

SANTA CLARA GENERAL PLAN

GENERAL PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Date: September 21, 2009

Location: Santa Clara City Hall

Attendees:

Steering Committee Members Present:

Joe Kornder, Co-Chair
Jamie McLeod, Co-Chair
Thomas Banholzer
Dixie Baus
Michele Beasley
Brian Brennan
David Dolozier
Ray Hashimoto
Joe Head
Jerry Marsalli
Teresa O'Neill
Kevin Park
Alice Pivacek
Andy Ratermann
Ed Richards
Peter Yoon

City Staff:

Kevin Riley
Carol Anne Painter
Julie Moloney
Alexander Abbe
Dennis Ng
Gian P. Martire

Dyett & Bhatia, Consultants:

Jean Eisberg

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Discuss issues related to the Focus Area: El Camino Real, Downtown, Santa Clara Station, Stevens Creek, and Future Focus Areas.
- Provide input on how to approach these issues related to the Focus Areas in the General Plan.

MEETING SUMMARY

I. Welcome and Announcements (Co-Chair McLeod)

Co-Chair McLeod asked Committee Members to discuss each of the five focus areas, by answering a set of questions and incorporating previous “parking lot” items, as appropriate.

II. Discussion of Draft Annotated Outline Sections Related to the Focus Areas (Kevin Riley and Carol Anne Painter)

1. El Camino Real Focus Area

Development Standards and Amenities

- Wider sidewalks

- Work with Caltrans or get right-of-way relinquished to the City in order to implement streetscape improvements.
- Appropriate buffers between residential development, which may be taller walls, building setbacks, or parking lots between buildings and residential uses.
- Focus on the relationship between retail development, the street edge, and parking:
 - Retail development up to the street edge with parking in the rear may be more pedestrian-friendly and provides a buffer, in the form of a parking lot, to residential uses behind El Camino Real.
 - Alternatively, retail set back with surface parking in front provides convenient access for vehicular parking and reduces the potential for illicit activities in parking areas hidden from the street.
- A more unified look and feel of building architecture to project a cohesive visual identity for Santa Clara (e.g. Mission City-style, building materials, signage, art, etc.).
- Appropriate building heights:
 - Interest was expressed for increased building heights of up to four stories at certain locations (e.g. Scott Boulevard & El Camino Real). This would produce a varied streetscape and accommodate a variety of uses.
 - There was also support for limiting building heights to two or three stories to ensure compatibility with adjacent single-family homes.
- New development amenities should be provided for the whole community, not just for the new development (e.g. publicly accessible open space).

Desired Uses

- Local businesses and small retail developments to maintain a community identity for the corridor.
- Professional office spaces (e.g. doctors, dentists, banks, and insurance agents).
- Mixed use developments could incorporate other uses and mixes, beyond just residential/commercial uses.
- Mixed use developments should seek a 24-hour presence to support businesses, increase foot traffic, and provide “eyes on the street” to enhance safety at various times of day.
- Discourage additional palm readers, liquor stores, tattoo parlors, or adult stores from locating on El Camino Real and encourage a greater mix of retail and professional uses.

Signature Design Elements/Streetscapes

- Focus pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and neighborhood-serving uses in nodes (e.g. Mervyn’s Plaza).
- Emphasize connections within and outside of nodes to ensure pedestrian safety for crossing El Camino Real.

- Coordinate with Caltrans on street design; Caltrans may be willing to work with City on facilitating improvements.
- Incorporate more street trees, landscaping and street furniture to exemplify “The King’s Road” and a true “Boulevard” design.
- Regulate physical building transitions in the Zoning Ordinance. Tiering or stepping down of buildings should occur within the project, as opposed to across parcels.
- Integrate creek into design, emphasize nodes, and provide public plazas.

2. Downtown Focus Area

Development Standards and Amenities

- Accommodate vehicles and pedestrians:
 - Focus should be on pedestrian safety and circulation by reducing vehicular access (e.g. restricting cars at certain times of day, such as weekends and evenings).
 - Alternatively, businesses in Downtown want retail parking and vehicle circulation to ensure convenient access for customers.
- Regulate parking to reduce on-street parking in nearby residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage more attractive and cohesive architecture and architectural styles.
- Determine what kind of Downtown the city desires (e.g. old town-style, modern new downtown).
- Keep historic context and theme.

Desired Uses

- Housing, with the understanding that some new housing will be used for students.
- Public facilities and activities to build on the increased use of the court house and other civic buildings.
- Cultural uses, such as art galleries and a theater.
- Retail uses, acknowledging that it may be challenging given the lack of visibility and access from a major transit corridor.

Services and Amenities

- Accommodate parking demand in a centralized parking garage.

Connections to the University and Santa Clara Station

- Develop a walking path between Franklin Square and the University.
- Partner with the University in developing a better Downtown.
- Provide shuttle “loop”.

3. Santa Clara Station Focus Area

Connections Between Station, El Camino Real, and Downtown

- Use east-west streets between Lafayette Street and the Alameda to provide connections to Downtown.
- Keep building heights west of El Camino lower.

Desired Uses

- Uses that capitalize on walkability and transit, including retail and restaurants. Retail developers may be more interested in this area as a destination, compared with Downtown.
- Tax-generating uses (e.g. retail and hotels).

Open Space and Public Amenities

- Public investment in cohesive design of street furniture and landscaping.
- Natural features (e.g. existing creeks) should be integrated into streetscape design and open space amenities where possible.

4. Stevens Creek Focus Area

Vibrancy of Boulevard

- Continue to prioritize revenue generating businesses.
- Encourage other large retail stores (e.g. grocery and large commodity stores).
- Consider ways to partner with adjacent cities.

5. Future Focus Areas

Ms. Painter asked for overarching visions for these areas, since details would emerge during the neighborhood planning processes before Phase II and III. The circle symbols on the maps for these areas represent 10 percent of the land area devoted to a given use (i.e. open space, public facilities, and neighborhood retail). This land area is discounted from the total buildout potential.

Support Services

- Ensure that services and infrastructure are in place before major changes in land use occur (i.e. conversion of industrial/office uses to residential uses).

Existing Development

- Balance needs of existing uses (e.g. National Semiconductor) with the vision for future uses and amenities.

New Development

- Work with Santa Clara County on Kifer Road/Lawrence Expressway for improvements to alleviate congestion and access to the train station in this area.

III. Public Comments

- Stevens Creek Boulevard/South of Forest Neighborhood:
 - Maintain existing street pattern, which distinguishes commercial and residential uses. The City should coordinate with auto dealerships to ensure appropriate transitions between parking areas and to distinguish residential and commercial access.
 - Ensure public safety, through appropriate unobtrusive lighting. Crime and safety are concerns in alleys and rear parking lots.
 - Mitigate noise with buildings and sound walls between car dealerships and homes, but consider aesthetics and scale.
 - Use landscaping as an attractive screen on the street and between uses, requiring maintenance to avoid landscaping debris in adjacent residential neighborhoods.
 - Maintain clean sidewalks on Stevens Creek Boulevard,.
 - Encourage pedestrian-orientation all along Stevens Creek Boulevard, like the portion east of Saratoga Avenue.
 - Limit building heights to two or three stories to ensure privacy and compatibility with adjacent uses.
 - Reduce setbacks to protect residences from noise and light pollution.
 - Encourage businesses to provide adequate parking for employees.
 - Consider alternate future uses if car dealerships are reduced in the future.
- Downtown
 - Allow Downtown to evolve piecemeal over time, as opposed to being developed by a single developer. This will ensure a unique, historic, organic Downtown that is composed of local businesses.
 - Acknowledge what type of “downtown” the city wants—a (i.e., historic downtown, a modern-retail center, or something else).
- Prioritize uses with potentially less impact in transition zones (i.e., professional offices, as opposed to 24-hour fast food establishments, adjacent to residential uses).

IV. Conclusion and Parking Lot Issues for Next Meeting

Ms. Painter offered to meet with South of Forest Neighborhood residents on the General Plan update.

NEXT STEPS

The Monday, November 16, 2009, joint meeting of the City Council and General Plan Steering Committee has been canceled. It will be rescheduled in early 2010. The next General

Plan Steering Committee meeting will be held on **Monday, October 5, 2009**, to discuss Historic and Neighborhood Preservation; and Transition and Discretionary Use Policies. The evening of **Thursday, October 15, 2009** is being held in reserve for a possible additional meeting.