

# Memorandum

<b>To/Attention</b>	Gary Andrishak	<b>Date</b>	05 July 2011
<b>From</b>	Warren Rempel	<b>Project No</b>	28602
<b>cc</b>	Michael Prinz Dennis Wahl	<b>Steno</b>	wr, djw
<b>Subject</b>	Mid-City SR-15 BRT Station Area Planning Study		

Meeting Date: 18 June 2011  
Meeting Time: 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM  
Meeting Location: El Cajon Blvd Business Improvement Association office,  
3727 El Cajon Blvd  
Attendance: See attached sign in sheets

Building on the input from the April walk audit, a community workshop was held at the El Cajon Blvd BIA office to present and discuss issues, ideas, and the boards prepared for the Task 4 Urban Design Visioning and Strategy of the Mid-City SR-15 Station Area Planning Study.

The consultant team began the workshop with initial comments regarding the need for proposals that are implementable, the role of Teralta Park as a focal point for the community, and concerns regarding density increases without addressing parking issues and the need for more recreational facilities.

The following comments, responses, and actions were noted. The headings refer to the boards on display in the context of the discussion.

## 1. Existing Zoning and Maximum Development Potential

Issue: Concern was expressed that redevelopment will affect large areas of small and single-family housing, disrupting neighborhoods.

Response: New development will be primarily focused near the designated BRT stations and along the already more-intensely developed streets of El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue, with the potential for increased density in the blocks immediately flanking the SR-15 right of way.

## 2. Open Space / Redevelopment

Issue: Interest was expressed in seeing a complete network of greenways, parks and pocket parks.

Response: The biggest impediment to additional open space is land cost within established communities.

It was proposed that additional density could be allowed in trade for new open space.

Referring to the Mid-City public facilities finance plan, this plan is 17 years old and should be updated to reflect the community's work on a draft update from approximately three years ago.

Followup: *Consultant team to secure a copy of the plan and review.*

Issue: A general obligations bond is required to pay for the maintenance of existing and to build new infrastructure.

Response: There is apparently one block on each side of Wilson Middle School, possibly along El Cajon Blvd., which could become open space sites.

Followup: *This potential opportunity should be investigated with the City.*

Issue: Concern was expressed over the locked and closed school playgrounds and fields that could be used for public open space.

Response: Schools are locked after hours and on weekends due to concerns regarding vandalism.

Other schools nearby are open. After hours access is used as source of revenue for money-strapped schools.

Followup: *We need to define measures the community can take to improve the public realm.*

Issue: The concept of urban movable parks should be explored. They have the advantage of being temporary, low cost and they use existing infrastructure.

Response: Movable street fairs should also be considered.

Issue: It is difficult to consider new development when the infrastructure is insufficient for existing development. Questions were raised regarding the forecasted population increase, 5,000 vs. 2,000 residents.

Response: There is some potential for additional building height, but on the condition of the provision of additional open space. Connections to Park De la Cruz and City Heights Village Park should be provided as well.

Followup: *Investigate what is required to make these connections and whether the existing plan succeeds in doing so.*

### 3. Gateways, Landmarks, Views and Vistas

Issue: Gateway signs are needed on El Cajon and University.  
People dislike the name "Mid-City".

Response: Consider other neighborhood/community names.

Issue: “San Diego is a loose confederation of semi-autonomous communities”.  
“Geography is important” in terms of defining neighborhoods.

The study area is the most densely populated and ethnically diverse area in the city.

Response: The naming issue is complex as there are many neighborhoods included in the area.

Rather than a name and entry sign, perhaps the community should focus on developing those attributes that contribute to identity and place, and let the naming follow.

#### 4. **Connectivity and Excess Right of Way**

Issue: Sidewalk gaps do not allow for a completed pedestrian grid system

Response: The community can benefit from existing completed grid layout to accommodate pedestrians.

One problem is that sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of adjacent landowners. Sidewalks are not well maintained in part due to lack of enforcement, absentee owners, and distressed or failed properties.

There is a seven year-old study regarding \$3M cost of long overdue sidewalk repair.

Followup: *Determine if this plan still exists and what would be involved in implementing it.*

Issue: Infrastructure is in need of upgrades and repairs.

Response: The community should leverage existing and new funding sources for infrastructure upgrades.

Followup: *Determine the funding sources that are available.*

Issue: Plans exist for a north-south bike connector.

Response: Don't step beyond the existing bike plans.

Issue: Make Polk a shared street, with an emphasis on pedestrian use.

Response: The idea of Polk as a shared street was well received, with the caveat that it must include parking for residents. Polk can provide a strong pedestrian link to Teralta Park and form part of a green network.

The existing home refurbishment loan program was discussed as a way to facilitate improvements to the homes on Polk.

#### 5. **Parking**

Issue: Why should the public realm must be used to provide parking for private residents to the detriment of the public.

Response: Gary Andrishak referred to the book *The High Cost of Free Parking* and noted that these issues are addressed within it.

Issue: If parking is provided/reconfigured, consideration should not be limited only to autos, but also to bike parking.

Response: There is local resistance to paid or permitted parking, yet there is a pilot program nearby to test the idea of permitted parking.

Issue: Currently, streets do not accommodate of other forms of transportation besides the car.

Response: The consultant team was advised to refer to the City's street design manual that was produced several years ago.

Followup: *The manual has been downloaded from the City's website and provided to the consultant team.*

Issue: There is always an issue of speed vs. flow on major streets.

Response: It was noted that the volume of traffic flow can be improved with slower speeds.

Long Beach City has a comprehensive cycling plan, including reduced traffic speeds.

It was suggested that this has helped local business as it makes people in cars more aware of local businesses and therefore more likely to stop

Lower speeds also make it easier for people to park at on street parking stalls

Followup: *IBI should investigate this.*

Issue: There is a goal to meter parking on El Cajon.

Response: ROW widths are being studied to maximize parking and angle, including 90 degree parking, is being considered. A one-block study area was suggested.

## 6. **Building Typologies and the Huffman 6-Pak**

Issue: Lower-scale typologies were generally preferred.

The study should include hotels as a typology. This would be one case where the podium and point tower would be viable for the area

Response: It was asked that the consultant team identify examples of successful mixed-use communities that have been developed in low-income areas, to show that this concept has indeed worked. The concern is that the buying power of existing and new low-income residents may not support the kind of businesses necessary to make this type of mixed-use community/development viable.

One advantage of increasing density is that it may allow for the creation of more open space as part of the cost of development.

Followup: *IBI to research this issue.*

Issue: There are nearly 200 Huffman style apartment buildings in the study area, with approximately 1500 dwelling units.

Response: A partly tongue-in-cheek proposal was made that IBI try to find the earliest such structure and determine if the Huffman family would consider its designation as a historical landmark.

The combination of improved and renovated buildings, along with a reconfigured streetscape, was well received but will require further discussions and analyses for parking and ROW issues.

## 7. **Placemaking**

Issue: Suggestions for a plaza market on redevelopment agency property, night markets, and converting vacant buildings to marketplaces were presented.

Response: The community has heard these good ideas many times before, but nothing has ever come of them.

Some felt that the public agencies are the roadblock to these improvements. For example, Caltrans has so far blocked the use of the existing kiosks on the SR-15 bridge decks over El Cajon and University. Staff will follow-up with appropriate parties to determine potential interim solutions.

Michael Prinz described how the recommendations will be used to seek grant funds for improvements and provide recommendations to developers, city departments, and the district council member regarding future developments.

## 8. **Station Areas and Enhancements:**

Issue: The idea of widened bridge decks and Teralta Park came from the residents, not from planners.

Response: *The notes from the April 25, 2011 walk audit have been revised to clarify this point.*

Issue: Pavement and design treatments for the BRT stations were presented and discussed. The community would like to have more input on the BRT station designs to address concerns.

Dennis Wahl informed the group that this study will be used to help inform the next phase of BRT station design. This work can be used to set the tone as to the elements that should be included in the station design.

Followup: *IBI will provide phasing suggestions for the urban design concepts.*

Attachments: Sign In Sheets (2)



MID-CITY SR-15 BRT STATION AREA PLANNING STUDY  
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

June 18, 2011

SIGN-IN SHEET

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