

## ECR Corridor Advisory Group Meeting #2 Summary

December 16, 2013

The CAG discussed content from a draft of the Briefing Book to provide initial feedback and suggestions for improving the draft alternatives. Approximately 15 CAG members attended the meeting, as well as one Councilmember and two EPC members. Four to five members of the public also provided comments at the end of the meeting. A meeting agenda and photographed record of all recorded comments is found at the end of this summary.

For each of the topics in the Alternatives Briefing Book, there was a short presentation by staff and consultants followed by CAG discussion. CAG comments were recorded on a flip chart by staff as the discussion occurred. A summary of these comments is provided below, followed by a copy of the meeting agenda and a photographed record of all comments recorded during the meeting.

### Issues

CAG members expressed interest and concern about a range of issues related to El Camino Real. Many of the issues raised related to El Camino Real's role as a transportation corridor for multiple modes of transportation. Some members highlighted the need to improve pedestrian safety, character, and crossings of El Camino, while others expressed concern about potential traffic impacts of additional development or lane reconfiguration.

#### *Transcribed Record of CAG comments about "Issues:"*

- Traffic is # 1
- Pedestrian collisions are a concern
- How to make the trans corridor Pedestrian friendly
- Overpasses
- What is the average speed?
- When are there Pedestrians?
- Overpasses may kill street life
- What are the transportation tradeoffs?
- Shouldn't be afraid to narrow El Camino Real
- Bring corners closer together
- At Hillsdale: "Separate experience" overpass
- People do not drive long distances on El Camino Real
- Sitting out on El Camino Real is not enjoyable
  - Café borronne
  - Counter at SAC
- Congestion reduces speed
  - Late night is most unsafe

## **Ground-Floor Use**

There was general support for the vision of focusing active ground-floor land uses in nodes of existing retail and pedestrian activity. At the same time, there were many caveats and conditions that CAG members felt were important if this were to be implemented successfully. This included an interest in maintaining flexibility and avoiding overly rigid requirements, more clearly defining “active” land uses, ensuring that pedestrian-oriented uses are feasible, ensuring that activity is still encouraged in areas between nodes, and creating clear requirements and/or incentives for different types of parcels.

*Transcribed Record of CAG comments about “Ground-Floor Use:”*

- Requirements lead to blight
- Prescriptions make some Devt’s impossible
- Is pedestrian activity feasible?
- How do you mean active?
- Santa Clara/ Sunnyvale are removing requirements for retail in mid-block areas
- Parcel assembly and demand are key
- Incentives are better than requirements
- Flexibility is important too
- Nodes improve traffic flow and create walkable areas
- Neighborhood – serving retail incentives
  - Fewer specialized uses
- Can create new development between
- Transit orientated retail
- Support spaces that can support office/ retail
- Form-based zoning reduces iterations of review
- Parking incentives
- Make sure we aren’t discouraging activity between nodes

## **Pedestrian & Bike Improvements**

There were mixed opinions about options for bicycle improvements for El Camino Real. Some Most CAG members supported bicycle facilities along Church/Latham, assuming it were possible to resolve conflicts with on-street parking along Church/Latham. Some CAG members also supported bicycle facilities along El Camino Real, but agreed that a complete and fully designed facility – such as a buffered cycle track or lane – would be the only safe and feasible way to provide bicycle facilities along El Camino Real.

There was a general consensus that pedestrian improvements should be linked to areas of pedestrian activity, and support for better linkages and mid-block cut-throughs to adjacent neighborhoods. There was general interest in improving the pedestrian character of El Camino Real but differing opinions about the viability of creating a truly pedestrian-oriented area.

*Transcribed Record of CAG comments about “Pedestrian and Bike Improvements:”*

- How important is crossing?

- There aren't very many crossings
- Support focused with resources toward improving frequency of crossing
- You can't escape El Camino Real on a Bike
- You have to navigate sidewalk, parking areas
- Bike improvements Across El Camino Real
  - Workers
  - Students
- Church/Latham is safer; but there are a lot of parked cars
- Don't take parking from units on Latham
- Don't take a lane from El Camino Real for bikes, too much risk of cut-through traffic
- Don't impact traffic on El Camino Real more than already is
- If you do bike routes EMBRACE them
- Secure linkages through blocks, Especially through the rear of DEVT's
- If necessary to make LU changes work, parking can be prioritized
- What to do at Church dead end?
- On street parking reduces safety
- Reduce curb cuts

## **Height & Scale**

There were differing opinions about how to plan for and regulate height and scale along the corridor. Some CAG members thought defining a community vision for focused areas would ensure more predictability and benefit for the community, while others felt it was important to allow the free market to determine where and how development occurs. There was general support for a differentiation in heights or intensities allowed in different areas.

*Transcribed Record of CAG comments about "Height and Scale:"*

- Let the free market have a chance to work
- The P.P is guidance for the developers
  - What might work there
- Planned community zone is always an option
- Accept that higher intensity may not happen everywhere

## **Public Benefits**

Affordable housing and improved public space were of particular interest to CAG members. Some CAG members expressed concern that requiring multiple public benefits could increase the cost of development and housing. There was general consensus that potential public benefits should benefit the corridor and community broadly, with some interest in an impact fee or improvement district to coordinate improvements and investments along the corridor.

*Transcribed Record of GAG comments about "Public Benefits:"*

- Should help the largest groups possible
- Plazas good
- Want to see details about retail types lost & hotel lost
- Impact fee to support big improvements
- Increase the supply of affordable units
- Bike/ped improvements
- Housing for local workers

### **Small Parcels**

Many CAG members expressed an understanding for the difficulty of maintaining and/or developing small parcels along El Camino Real. In general there was a consensus that facilitating small parcel maintenance, development, or improvement – particularly for vacant or blighted parcels – would be positive for the community, assuming it could be done while still strongly supporting existing businesses. There was general interest in exploring ideas for small parcels such as relaxing development or parking standards, reducing setback or adjacency requirements, and general simplification of the development process for small projects. At the same time, CAG members stressed the importance of strong controls on transitions to adjacent neighborhoods, even for projects on small parcels. There was general recognition of the importance of small businesses and parcels for the pedestrian character of El Camino Real.

*Transcribed Record of CAG comments about “Small Parcels:”*

- Allow more flexibility
- Simplify requirements
- No prescriptive requirements
  - You lose out on development options
- Use vertical space better
  - Arcades
- Are the height densities enough?
- Are they too much?
- Concern about impact of development size on existing neighborhood
- Urban canopy will be an asset

### **Public Comments**

Public comments covered an array of issues, including improvements to bicycle facilities, approaches to regulating and focusing ground-floor active uses, parking needs, the need for affordable housing and community space, and the importance of maintaining infrastructure like sewers.

*Transcribed Record of Public Comments:*

- Benefit: upgrade infrastructures including sewers

- Bike facilities along El Camino Real would be fabulous, Latham Bike Blvd. would be a good alternative
- Improve parking at Escuela
- El monte/ Escuela bike connection
- Support for focused strategy
- Encourage rather than mandate ground floor uses
- Use 4B & 4C (small parcels)
- Benefit: BMR housing
- Potential for different benefits in different areas
- Need for community Space for events & meetings
- Bike compromise: Lane only on the South?