

**Supplementary Meeting Materials
Citizens Advisory Committee
02/02/2012**

Potential Revisions To Downtown Station Area Plan In Response to Public Review Process

(Draft for CAC discussion 2/2/12)

Overall comments

1. A good conceptual Plan for encouraging a compact, vibrant, walkable gateway district in the station area.
2. Connections under freeway and to Canal and other parts of San Rafael are especially important.
3. Continued attention to design quality and to strengthening the area's overall sense of place will be necessary during Plan implementation.

Significant changes to the Draft Plan

1. Taper height & FAR adjacent to Montecito residential neighborhood. Reduce to existing allowable heights and FAR on north side of 4th between Irwin and Grand and on east side of Irwin north of 4th to address neighborhood concerns regarding light and shadow on existing housing east of Irwin.
2. Prioritize Whistlestop solutions. Include suggestion of possible re-use of upper floors of building for transit-related offices. Strengthen discussion of desirability of ground floor uses that enhance the pedestrian experience in this area. Include need to relocate and retain existing senior service use.
3. Provide stronger options for near-term solutions to 3rd St. pedestrian crossings. Include possibility of enhancing the prominence and visibility of the 3rd St. crosswalk at W. Tamalpais, including widening the crosswalk eastward by approximately one car length for additional pedestrian safety.
4. Recommend further study of the near-term transit/pedestrian/bicycle improvements on West Tamalpais in keeping with the strong community desires to make Tamalpais inviting for pedestrians, transit riders, and cyclists. Recommend studying the feasibility of a multi-use path along Tamalpais between 2nd and Mission . Integrate these treatments with proposed landscape treatment of SMART right-of-way and with East Tamalpais. [San Rafael DPW has stated that finalization of the multi-use path study needs to occur after the SMART train is in operation to determine if Tamalpais is a viable and safe area for pedestrians and cyclists.]

Other recommendations

1. Assure seamless operation of existing transit center. Avoid any disruption or diminishment of the transit experience for current riders. Add option of retaining Bettini Center and incorporating SMART block for bus expansion.

2. Emphasize the community desire to create a pleasant pedestrian experience in this area. Strengthen the discussion of balancing traffic and pedestrian needs including the balance of parking and pedestrian priorities.
3. Strengthen the parking solution discussion with the following: Emphasize the need to address transit riders parking in the neighborhoods surrounding the transit center including investigating residential parking permits.
4. Discuss the viability and impact of setting parking maximums in this area in addition to the proposal to reduce the existing minimum parking requirements.
5. Mention that parking structure under freeway was found infeasible.
6. Emphasize “form-based” zoning and City discretion in granting bonuses for public benefits. Plan should clarify relation of existing affordable housing bonuses to the proposed transit supportive or other public benefit bonuses. Current State Law provides for the creation of additional housing units in exchange for affordable housing on site. These housing bonuses are “as of right” and are not subject to local government discretion.
7. Prioritize need for area Design Guidelines. To help integrate new development with existing character (especially of 4th Street and adjacent neighborhoods) and achieve the strong sense of place that the plan envisions.
8. Discuss existing and proposed incentives for affordable housing in the area. Discuss construction methods to address noise and air quality for housing near the freeway.
9. Clarify potential use of 4th Street plaza and relation to other public improvements. Emphasize plaza function as a visual focus and entry feature. Show an area plan view integrating all major public improvements (plaza, transit center, SMART/Tamalpais ROW, multi-use paths). Show cross-sections of proposed improvements to entire public space from East to West Tamalpais.
10. Clarify bicycle and pedestrian access in the Tamalpais & 4th Street area, including connection along 4th to and from the Hetherton multi-use path. The approved and funded Hetherton multi-use path project includes a pedestrian and bicycle median on 4th at Tamalpais. To facilitate proposed transit improvements, recommend additional studies to assess options to allow cars to turn left from northbound Tamalpais onto 4th Street, including the potential for signalization.
11. Clarify east-west bicycle connections. Show plan area connections to routes east to China Camp and west to Ross Valley.

12. Emphasize importance of trees in enhancing the pedestrian experience.
13. Make specific mention that the plan area may be subject to sea level rise, as identified by BCDC and as addressed by the Climate Change Action Plan.
14. Add Coleman School to pedestrian routes map.
15. Provide the plan to Caltrans and actively work with Caltrans staff on solutions to address physical limitations created by 101.
16. Refer also to discussion at December CAC meeting (see minutes).

Recommendations for Next Steps

1. Code Revisions to encourage transit oriented development.
2. Design Guidelines to achieve a gateway district with a strong sense of place.
3. Public Improvement Plan to integrate investments in support of Plan.

**Comments from Transit Agency Board Presentations
(Golden Gate Transit, Marin Transit, Transportation Authority of Marin)**

The Downtown Station Area Plan was presented to Golden Gate Transit's Transportation Subcommittee on 12/15/2011, Marin Transit on 12/19/2011, and Transportation Authority of Marin on 1/26/2012. Presentations to Golden Gate Transit and Marin Transit were made by their agency staff and the presentation to the Transportation Authority of Marin was made by CAC Vice-Chair, Bill Carney. The following is a summary of the major comments made by the various board members and commissioners.

- The SAP process was a good starting point to bring all transit operators together. The collaboration should continue with additional studies to address the transit operations issues identified in the SAP.
- Regional bike connections are important. A viable east-west connection should be shown.
- Whistlestop is an essential service provider and their needs should be addressed.
- A congestion management program is needed for regional thoroughfares and freeway access.
- As SMART's plans develop, it will be important to understand how pedestrians will interact with the Station Area and the design of the SMART right-of-way.
- Assessment of changes to bus operations or locations due to SMART should include the impact of increased travel time of bus patrons.

Comments to be presented to the Downtown San Rafael Station Area Plan Citizens Advisory Committee on February 2, 2012

By Jeff Rhoads, RA LEED

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1. Consider moving the class one bike path from Hetherton to West Tamalpais from Mission south to 4th Street (or at least providing a parallel route). This will eliminate conflicts with right turn movements into downtown from the freeway and further emphasize West Tamalpais as an amenitized pedestrian/bicycle spine. Through bike movements might be better accommodated on the east side of Hetherton parallel to the freeway (cross at Mission and return under the Second Street to South Bound 101 ramp in combination with the Canal trail). Use of the west side of Hetherton as a pedestrian route probably shouldn't be encouraged due to the function of Hetherton for vehicular distribution, sorting and stacking associated with the 101 corridor.
2. Routing of the multi use path south from the station requires additional thought (perhaps this has been considered but was not shown in the plan documents). Is it parallel to the future tracks on the east side? Will it remain on-street on Anderson? How does it get across 2nd Street and link to West Tamalpais and the Puerto Suelo Hill alignment?
3. Opportunity sites noted seem limited. Perhaps one could extend up to 5th Street on the east side of the railroad (including re-tasking and possibly relocating the two historic residences on the south side of 5th). Notwithstanding the previous comment, initial focus of development activity should be on the west side of the freeway with increased density and bulk on the east side occurring later after effective build-out on the west side.
4. A commitment should be made by SMART (or consortium of transit agencies) to purchase the Whistle Stop building to allow this critical use to move to a more suitable location. SMART could utilize the second level office space for its interim executive and construction offices while permanent space is being located and improved elsewhere consistent with the direction of the SMART board. Similarly the Citibank site should also be purchased by SMART and other transit agencies as soon as feasible to allow for implementation of the plan.
5. Development of air rights over the rail and bus stations and the rail line is a glaring omission, worth aggressive consideration and should be included in the plan and EIR.

6. Notwithstanding the previous comment, grade separation of the rail alignment should be considered as a long-term objective. A preferred alternative (though costly) would be to depress the railroad through downtown allowing use of the air rights and elimination of grade crossing conflicts. An elevated alignment also eliminates grade crossing conflicts and allows better use of the ground plane (think BART through Albany and El Cerrito) but has greater visual and other impacts and constrains air rights development potential. Downtown San Rafael is a unique case along the rail corridor with the greatest frequency of grade crossings under the most congested conditions. Block lengths here will likely become a significant constraint to future operations and preclude commuter and excursion trains exceeding 2 or 3 cars.
7. Funding options seem too limited. Perhaps private and public grants and leveraging quazi-public facilities and uses (museums, foundations etc.) may prove fruitful. Unspoken but likely to be significant factors are project exactions and commitments resulting from development agreements. An RFP for development of the station and Bettini air rights may include public infrastructure enhancements.
8. Freeway noise, dust and shadow seems to suggest the uses fronting the freeway (Hetherton) are less pedestrian oriented and more vehicle focused e.g. parking, vehicle assess etc. That isn't to say efforts shouldn't be made to create attractive streetscapes. The west side of Hetherton should have a consistent street tree program and other urban design enhancements. The east side should see restoration and appropriate armoring of the creek, native landscape placement, removal of the chain link fence and possibly pedestrian/bicycle enhancements parallel to the roadway if they can be accommodated without undue impairment of traffic function or sacrificing the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.
9. Figure III-8 Residential over retail facing Tamalpais: Retail finish floor to finish floor height: maintain a minimum of 13'6" (18 feet preferred). Height shown is inadequate. (Same issue with Figure III-10)
10. Residential uses in the plan area should have very low parking ratios, less than .25 spaces per unit, and parking for commercial uses (on the west side of the freeway) should be accommodated through parking district facilities. A natural selection process for transit and walking oriented tenants will result. The parking ratios proposed are not likely to achieve the desired TOD results (regardless of the Santa Clara valley example). The unbundling of the parking requirement is a good step, however if projects are required to provide parking (unbundled or otherwise) the cost is still part of a project pro forma. This will directly affect the rents of apartments, commercial space and sale prices of condominiums. It also directly affects the financial viability of projects. Also since parking is not considered

of the FAR, its impact on bulk is not accurately reflected. Greater parking requirement per given uses equate to greater bulk.

11. More consideration should be given to building additional parking under the freeway particularly for SMART and other transit users. Caltrans ownership reduces the need to acquire land elsewhere (at locations suitable for other uses). Clearly there are challenges such as existing parking agreements, the structural grid of the bridge (and seismic bracing) and vertical clearance limitations (11' floor to floor height is common for parking structures). Structures will probably be limited to a ground and second level and not allow optimal efficiency. However avoidance of land acquisition costs, making better use of space with limited utility, and providing parking for regional commuters are offsetting considerations. Lowering the existing grade to the top of the bridge pier piling caps will likely increase vertical clearance. Since determining feasibility is challenging and complex, I recommend retaining a parking structure specialist, reviewing as-built bridge drawings and existing agreements and potholing the piling caps as needed. In my opinion it is premature to dismiss this from consideration without more definitive analysis.

12. The plaza at the north end of the Whistle Stop building is a pleasant idea with some environmental and site configuration issues. These are: Exposure, poorly defined edges and no reason to stay for users that would contribute to the setting (a great place for homeless to hang out, however). The examples shown in the plan have more advantageous site conditions. It may be better to make this area into a privately owned and managed space such as outdoor dining associated with a cafe. This would result in active management of a space that would be a positive for Downtown and an inviting gateway for 4th Street.

From: Joe O'Hehir [johehir@whistlestop.org]
Sent: Wednesday, February 01, 2012 7:40 PM
To: Rebecca Woodbury
Cc: Linda Woodbury
Subject: Station Area Plan

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Hi Rebecca:

I would like to request a suggested edit to the Station Area Plan Executive Summary:

Page 10, "Concept C. Facilitate reuse of the Whistlestop Building" i. Assist current tenant, Marin Senior Coordinating Council (Whistlestop) with relocation."

Just calling us a "tenant" is a bit misleading. I suggest:

"Whistlestop purchased the property in February 1971 from the Northwestern Railroad Company and has operated its Active Aging Services Center at the location for over forty years. The plan will need to address the potential purchase of the property and building from Whistlestop and/or a possible lease arrangement for use of the building. Also, the city will need to help Whistlestop with the relocation of its vital services for older adults to another central San Rafael location".

Listening to the comments made at several meetings I sense that some people think that this is currently a public building and not owned by Whistlestop.

If you have any questions concerning this suggested edit please contact me.

Thanks, Joe

Joe O'Hehir
Chief Executive Officer, Whistlestop

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Help Whistlestop end loneliness everyday. Visit our new website to learn how you can help: www.whistlestop.org

From: David Kupfer [david.kupfer@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 02, 2012 5:02 PM
To: Rebecca Woodbury
Subject: So sorry for delay!

Rebecca Woodbury, Management Analyst City of San Rafael
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I am writing in regard to the ongoing plans for the development of the San Rafael Smart Train Station. As a native of San Rafael, I have long considered it a travesty that San Rafael Creek under HW 101 between Heatherton and Irwin Streets has been fenced off. I believe it could provide a valuable asset as a recreational spot, being adjacent to the planned station, bus transit center, and downtown San Rafael. My thought is that removing the fence surrounding the creek would serve the interests of our community. As well, the potential involvement of Davidson Middle and San Rafael High School kids in San Rafael Creek's restoration via erosion prevention and the planting of native plant species (possible donated by local nurseries), as well as community service in the construction of benches and paths would increase their ownership and involvement with a lovely community asset.

See a map of the San Rafael Creek Watershed here:

http://www.marinwatersheds.org/pdf_maps/Watershed_pdfs/W_SRafael_BasicMap.pdf

As well this assessment of a nearby effort may be of interest

THE ROLE OF CREEK RESTORATION IN K - 12 EDUCATION IN THE AREA

Locating information about schools involved in creek restoration in Marin and Sonoma counties opened my eyes to the tremendous amount of emphasis the schools place in educating students about environment. It would be difficult to find a school that was not involved in some type of environmental project in one way or another. There are several different groups who work directly with students and teachers, educating them about environmental issues and guiding them to help with community projects.

One of the organizations is called Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program, also known as MCSTOPPP. They have provided funding and education for many schools in Marin, including Brookside, Kent Middle, Manor, Miller, Park, Cascade Canyon, and Sir Francis Drake High School. As a result Kent Middle School produced a visual display of creek studies, and became active in a comprehensive study of the Corte Madera Creek which includes continuous creek testing. Sir Francis Drake High School restored a two hundred meter section of Sleepy Hollow Creek. They replaced one hundred sixty non-native plants that had been removed. Wattles were added to reinforce eroding banks and an irrigation system was added. Water quality testing occurred at the source and downstream. Macroinvertebrate samplings were taken in the fall and spring. In addition, the high school interns assisted elementary students in creek restoration projects. Besides learning about other areas of the environment, many of the schools worked on bi-weekly

creek studies to develop observation and investigation skills and also planted native plants along Marin creeks (<http://mcstoppp.org/projects3.htm>).

Walker Creek Ranch in West Marin conducts environmental studies for all school children. Many of the schools engage in creek restoration projects during their scheduled visit to Walker Creek. Students from Bahia Vista, San Pedro, Laurell Dell and Coleman constructed a living willow streambank revetment and willow brush mattress while they participated in their environmental studies at Walker Creek (<http://mcstoppp.org/projects3/htm>).

The STRAW project (Students and Teachers Restoring a Watershed) is a program of the Bay Institute and the Center for Ecoliteracy. Students in Marin and Sonoma counties have created new life and promoted healthy ecosystems within watersheds by working actively on STRAW projects.

The California Freshwater Shrimp Project, which has developed to become the STRAW project, began in 1993 with funding from the Center for Ecoliteracy. A fourth grade class at Brookside School in San Anselmo was concerned about the loss of wildlife and decided to take action to protect an endangered species, the California Freshwater Shrimp. They worked on creek restoration at Stemple Creek which flows through miles of cattle ranches from the headwaters in the hills of Petaluma to the Estereo de Antonio. The students met and worked with ranchers, biologists, vineyard owners, and environmentalists.

They raised money which was used for native plants, fencing, cattle bridges, and operating expenses for the shrimp habitat improvement projects in the Stemple Creek watershed

(<http://endangered.fws.gov/esb/96/shrimp.html>). The students learned that the female shrimp carries her eggs on top of her legs for nine months and when the stream flows hard, she clings to the roots of willow and blackberries (Ecoliteracy, 2000). They also learned that the freshwater shrimp eats all the decayed material in the creek and also the fact that when the shrimp are dying in a creek, the entire creek system depending on the cycle begins to decline, as well. The students worked with volunteers to fence off Stemple Creek in a way so that cattle could cross from one area to another without entering the creek. They also planted willows and native blackberries along the banks.

Today, the STRAW project are restoring habitat, mapping riparian habitat, testing water quality, researching, clearing debris and educating the public about the importance of being concerned about creating sustainable communities. The children have been able to integrate all that they learn from the environment into all aspects of life inside and outside of their classrooms. Their efforts have made a difference not only in the life of the California Freshwater Shrimp, but for the entire system of life in the environment.

Another outstanding project created and maintained by students is the restoration of the Adobe Creek by the students of Casa Grande High School in Petaluma. The Adobe Creek which was once the major source of drinking water in 1880 has a seven mile course. Throughout the years, the water in the creek was diverted, trashed, and abused. It was declared dead and was a public eye sore. This was one of the reasons which lead to the Adobe Creek Restoration Project by the students of Casa Grande. The other was that the Steelhead Trout would become extinct without human intervention. The

students wanted a personal connection to the environment and a positive outlook for the future.

They began a massive cleanup of the creek in 1984, removing thirty truckloads of debris, some of which included stoves, refrigerators, engines, tires, and carpets. In 1985, they planted 1200 trees and converted an old abandoned green house on campus to a fish hatchery. After the hatchery building was declared unsafe by state earthquake standards, campaigns were held to raise funds to build a state of the art conservation fish hatchery on campus, which was officially opened on April 25, 1993. In 1992, the city of Petaluma abandoned all water diversion of Adobe Creek and gave it back to nature and the students of Casa Grande High School. The successful efforts of the students have completely restored the creek and returned the population of the Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Trout back to their home. Nationally high praises have been given to the efforts of Casa Grande High School students, which include those of Dr. Jane Goodall and ESPN who made appearances at the school. The students are continuing this project by collaborating with scientists from Bodega Bay Marine Labs and have taken permanent internships at the lab (<http://www.uacg.org/highlight.html>). The restoration of a dying creek by the outstanding efforts of the compassionate students of Casa Grande High School is a great lesson we all can learn.

Most sincerely

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