanced into the environmental review phase.

Engagement teams from Winter and Kimley-Horn supported the partner agencies in a variety of interactive activities to support this effort. Activities took place in and around Diridon Station, on transit vehicles serving Diridon Station, at select key transit nodes elsewhere in San José, in downtown San José, as well as virtually when appropriate. The outreach program also featured an online open house. Activities featured informational materials designed to encourage participation and ensure stakeholders were well-informed.

The engagement strategy has prioritized equity, inclusivity, and accessibility by meeting communities where they are and by using culturally sensitive and multilingual approaches. Through diverse methods ranging from online and in-person workshops to intimate meetings with community partners, the process has sought to ensure meaningful, community-driven outcomes. This process has been enriched by the participation of trusted community leaders and local organizations, neighbors, landowners, and developers.

Figure 2. Jessica Zenk and Eric Eidlin from the City of San José presented on the Diridon Station Project and engaged in conversation with neighbors at the Gardner Community Center



Figure 3. Exhibit on station alternatives at Diridon Station



Figure 4. City and Diridon Partner Agencies led a walking tour of the Gregory Plaza neighborhood with neighborhood residents



Historical Context

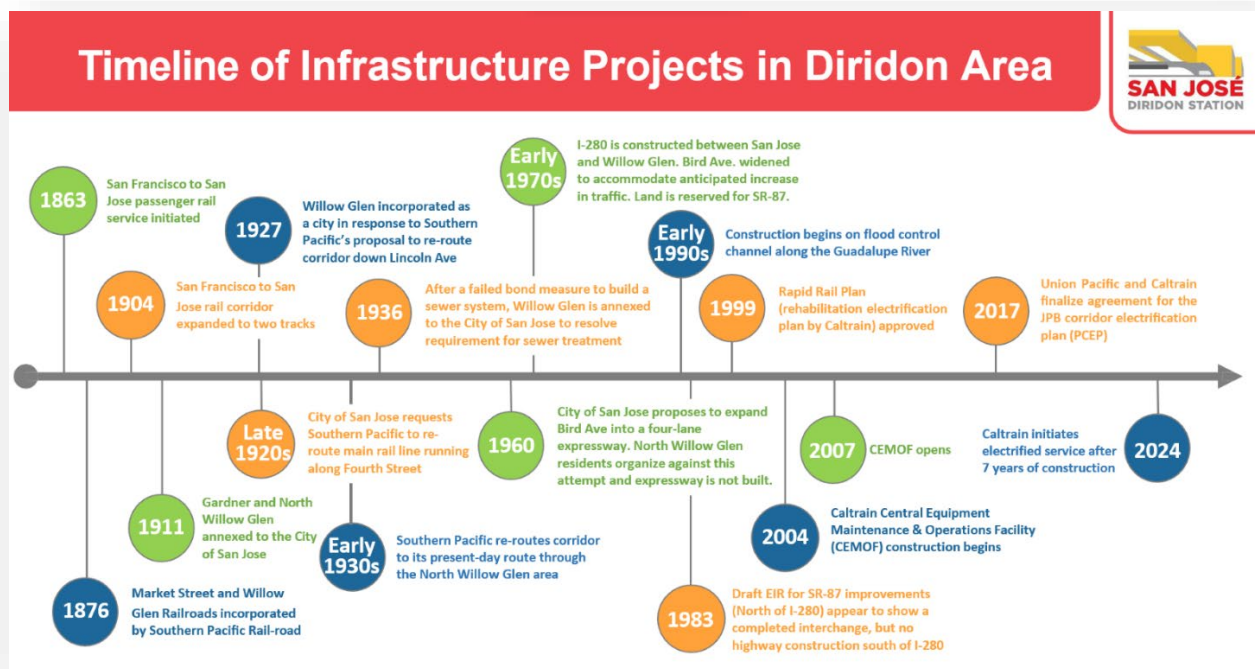
When conducting outreach, the partner agencies have been mindful of the legacy of transportation impacts in the neighborhoods surrounding Diridon Station. These neighborhoods – including Gardner, Gregory Plaza, Hannah, Delmas Park, Washington-Guadalupe, and others – have been disproportionately impacted by the construction of large transportation projects since the early 1900s, including the rail corridor, Interstate 280 (I-280), and State Route 87 (SR-87). These projects have exacerbated physical, social, and economic divides in neighborhoods that had already been harmed by racially discriminatory practices, including redlining, in the early 1900s.

The construction of Southern Pacific Railroad in the early 1900s, and the re-routing of rail service around San José's historic center, split the Gardner neighborhood. The railroad corridor became a physical barrier between lower-income and wealthier neighborhoods. Additionally, in the 1960s, the construction of I-280 separated neighborhoods north and south of the freeway, impacting connectivity and exacerbating air and noise pollution. These neighborhoods were further divided by the construction of State Route 87, which was built in phases over three decades. Construction began with the I-280/SR-87 interchange in the mid-1960s. An extension of the freeway north to Taylor Street was subsequently completed in 1988 and an extension south to SR-85 was completed in 1993. These projects and the neighborhoods that they go through are shown in Figure 5. A full timeline of transportation impacts is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Major transportation corridors and neighborhoods south and east of Diridon Station



Figure 6. Timeline of infrastructure projects in neighborhoods near Diridon Station



These transportation projects divided neighborhoods and displaced many residents whose homes were demolished to make way for the transportation corridors. Areas adjacent to the transportation corridors that were not directly impacted by construction were negatively affected by noise, pollution, and visual impacts. In turn, this led to blight and an increase in crime according to many neighborhood residents. Efforts to address these impacts included funding for neighborhood improvements, but the effectiveness of these interventions has been hampered by a lack of sustained support and funding. Local volunteers continue to advocate for neighborhood improvements, warning that further transportation changes could lead to increased crime and a return to earlier blighted conditions.

C. Summary of Completed Activities

Across the 40 events held during this phase, the team engaged with over 5,700 community members about the station redesign. These activities ranged from intimate meetings with local leaders and brief interactions with stakeholders at community pop-ups. The team also developed a survey paired with informational videos that detailed each aspect of the project. In order to receive the broadest and most complete community input, the team made intentional efforts to reach the community *where they were* by attending meeting and events organized by neighborhood groups.

Table 1. List of community engagement events

Event Type	Location	Date and Time	No. of Touchpoints
Historic Working Group	Virtual	10/25/2023 11/9/2023 3/27/2024	23
Stakeholder Meetings	Virtual	April, May, September, October 2024, March, April 2025	61
Community Member Meetings	Virtual	8/19/2024 10/8/2024 10/9/2024	3
Pop-up	Viva Calle	9/8/2024	150
Open House	Gardner Community Center	9/12/2024	120
Caltrain Electrification Launch Party – San José	Diridon Station	9/21/2024	150* estimate

Event Type	Location	Date and Time	No. of Touchpoints
D3 Neighborhood Leaders Meeting	Virtual	10/16/2024	10
D6 Neighborhood Leaders Meeting	Virtual	10/7/2024	10
Gardner Neighborhood Association Meeting	In-Person	10/16/2024	15
Delmas Park Neighbors Meeting	In-Person	10/23/2024	9
Pop-up	Diridon Station	10/23/2024	100
Pop-up	Whole Foods	10/26/2024	41
Pop-up	SAP Center	10/29/2024	40
Pop-up	Eastridge Transit Center	10/30/2024	20
Pop-up	Berryessa Transit Station	11/2/2024	20
In-Field Community Meetings & Walking Tours	Gardner neighborhood	11/9/2024 (with “makeup” on 11/19/2024)	40
Pop-up	SAP Center	11/29/2024	90
Vista Center for the Blind Focus Group	Virtual	12/10/2024	9

Event Type	Location	Date and Time	No. of Touchpoints
Focused Small Group Discussion	San José City Hall	12/11/2024	12
Exhibit Opening	Diridon Station	12/12/2024	35
Station Exhibit	Diridon Station	12/13/2024 – 3/1/2025	1,535* <i>estimate</i>
Online Open House	Online	11/8/2024-1/3/2025	28
Shasta Hanchett Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting	Westminster Presbyterian Church	2/8/2025	75
Prosperity Lab Focus Group	Center for Employment Training San José	2/14/2025	5
Community Meeting	Gardner Community Center	3/13/2025	65
In-Field Community Meeting & Walking Tour	Gardner Neighborhood	4/1/2025	25
Community Meeting Mailers	Direct to homes & businesses	September & March	3,525

D. Promotion of Activities

To gather feedback from the diverse group of community members and stakeholders that are invested in the future of Diridon Station, the engagement team used a variety of promotional strategies. To ensure the broadest possible awareness among residents and businesses about engagement and feedback opportunities, the team sent mailers to homes, posted flyers at popular local businesses and other locations, and tabled at locations and events frequented by neighbors. To reach the broader transit-riding community, the team cast a wider net by sending email blasts, posting joint social media posts with the partner agencies, and distributing flyers on Caltrain and Capitol Corridor. The team also tabled in locations where riders would be, such as at Diridon Station and the Eastridge Transit Center during commute hours.

Some of the specific actions the team took to inform the public about engagement activities included:

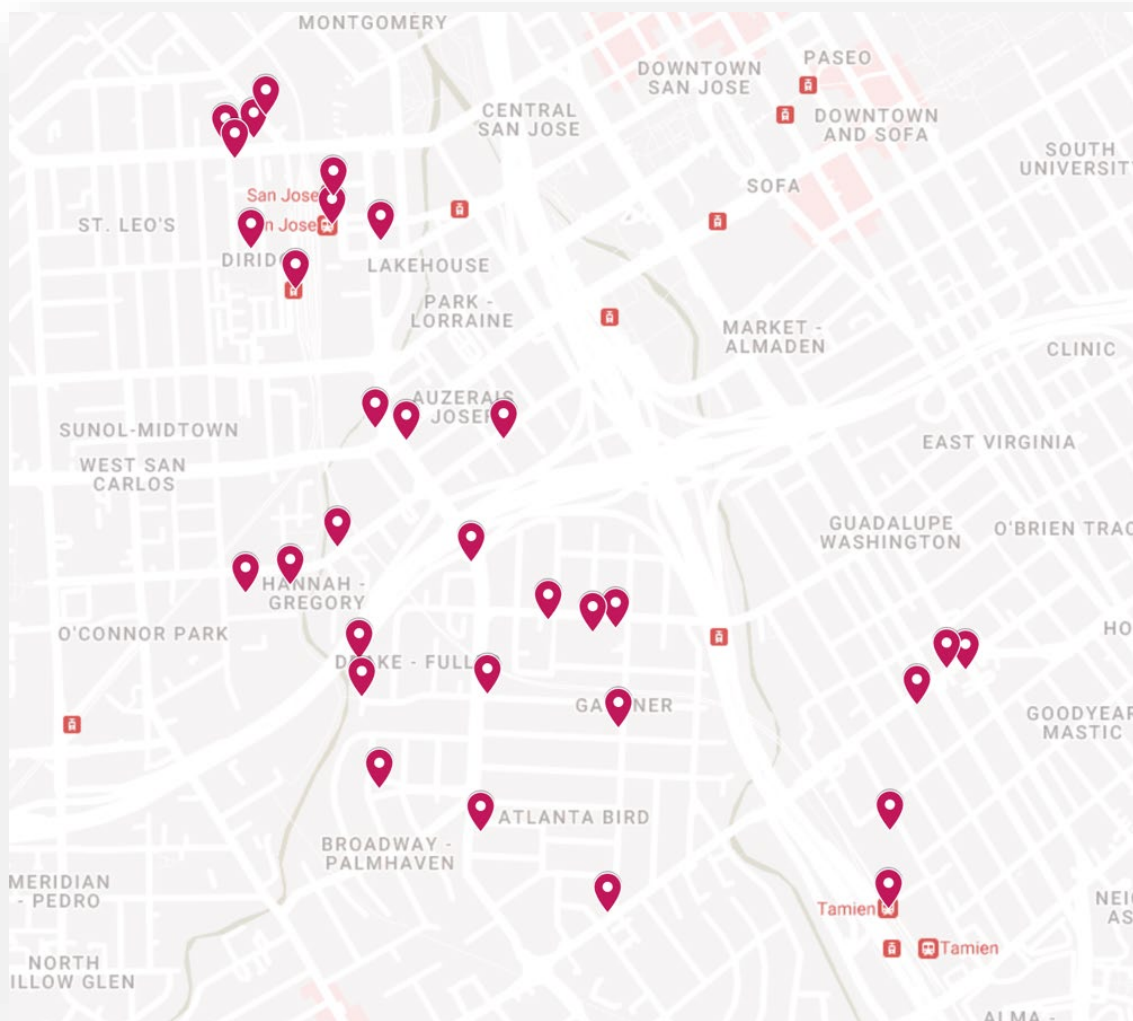
- Holding a City Council Study Session in August 2024 to ensure broad public and City Council awareness of the project.
- Organizing a celebration of the opening of Caltrain's Electrified Service, an event attended by over 4,000 people, to raise awareness about the Station redesign effort and electrified Caltrain service.
- Collaborating with Amtrak station agents and Diridon Station employees at Diridon Station to hand out promotional items to riders.
- Distributing flyers at businesses and at public areas throughout surrounding neighborhoods.
- Distributing flyers on trains serving Diridon Station, including on Caltrain and on Capitol Corridor.
- Sending out e-mail blasts to previous project participants.
- Sending mailers to residents and businesses in affected neighborhoods.
- Attending neighborhood and business association meetings for interested communities, including the Gardner Neighborhood Association, Delmas Park Neighborhood Association, Alameda-Park Neighborhood Association, Shasta Hanchett Park Neighborhood Association, Plant 51 community, Stakeholders + Neighborhoods Initiative (S+NI), the Downtown Homeowner's Association, the Alameda Business Association, and the San José Downtown Association.

- Partnering with two community-based organizations, the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Prosperity Lab.
- Holding multiple pop-ups to promote general awareness about the project and to promote the September open house, November in-field community meeting, and March community and in-field meetings.
- Promoting the open house, as well as community and in-field meetings, in the local City Council representative's newsletter.
- Promoting the community meetings and online open house on the social media accounts of the partner agencies.

Figures 7 and 8. Flyers promoting the project's in-person open house were posted at Palm Haven Park (left) and on the Los Gatos Creek Trail bridge at Gregory and Fuller (right), among other locations



Figure 9. Map of the locations where flyers promoting community engagement events were posted throughout the Diridon Station area, as well as the Gardner and Tamien neighborhoods



E. What We Heard

This section provides highlights of the feedback received from late 2023 through April 2025. Overall, the team captured over 800 individual comments from approximately 760 community members. It is important to note that although this represents a significant amount of feedback, there were many people who received information about the project without providing feedback on project details. This includes visitors to the www.diridonsj.org website, as well as people who viewed the exhibit at Diridon Station. The qualitative feedback is categorized into the following two sections.

General Feedback

- What people liked
- Primary concerns
- Reactions to At-Grade Alternative
- Reactions to Elevated Alternative
- What people wanted to know more about

Topical Feedback

- Accessibility
- Amenities
- Circulation
- Community
- Design & Infrastructure
- Environmental
- Operations & Service

General Feedback

What people liked | The following highlights the aspects that community members supported for both alternatives. Across all engagement activities, the team recorded 87 comments of clear support for the project or an aspect of the project.

- Both transit advocates and the general public supported the prospect of improved regional mobility through the redesigned station.
- Respondents felt that the redesigned station prioritized modes appropriately, particularly by allocating ample space for pedestrians in locations most central to the station.
- People liked the improved arrival experience offered by the redesigned station and associated plazas.

- Community members appreciated both the preservation of the historic station hall and modifications to the historic assets to improve the functionality of the station. They also generally felt that the redesigned station successfully blended historic station components with new architectural elements.
- Community members placed importance and preference for the alternative that would ensure the most timely and efficient completion.
- Transit advocates were especially excited for the economic prospects and greater connectivity promised by the future station.
- People appreciated the thoughtful and thorough public engagement process.

Primary concerns | The following highlights the concerns for community members for both alternatives. Across all engagement activities, the team received 67 comments expressing concerns, either about current conditions or about aspects of the proposed designs that could require additional consideration.

- Community members raised concerns around potential flooding (especially in underpasses), maintenance, overcrowding, undersized station entrances, as well as concerns about heat or glare from the natural light that would penetrate into the station.
- Community members expressed hope that the station project would have a net positive impact on open spaces and vegetation along tracks leading into the station. Some expressed specific concerns about the preservation of Fuller Park and the potential loss of mature trees.
- Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with maintenance of the rail corridor currently, highlighting particular concerns about illegal dumping and pigeons roosting in underpasses. These individuals called for better maintenance of the existing rail corridor.
- People were curious about property impacts due to rail expansion, including changes to neighborhood access, parking, and impacts to existing amenities such as parks.
- Some respondents expressed concern about noise, vibration, and visual impacts of the designs.
- Some respondents opposed the potential removal of benches from the historic station hall. These individuals asked that adequate seating be provided in the future station, particularly for people with disabilities, elders, and long-haul passengers.

Reactions to the At-Grade Alternative | Community members shared the following thoughts about the At-Grade Alternative:

- The arrival experience is slightly better with the historic building more prominent.
- While some appreciated the design of the historic hall with the floor cut out and the creation of a gallery, there was not universal support for this idea, particularly for accessibility or rest areas needed for people with disabilities.
- This alternative is more cost- and time-efficient and would result in less construction disruption than the Elevated Alternative. Transit/rail riders particularly appreciated the shorter construction disruption.
- There was mixed feedback about the superstructure design of the roof.
- There were concerns about property impacts, especially at Auzerais Avenue, West Virginia Street, and Stockton Avenue.
- There were concerns about maintaining adequate access across the tracks.

Reactions to the Elevated Alternative | Community members shared the following thoughts about the Elevated Alternative:

- Support for better local street, neighborhood, and multimodal connections, which is especially beneficial for pedestrians, bicyclists, and emergency responders.
- Support for easy access to the planned shops & community spaces.
- Appreciation that this alternative avoids many road complications.
- Preference for flatter roads.
- Appreciation that this design allows for an intuitive bike path design, one that is accessible for a wide spectrum of users.
- Concerns about visual impacts of elevated tracks.
- Concerns about maintenance and the need for programming of spaces under future elevated tracks.

What people wanted to know more about | The highlights listed below are the topics that people were curious to learn more about:

- Benefits to residents directly adjacent to the station and tracks.
- More details on pedestrian crossings at tracks and streets.
- Maintenance (e.g. proposed roof).
- Intermodal connections, specifically to BART and buses.

- Accommodating freight service, particularly with respect to the Vasona Line. On this point, community members mentioned the decision in 2023 to permanently close the Permanente Quarry in Cupertino, the primary business that the Vasona Line serves.

Topical Feedback

This section breaks down feedback received into more topical categories and gives more detail about community desires, interests, concerns, and recommendations.

Accessibility | Community members showed interest in ensuring the station is accessible in the following ways:

- There was desire for clear wayfinding and minimizing walking distances within the station.
- Comprehensive accessibility was important for the design of both alternatives, using ideas such as universal design, trams, or elevators.
- People were interested in wheelchair accessibility, and in infrastructure that accommodates all mobility needs.
- Community members desire well-organized parking areas with clear, accessible routes between lots and platforms along with comprehensive, well-connected bus routes.
- Focus group participants suggested the following features for people who are blind or have low vision: edge detection, truncated domes, beacon systems, tactile maps, and tactile flooring.
- Community members asked to consider making PA system announcements clear to hear for navigational purposes.
- Station staff do not always see participants waiting in the disabled boarding area. The project team should consider creating a way to notify staff that assistance is needed.

Amenities | When asked about the type of amenities or services that the community would like to have at or near the station, the following were those most commonly named:

- Practical amenities such as bathrooms, ample seating, water bottle-filling stations, shade and shelter, and public Wi-Fi.
- Local businesses that provide various dining and grocery options for convenience and leisure, places to buy food and drink, such as cafes, restaurants, bars, markets, and grocery stores.
- Local retail and entertainment options, outlets, or a shopping center.

- Landscaping—particularly trees—that is sustainable, and that provides shelter and shade.
- For travelers, amenities such as car and bike parking, baggage storage, and lodging.
- Public art and educational content about the history of San José, including educational information and/or artwork celebrating the history and importance of native people.
- Spaces for community use and socialization, such as farmers markets, seasonal events, winter markets, live music, or general open plaza space.
- Recreational and green spaces such as a dog park and athletic courts.
- Family-friendly spaces including play areas.
- Elements that would contribute to a unique cultural identity at Diridon Station, with spaces featuring local food, rotating vendors, and large art installations. The San Francisco Ferry Building was named as a strong example.
- Shops, services, and amenities that would make Diridon Station a destination in its own right through unique products, ambiance, and community-friendly spaces. These features would make the station more community-oriented and would attract investors.

Figure 10. Word cloud of the amenities that community members requested at the future station



Circulation | Community members had the following suggestions or concerns about circulation with the redesign:

- Increased traffic in the area could heighten the risk for break-ins.
- Some worried that closing West Virginia to cars – as proposed in the at-grade alternative – would likely impact emergency vehicle and services access to the area, potentially exacerbating the historical harms already imposed on the Gardner and Gregory Plaza neighborhoods by past transportation projects. Improvements at Fuller and Bird avenues, as well as other options, should be considered to compensate for the loss of access.
- Some residents of Plant 51 provided the following comments:
 - They asked that Park Avenue be considered as the primary east/west connection for people on bikes across the tracks instead of San Fernando Street / Laurel Grove Lane to allow continued auto access to their parking garage via Laurel Grove Lane.
 - If the bikeway through the station is maintained along San Fernando Street / Laurel Grove Lane, there was a request to investigate shifting the bike/ped facility to the south side of the street in order to maintain access to Plant 51's southern garage gate.
 - Concern about congestion during SAP Center events. They made the specific request that specific measures should be taken to prevent double-parking and passenger pick-up and drop-offs along red curb zones on Laurel Grove Lane.

Community | Pertaining to community considerations, people were mostly interested in the following key themes:

- Many expressed a desire for the station to be as accessible as possible by bicycle.
- There is an interest in keeping neighborhoods together and in reducing impacts to nearby properties.
- There is a desire to account for business needs, as they differ from residential needs.
 - Business owners highlighted the need for affordable rents, partnerships, and support during the construction phase.
 - Some offered lessons from past projects that highlighted the need for clear signage, communication, and parking availability during construction.
 - Residents raised concerns about how access to local shops could be impacted by changes to rail crossings, particularly at Auzerais Avenue and West Virginia Street.
- Community members raised concerns that the grade separation treatments proposed at Auzerais Avenue and West Virginia Street could further isolate pockets of neighborhoods that have already been divided by past transportation projects.

There were particular concerns about impacts to the social fabric of the Gregory Plaza and Gardner neighborhoods, both of which have only recently recovered from long-standing gang activity.

- People requested a transparent and accessible process for collecting and meaningfully using community feedback in decision-making for the duration of this project and into the future.
- People raised safety considerations for vulnerable populations like seniors and children in waiting areas for pickup. Some participants reported feeling unsafe due to the presence of unhoused individuals at the Diridon Station.
- Residents shared strong concerns about pedestrian safety and walkability in the neighborhoods, stating that they want more community features like art, benches, and clear, safe sidewalks.
- Residents were concerned with widespread tree removal. They asked that trees removed by the station project be replaced in order to maintain tree canopies.
- There was strong concern about further displacement resulting from the reconstruction of the station and track approaches, particularly for marginalized communities. There was also a request for these communities to continue to be represented in the engagement process and their needs to be recognized and championed by elected officials.
- There were suggestions to prioritize inclusivity in addressing the needs of underserved communities and involving diverse voices in the planning process.

Design & Infrastructure | Community members showed excitement about the station redesign. The following section highlights their suggestions and desires for four aspects: station design, historical features, building design, and pedestrian and bike inclusive design:

Station design

- There was strong interest in a station that blends well with surrounding neighborhoods, supports residential and business connections, and creates a vibrant downtown environment.
- There was a desire for design that allows visibility of trains as they travel throughout the corridor, creating a unique, open atmosphere that enhances the station's role as a central attraction.
- People reacted positively to features like flatter underpasses and more direct concourse-to-track connections.
- People showed preference for a design that allows for open, functional, and visually appealing concourses and plaza spaces.
- Community members showed support for removing at-grade train crossings and introducing separated rail crossings for improved safety and efficiency.

- People were concerned about the visual impacts of roof canopies that appear to be higher than Diridon Station in the Elevated Alternative.

Historical features

- Many expressed a desire to maintain the historic aspects of the station as much as possible.
- Many community members also requested that the aesthetics of the current building be preserved; they also asked that awareness of the area's history be further elevated with new elements such as murals and monuments.
- There was a recommendation that the structure could be used as a landmark for photo opportunities and recognition across the Bay Area.

Building design

- Community members expressed interest in preserving the building's beautiful brick and supported making the building a grand focal point in the community to mark its history.
- There was strong appreciation for maintaining the view of the historic depot building, ensuring its visibility from platforms, and preserving its character while incorporating modern enhancements.
- There was preference for lowering the awning by one story in order to preserve the same distance between the new ground plane and the awning. There was also a preference for connecting the upper and lower window sections, though some respondents raised questions about the impact of additional sunlight.

Pedestrian and bike inclusive design

- Community members emphasized bike-ability, with dedicated bike lanes, ample bike parking, drop-off areas, and open, pedestrian-friendly spaces.
- Community members emphasized minimizing walking distances, improving wayfinding, and enhancing bus connections and safety features. Some recommended traffic-calming features, such as speed bumps or protected bike lanes, to ensure safety.
- Many people showed interest in emergency vehicles access, safety design for pedestrians such as lighting at under crossings, bicycle separation methods, and vehicular speeds.
 - There were concerns about cyclist and pedestrian safety in underpasses.
 - There was a preference for the bike tunnel that would seem to reduce vehicle-bicycle conflict on Bush Street and Laurel Grove Lane.
 - Residents, including those whose children attend Gardner Elementary, shared that they do not feel safe using the pedestrian underpass on Bird Avenue between West Virginia Street and Fuller Avenue.

- People advocated for improved pedestrian and bike-friendly connections, especially at crossings like Julian and Santa Clara streets, as well as Park Avenue.

Environmental | Community members identified the following environmental concerns or questions about the station redesign:

- Some community members raised questions about the impacts the project might have on the Los Gatos Creek Trail including noise pollution from increased train service. Some raised particular concerns about noise impacts in the Elevated Alternative.
- Some expressed concerns about noise pollution and how it could affect nearby neighborhoods, including dog-walking areas; they shared interest in options that could mitigate sound from traffic and trains around the station, such as soundwalls.
- There was interest in sustainable design elements, including shade, trees, and protection from the elements for transit users.
- There was a recommendation to include “quality of life” as a factor in the redesign.
- Some community members requested to keep the sycamore trees on White Street.

Operations & Service | This section provides highlights about questions, suggestions, or concerns that people had about station and transit operations and service:

- Some community members had a specific concern about when Amtrak or Capitol Corridor trains sometimes block the road (especially at Auzerais Avenue) or when there are “ghost closings,” meaning that the gates go down when trains do not cross.
- People requested that the station design facilitates transfers for riders who use multiple modes of transit or other last-mile modes to access the station. These individuals asked to include infrastructure such as bike racks and easy connection to Caltrain, VTA Light Rail, and VTA BART lines.
- People asked for smooth transfers between travel modes with direct light rail, bus lines, and shuttles connecting to key destinations such as San José State University.
- Some people had concerns about managing maintenance, overcrowding, and cost, both for project construction and ongoing maintenance.
- Community members named a desire for comprehensive, well-connected bus routes.