

El Camino Real Plan Advisory Committee (ECRPAC) Meeting #6 Summary Notes

Senior Center (Laurel Room) - 550 E Remington Drive, Sunnyvale
December 5, 2017 | 6:30-9:00 p.m.

ATTENDEES

ECRPAC:

Patti Evans, Gary Guiffre, Karen Galatis, Tim Oey, Dan Hafeman, Sue Harrison, Steve Pavlina, and Raj Singh

Members not present: Chris Figone, Linda García, Michael Shum, and Tracy Tripp

Project Team:

City Staff:

Andrew Miner (Planning Officer) and Trudi Ryan (Community Development Director)

Consultants:

Tom Ford, Geoff Bradley, and Justin Shiu (M-Group) and David Javid (Plan to Place),

Community Members:

Approximately 11 community members were present at the meeting.

MEETING AGENDA

- I. Welcome and Meeting Overview
- II. Project Update and Upcoming Items
- III. District/Node Character and Identification
- IV. Development Allowances/Incentives
- V. Building Form and Design Strategies
- VI. Parking Standards
- VII. Public Comment
- VIII. Next Steps
- IX. Adjourn

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome and Meeting Overview

Patti Evans, Chair of the ECRPAC, and Andrew Miner, Planning Officer, opened the sixth ECRPAC meeting. The ECRPAC, City staff and consultant team introduced themselves.

Project Update and Upcoming Items

Andrew Miner provided an overview of the project schedule and work to be done following the adoption of the Preferred Land Use Alternative by City Council. For this meeting, Staff and the consultant team sought input from the ECRPAC on the following:

- **the character and identification of districts/nodes;**
- **development allowances;**

- **design strategies and tools; and**
- **parking strategies.**

Staff also pointed out that the development of the draft ECR Corridor Specific Plan is running concurrently with the Environmental Impact Report.

Presentation and Discussion.

Tom Ford, M-Group, gave a presentation of topics to be considered in guiding development within the corridor. ECRPAC members provided questions and comments at the end of each section of the presentation and received responses from City staff and the consultant team. Public comment followed ECRPAC member comments in each section. The following is a summary of the feedback received from the ECRPAC and members of the public in attendance:

District/Node Character and Identification

ECRPAC Comments

- The project team presented ideas for naming each of the four nodes (currently named Western, Downtown, Community Center, and Eastern) to give them unique character and identification. ECRPAC weighed in on the names.
 - Three Points Neighborhood is a good name for the Eastern Node.
 - Orchard District is a good name for the Community Center Node.
 - South of Downtown Area (SODA) is not favored for the Downtown Node. "Civic Central" was proposed as an option.
 - Bernardo Gateway is an appropriate name for the Western Node.

ECRPAC Consensus

Name the nodes accordingly:

- **Western Node = Bernardo Gateway**
- **Community Center Node = Orchard District**
- **Eastern Node = Three Points Neighborhood**
- **Consider another name for the Downtown Node**

Comments from the Public

- How does the presence of auto dealerships fit in context with the plan and continuing development.
 - The City does not control how market forces influence which properties redevelop but can set design guidelines for site design and building form when development occurs. Retention of auto dealers is a goal of the planning effort.

Development Allowances/Incentives

ECRPAC Comments

- The concept of "buckets" of development was presented to the ECRPAC for consideration.
 - The "buckets" of development concept establishes maximum unit caps for an entire node or segment area. The maximum is based on the development potential of all parcels within each node and segment, in keeping with development proposed for individual parcels in the Preferred Alternative, as approved by the City Council.

- Lawrence Station Plan works with the “buckets” concept as well.
- ECRPAC was accepting of the general concept.
- There was a discussion about office uses and where along the corridor they should be allowed (nodes vs. segments, etc.).
 - Geoff Bradley pointed out that the Market Analysis report indicated a saturation of office development and the limited site sizes of most ECR parcels for office.
 - A committee member suggested the concept of “buckets” of development to allocate allowable office and retail square footage.
- Providing a cap creates a more balanced distribution of uses and intensity throughout the corridor that fits within the vision for development.
- Some residential-only properties in the segments would be okay, subject to context considerations.
- Context and review should determine whether a residential-only project is allowed.
- Minimum and maximums for residential densities should be set.
- Some ECRPAC members voiced concerns regarding placing buildings too close to the sidewalk.
- In some parts of the corridor (segments), a mix of uses is desired, rather than residential-only projects.
- Some flexibility in the number of units is desired, rather than an absolute unit cap (so that good projects are not precluded due to the cap on units per area). General progress towards the cap should still be considered, and could be accomplished through annual review by Planning staff after Specific Plan adoption and implementation.
- ECRPAC members supported the concept of a menu of incentives in the Plan to allow projects to achieve greater density.
- Parcels in the segments with small lots may have difficulty meeting parking standards.

ECRPAC Consensus

- **The “buckets” approach to controlling & regulating development is supported.**
- **Limits on office development are appropriate.**
- **Would like to see stand-alone residential developments allowed by some mechanism based on site appropriateness, including within the segments.**
- **The use of incentive based development standards was endorsed.**
- **Minimum and maximum residential densities should be required.**

Comments from the Public

- The Plan needs to consider the impact of traffic on side streets/neighborhoods.
- The Plan should promote a diversity of people on El Camino Real and a real sense of place.
- There is a jobs-housing imbalance and severe lack of residential opportunities locally and regionally.
- Consider bedrooms per acre as a measurement of density rather than units per acre. Staff explained the difficulties with imposing such a measurement.

Building Form and Design Strategies

ECRPAC Comments

- Existing projects with favorable design or development elements include:
 - Downtown Sunnyvale building articulation on Washington Ave.
 - The residential building at Mathilda Avenue and Olive St, 481 Mathilda Ave. Taller parts of the building fronting the busier Mathilda Avenue while lower building heights face inward towards Charles Street, which is lower density residential in nature.
 - Sobrato Project -- The residential use at the rear of the site interfaces well with the existing apartments across Olive Avenue.
- Building Form
 - Variation in building type is encouraged.
 - Consider approaches that are more organic and flexible. Allows for more variation in building types; allows for variation in density on a lot.
- Streetscape
 - A landscaping buffer should be provided from the street. More buffering to create a more welcoming environment.
 - Wider sidewalks offset the feeling of tall buildings. Appropriate sidewalk proportions.
 - Projects may be improved by providing something in the design for pedestrians. This would include places to sit, protection from sun & rain, water fountains and storefronts.
- Building-to Line and Building Frontage
 - If a build-to line is established, there should be sufficient distance from the right-of-way.
 - Variation in the linear mass is important.
- Setback
 - Consider the different parcel sizes when developing setback requirements from both the front and the back of the properties (e.g., shallow versus deep, nodes versus segments). Also consider the confined nature of smaller parcels.
- Upper Story Setback
 - Consider daylighting at the back of the property.
 - Consider how upper story setbacks adjacent to single-family residential should be achieved. More consideration and examples are needed.
 - 45-degree angle daylight plane
 - General support was expressed by the committee for the 45 degree angle approach to regulating the rear setback and stepback condition (similar to the Mountain View ECR Plan) but no determination was made on the starting point of the angle. More consideration on whether the angle should be located at the property line or taken 15 feet above the property line.
 - More research and illustrations is desired in order to reach a consensus about this concept.

- Stepbacks
 - More consideration is needed on the height of buildings before additional stories are set back further. Also consider if establishing a specific height would be too limiting.
 - Stepbacks could be different for segments.
 - Consider not establishing a stepback at a defined height but allow more flexible and organic design for where it is used.
- Height
 - Consider whether height maximums are needed or whether other development standards (such as density, floor area ratio, setbacks, stepbacks, etc.) or building code requirements would limit height.
 - Not placing height minimums can allow for more design flexibility.
 - May be considered in nodes, but maximums are important in segments near residential.

ECRPAC Consensus

- **Build-to Line should not allow front façade too close to sidewalk.**
- **The 45-degree daylight plane for regulating rear-parcel development adjacent to residential is a good solution but needs further study as to how high above the ground the plane is set.**
- **The form-based approach seems to offer greater flexibility but it is probably not necessary to impose minimum heights for buildings and front façade stepbacks.**
- **A consensus was not reached on maximum height limit in the nodes. More exploration is needed, including consideration of not having a maximum height limit.**

Comments from the Public

- The build-to line is okay if it is not at the property line – more space between the building and street is desired.
- Buildings should be limited to four stories maximum height.
- Sidewalk landscaping should be more than just tree wells.
- Request that the Plan include strategies to address the need for landmarks and design/identity.
- Form-based approach is good as it can provide greater variation to future development.

Parking Standards

ECRPAC Comments

- Parking could be located somewhere on-site other than the front setback. (i.e. place parking to side of building or behind it).
- Bike parking should be easily visible and covered under a building (i.e. under the eave) . This way, they can also be easily located by bicyclists that may not be familiar with the area.
- Consider the consequences of changing parking standards (e.g., risk of spill-over parking into neighborhoods).
- Consider shared parking.
- Some areas may require more parking than others.
- Do not create a parking shortage.
- Consider unbundling parking from rent.
- Consider potential impact of parking overflowing into neighboring areas.
- Consider autonomous vehicles and effect on parking needs.
- More electric vehicle charging stations are needed.

ECRPAC Consensus

- **Consider parking standards that would allow a transition to a less car dependent future.**
- **Reduced parking requirements can lead to more affordable housing.**
- **Neighborhoods should be protected from potential spill-over parking.**

Comments from the Public

- Parking could impact building heights. This occurs when parking is placed at grade or a ½ level below grade and the building is built over the parking, increasing the height.
- Creating parking structures with too much parking is inefficient and may result in other negative impacts.
- Consider parking lot circulation to ensure that parking facilities are convenient and safe for the people using them as both drivers and pedestrians.

NEXT STEPS

The next step in the process is the preparation of more detailed material for design guidelines and development standards that will be brought to the ECRPAC for review.

IMAGE FROM THE ECRPAC #6 MEETING

