

Colima Street

BACKGROUND

Residents are concerned with view sheds and access, altered traffic patterns, auto trip generation, and other auto impacts with proposed new condominium housing near Colima Street. This plan recommends specific solutions to new vehicular and pedestrian traffic resulting from new condominiums on La Jolla Boulevard at Colima Street. The plan proposed by the developer calls for the entrance and exit to the condominium project to be located at mid-block on La Jolla Boulevard halfway between Colima Street and Midway Avenue. Such a location favors the desired view shed. An exit is also proposed at Midway Avenue.

At the community workshop residents included a roundabout at the intersection of La Jolla Blvd and Colima Street. Based on community desires and verbal information about the condominium development, the Walkable Communities team considered that the relocation of the development driveway to the roundabout at Colima Street to be desirable based on access management principles of improving access while minimizing left turn and U-turn conflicts. However if the combined project entrance and view shed is to be preserved mid-block, then access management needs can be addressed by both the Colima Street roundabout and a second roundabout at Midway. This option will allow proper circulation and minimize turns and weaving.

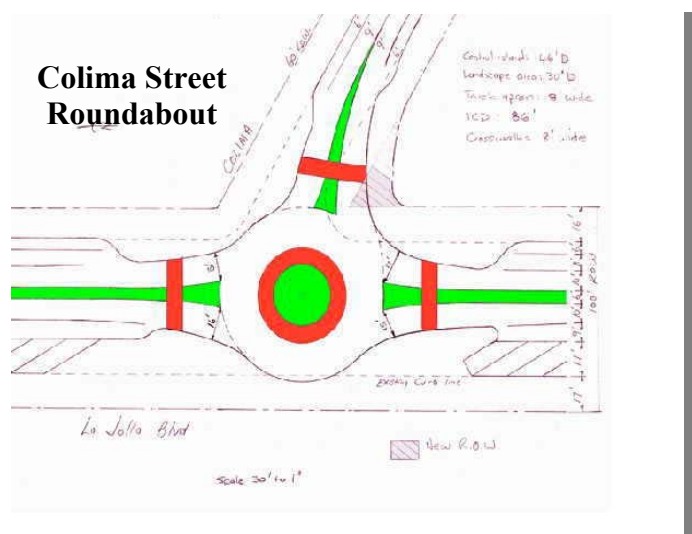
Benefits to the Bird Rock community of roundabouts at Colima Street and/or Midway include:

1. Reduced speeds on La Jolla Boulevard
2. Improved pedestrian access and safety for residents of the condominium as well as school children and Bird Rock residents who wish to access the beach, parks and schools.
3. Installation of a full median island for increased landscaping.
4. Added parking (same pattern as in the commercial area).
5. Gateway entry to Bird Rock, reduced speed through the shopping district.
6. Eliminates need for condominium drivers to go around the block to gain access to the development.

Condominium Area



Photo: Roundabout capacity: Upward of 25,000 vehicles per day





Above photo: Fort Pierce, Florida. This roundabout eliminated a four lane roadway, tamed traffic entering downtown Ft Pierce, and created an attractive gateway to the shopping district.

Right: These conceptual roundabouts show the variety of shapes and placements to come

Pedestrian Issues

The Midblock condominium entry and a commercial enterprise under consideration across the street create a natural desire line for pedestrians crossing. The pair of suggested roundabouts will provide ideal crossings close to these attractions, and reduce speed in this area. It is essential that this entire area become highly pedestrian friendly.

Easier access onto La Jolla Blvd or into the development and elimination of the need for difficult U-turns or left turns through fast traffic (42 mph traffic) when entering or leaving the development (as drivers enter or leave via the roundabout in a lower speed environment).

The downside of relocating the driveway to Colima Street is the loss of the view shed across from the driveway location.

If the driveway remains at its proposed mid-block location where it protects the view shed a second roundabout at Midway eliminates the need for U-turns at standard intersections and left turns through higher speed traffic

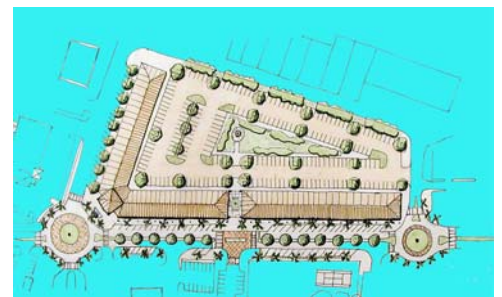
ROUNABOUT DESIGN

The roundabout will be a single lane device creating a strong gateway feature which can handle upward of 25,000 vehicles. Pedestrians cross distances of 12-14 feet to median islands. Speeds through the roundabout are reduced to 15-23 mph. Large trucks will be able to pass through the roundabout along La Jolla Blvd, and smaller service vehicles will be able to make all turns at this roundabout.

Median islands will be eight to ten feet wide and will be landscaped to add color and attraction to the area. The median should have occasional breaks to support ease of pedestrian crossings if pedestrians have to walk over 250 feet to reach a place to cross the street. This portion of La Jolla Boulevard will have on-street parking on each side. The West side will have diagonal parking, while the east side will have parallel parking. There will be two travel lanes through this area. These two lanes are capable of carrying the existing traffic of 22,000 vehicles per day. Growth in traffic is constrained by the two-lane road design north and south of Bird Rock.



The Colima Street roundabout will be a similar size and shape as those illustrated above



TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

Slightly more than 150 of Bird Rock's most interested citizens took part in the closing session of the charrette. After viewing the details of the plan, and asking many questions, about two-thirds of the group felt that it had reached consensus on going forward with the conceptual plan. Details are to be worked out by an appointed task force.

More than twenty residents signed up to be considered to serve on this volunteer stakeholder task force. The new group will be charged to refine, energize and carry out the many details of the plan. Seven or eight people will be selected to serve. It is now up to Bird Rock to work through remaining issues and consensus building process and work with the City of San Diego to carry out each phase of this plan in a timely, comprehensive way.

It is understood, some citizens will want to proceed cautiously. That said, it is essential that the process to conduct further reviews and refine details go forward without significant delay ... not to be stalled by fear. Trust in the work effort of stakeholders and staff is needed to get beyond reactive planning and on with pro-active result-oriented planning and implementation. All work should be phased, monitored and measured for results. The biggest mistake that can be made is to not make decisions that solve these serious problems. Bird Rock residents and other stakeholders are in a position to move the community forward with achievable results.

The purpose of the charrette process was to develop a sense of ownership and commitment by residents to solve the problems affecting their safety, access, property values and quality of life. Village traffic management, parking and traffic calming are citizen's "hands-on" programs. Such programs cannot be successfully conducted by government working alone. You, the residents, must feel ownership and commitment has been achieved. This project is ready to begin.

Advisory Team and Other Actions

The following additional steps are recommended. Following these steps provides assurance that issues will be properly addressed, costs minimized, and that results achieve their maximum ongoing effect. The following steps are vital.

- (1) Create and empower a Bird Rock Traffic Plan Implementation Task Force. This group will be carefully selected as an independent advisory body, in charge of understanding and interpreting the vision, and having the clarity of purpose and intent to be pro-active in carrying through the plan.

This group will work with city staff and elected leaders on all relevant issues. The group will conduct added research, carry out well considered discussions and reach realistic and timely decisions. The team should remain small, with no more than 8-12 members pledged to meet on a monthly basis to help refine the plan, work toward funding, review plans and work through implementation. Effective use of subcommittee assignments to address specific issues and solutions maintains the efficiency of the overall group.

- (2) Task force members, or other volunteers, can work with local residents (door to door) to share copies of this report and to gain added insight, suggestions and support.
- (3) Review, understand and know the workings of this vision, and the research documents that provide a reasonable level of comfort on proceeding. There are also many tools in the "Citizens Guide to Traffic Calming" that may help further analysis. Most analysis must be completed soon in order to get on with timely decision making.
- (4) To see visible changes immediately, residents should begin by being more cautious with their own driving habits through the neighborhood. The PACE Car program should be considered for early adoption.
- (5) Law enforcement can also be increased at this stage. An aggressive, selective enforcement program can address areas and times where speeding is a constant. La Jolla Boulevard, Forward, La Jolla Mesa, Linda Rosa and Colima, locations can be addressed.



A community/Village partnership is built upon a lot of work, trust, openness and respect among all stakeholders and players. Senior Traffic Engineer, Siavash Pazargadi, is enthusiastic about working with Bird Rock residents to achieve workable results.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAN DIEGO

Traffic Calming is a new program for San Diego. It is important that the Bird Rock neighborhood project receive high levels of interest, funding, focus and attention. The public in general and the media in particular are split on their support in the early stages of this or any program altering human behavior. The following recommendations improve the opportunity for both short term and long term success, not only for the neighborhood, but for the City and the region. This is the most comprehensive, holistic and effective traffic calming program in the city. It will also be the most expensive and watched over. It will have its supporters and critics, both from inside the neighborhood, and outside.

- 1) **New tools should be attractive and functional.** Use construction materials, methods, landscaping and other aids creating elements of pride.
- 2) **Full time staff.** San Diego needs at least two, and preferably four, full time staff watching over each phase of this program. Cities such as Portland, Seattle and Honolulu are staffing their programs with 2-8 full time, well trained, specialists. Traffic calming is complex and multi-faceted, requiring many levels and depths of knowledge and experience. People working in traffic calming need to know many details on planning, public process, public relations, engineering, construction and maintenance. There needs to be significant coordination among many agencies; from emergency response, to utilities to parks and recreation. To undertake an important model traffic calming program without serious staffing commitment is risky.
- 3) **Study other programs.** All members of the advisory team, as well as many on the city staff, will want to study related traffic calming manuals and be briefed by highly practiced experts in the field. It is worthwhile to bring in from 2-6 experts to explain many details leading to success and failure of traffic calming programs. Some mistakes will be made. However, by understanding how and why certain tools work, and how others do not, many of the most expensive and painful problems are avoided.
- 4) **Set reasonable expectations and evaluate each tool.** In order to know how well the overall program and how each site is performing it is important to measure a number of times and at many sites. Evaluations must be realistic. By conducting surveys of residents in advance it is possible to learn which changes are most sought. Is it most important to curtail speeding and reckless behavior of the top 15 percent of offenders ... those going 35 mph or more? Or, is it most important to focus on getting the 85 per cent who are going 5-10 mph too fast down to the legal speed limit?
- 5) **Grants, funding and budgets.** All successful traffic calming programs are provided ongoing annual budgets. Honolulu, a city half the size of San Diego, currently budgets \$4.5 million annually in traffic calming, and many millions more in indirect funds. Seattle launched important elements of their traffic calming program 20 years ago using many sources of funds, including safety, neighborhood development, block grant funds and many other sources. Considering the number of neighborhoods and residents concerned with traffic on the streets that affect them the most, within several years it is reasonable for San Diego to budget and oversee expenditures of \$8-12 Million per year.
- 6) **Cost affordable solutions.** Traffic calming tools should be designed and applied in ways that keep each tool highly attractive and effective, as well as affordable. A highly acceptable mini-roundabout can be designed and built for \$12,000, or \$180,000. Obviously a successful community program requires guidelines, policies, practices, construction methods, bidding processes, and other measures that allow these tools to be designed, built and maintained at the lower costs. Simple procedures, like not requiring surveys, allowing low-cost construction methods, training specialist construction teams, bidding out projects in highly competitive ways will lead to wide scale applications and satisfaction.
- 7) **Measuring program success.** In the end the Bird Rock traffic calming program will be measured on each of its performances, from the success of the advisory team, to proper policy, practice and budget of the City program, quality of design and review, contracting, construction, methods of evaluating, testing and refining and neighborhood acceptance.
- 8) **Traffic calming guidelines.** The City of San Diego should adopt comprehensive guidelines to manage its traffic calming program. Cities such as Honolulu, Sacramento, Vancouver, Melbourne; as well as nations such as Canada, Holland, England and Germany each have guidelines and publications that provide guidance and support to the selection and placement of appropriate tools, signs, markings and other elements.

Siavash explained that initially they conducted their study in response to a question from the council person. Now the community has made it clear they want the whole thing included in the study. What he would like to see is for the community to come together. Councilman Peters wants to see the area be viable, safe, and a place to be proud of. We are not fixed on any type of project.

- Diagonal parking was one of the suggestions to provide additional parking for the failing retail and also calming traffic. Along with that there were some ‘blow out’ at the corners.
- No matter where you start, architecture, safety, neighborhoods they are all tied together. Whatever we do must be comprehensive. There is a symbiotic relationship between residents and merchants. We have to convince the drivers it is quicker to stay on La Jolla Boulevard than cut through the neighborhoods.

Dan explained that many people expressed fears about increased traffic and revealed perceptions of high levels of cut-through in neighborhoods, but that everyone who attended agreed that speeds on La Jolla Boulevard are too fast. The next step is to work with the community to set priorities.

They are concerned with the spill off affects in neighborhoods. People are interested in beauty. We only heard one person defend that everything is okay the way it is. Charlie Gandy remarked that Bird Rock is an extraordinary place. The initial effort seems to have grown to incorporating issues in the neighborhood. There seems to be more of a speed problem than a volume problem. It seems our task partially is to demonstrate that and show how moderating those speeds will have an impact.

Michael Wallwork stated that the hardest issue to deal with in traffic calming is perception versus fact. Traffic counts don't support the descriptions of the traffic volumes. His concern is to be certain there is a clearly defined problem to address so that success of the treatments can be demonstrated. He feels speeds are a definite issue, and that roundabouts, medians and curb extensions should be considered as tools to slow vehicles and ease pedestrian crossings. It is possible that roundabouts would be feasible at the condo project (Colima), Bird Rock, and Forward. In the neighborhoods, Chelsea at Sea Ridge is a large intersection suitable for a roundabout to slow traffic and beautify the area. Chelsea is too wide and should be narrowed with some bulb outs or some other feature.

Dan asked if it was feasible to remove the center line strip except on the curve on Forward Street and was advised that staff would check. Staff explained there was a concern about the maintenance of the landscaping features. There is a process to establish a landscape maintenance district but it takes a 2/3 vote of the property owners, which is very hard to obtain.

Dear Dan and Michael,

Greetings from beautiful La Jolla! Based on telephone discussions with many traffic engineers in cities throughout the country (in particular) ones with whom you have worked and have recommended to us) and a discussion at our community task force meeting (5-29-02), we (the task force) have questions/concerns about your proposed plan. We would very much appreciate having your reply prior to your upcoming return to our community, or if this is not possible, please incorporate these specific issues into your presentation.

- 1) **Volume.** La Jolla Blvd. Traffic was measured at about 22,000 ADT (an off tourist season, low measurement) with peak flows at about 2,000 to 2,200 vph. In looking at twenty year growth estimates, one task force member found an estimate of about 35,000 ADT for the summer months (this could yield peaks of about 3,500 vph). Currently we are looking to verify this number and will send a follow up regarding its accuracy. Some traffic engineers stated single lane roundabouts can fail at over 2,000 vph, others state that single lane roundabouts should be constructed to handle less than 2,800 vph. Another engineer suggested that we need two lane roundabouts with two approach lanes. Given our present traffic volumes and our projected future volumes, are single lane roundabouts appropriate?

Answer: Two constraint points on La Jolla Boulevard— one to the north with only one entry lane, and another near capacity intersection to the south, limit future traffic volume in Bird Rock to 23-25,000 vehicles per day. Unless the traffic forecasts from the City and SANDAG show a buildout daily volume of 23,000 for La Jolla Boulevard.

- 2) **Leg Balance.** Intersection with heavy flows on the major road (about 2,000 vph, La Jolla Blvd.) and low flows on the minor road (about tens of vph, the cross streets) have been labeled “inappropriate locations” for roundabouts by some of the traffic engineers with whom we have spoken.

Answer: This myth originates from a traffic engineer in Florida. Many roundabouts have been built with identical imbalance to disprove this theory.