

Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan



City of San Diego

Project Working Group Meeting #3

September 21, 2011 – 5:00-7:30pm

Sherman Heights Community Center

Meeting Objectives

- Confirm vision, guiding principles, and goals/policies.
- Review alternatives and provide feedback.
- Brainstorm charrette outreach.

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome

Karen Bucey (City of San Diego) welcomed participants to the meeting and summarized the previous Working Group Meeting in July which included a debrief of community outreach meetings, review of the Existing Conditions Report and Market Study findings, and discussion of vision and goals for the corridor.

2. Confirm Draft Vision and Guiding Principles

Jean Eisberg (Dyett & Bhatia) presented the draft vision and guiding principles that have emerged from community outreach meetings to date. She explained that the vision and principles will continue to be refined through the process and will provide the framework for the plan.

Rajeev Bhatia (Dyett & Bhatia) asked committee members to provide feedback on the draft vision and principles. Comments included:

- Concern about how this vision can be achieved piecemeal. The plan need some umbrella agency to implement it.
- Light industrial is good for this corridor. Avoid minimum lot sizes, since new businesses can start up with just 5,000 square feet. Education is important to prepare people for good jobs.
- Need other tools outside of redevelopment and government to improve the community. Community members need to take responsibility and get involved with making improvements.
- Important of public gathering space and open space should be added to the vision/guiding principles.
- Economic development should be added to the vision. We need to protect the interest of low-income households through living wage jobs, worker cooperatives, land trusts, 3rd

Space near Adams Avenue corridor (shared work spaces). Business and property owners are overrepresented in this process.

- Allow warehouse spaces to accommodate small vendors, farmers' market, etc.
- Avoid displacement and ensure high-quality jobs as redevelopment happens unfolds. Chain stores often do not provide good employment benefits.
- Commercial Street should be heavy industrial. The street has a rail spur that will be more and more utilized as shipping costs increased. Respect these existing uses; they provide jobs and the land is valuable at \$50-75 per square foot. 20-50 years from now, more change may be possible.
- Determine what kind of good jobs may be feasible in this corridor.
- Encourage as many participants as possible to participate in community meetings. Always the same people attending meetings.
- Concern that we are talking about vision before knowing if have any funding. [Mr. Bhatia explained the importance of having a vision and plan in place first, so that we have direction for how to direct funds.]
- Property owners need to have incentives to implement the community's plan.

3. Review Alternatives

Mr. Bhatia described the alternatives purpose and process, including building type and urban design possibilities and financial pro forma analysis. Ms. Eisberg described the current regulatory framework including the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan land use designations and Planned District Ordinance zoning designations.

Mr. Bhatia summarized the three alternative concepts. Participants reviewed the concepts, filled out a feedback form individually, and then discussed their comments as a group.

Discussion Summary

Working Group members overwhelmingly supported the retention of industrial uses along Commercial Street and transit-oriented development (TOD) around trolley stops (including space for parks/public gathering), as shown in Concept A. In addition, members supported adding a new trolley stop at 28th Street, as shown in Concept B. Specific preferences and dislikes were as follows:

- Preferred Concept A: industrial zoning here is crucial; it is the only location where we still have this use.
- Preferred Concept A: industrial use is critical. From Concept B, include new 28th Street trolley stop and bus route along 28th. TOD is fine as long as it does not affect the industrial uses.

- Preferred Concept C: bicycle/pedestrian priority, least amount of high-density residential. People do not want high-density development. Four-story is okay. From Concept B: add trolley stop at 28th Street.
- Preferred Concept A and C: liked neighborhood village on 32nd Street, disliked high-density. From Concept B: add trolley stop at 28th Street.
- Preferred Concept B: trolley stop on 28th Street, higher density will help create a successful corridor. Would like to see Imperial Avenue only two-lanes wide with diagonal parking.
- Each concept has good points: preferred higher density, more commercial, additional trolley stop on 28th Street.
- Preferred Concept A: liked that it improves the area and sidewalks. Disliked Concept B: west of 28th Street there are a lot of residences and a new trolley stop would create more noise early in the morning.
- Preferred Concept A: with modification from 28th and 31st to allow heavy industrial and a requirement for business owners to keep the properties clean, put up walls, etc.
- Preferred Concept A: with modification from 28th and 31st to allow heavy industrial (seconded comment above). As a property owner, speaker was willing to make improvements that improve the community.
- Preferred higher density around the transit stops to allow housing/jobs balance and gathering spaces/plazas to build connections between community members. There are a lot of missed opportunities for TOD in San Diego.
- Preferred Concept B: new trolley stop and connections between east and west segments of the corridor. However, disliked the mixed use along the corridor—need to maintain industrial uses.
- Would like to see industrial uses continue; encourage energy providers to locate on Commercial Street. Would like to see Imperial become more upscale, with commercial on the first floor and residential above.
- Preferred development around the trolley stations, with more residential and commercial development, to alleviate car traffic and allow people to live and work in the same community. Imperial Avenue has substandard businesses that need to be revitalized. Liked vision that has been established; it provides a framework for use to follow.
- Preferred Concept B: open space, walkability, new trolley stop, but no more than five stories with a mix of business and residential.
- Would like to consider the whole corridor as a transit corridor; development should not just be limited to the trolley stops. Consider a shuttle from one end of the corridor to the other.

Other items that should be examined:

- Review Sherman Heights Historic District regulations to understand height regulations and potential historic resources (some of which may have adaptive reuse capability).
- Examine one-way couplet, two-lane Imperial Avenue
- Get buy-in on transportation system and additional transit stop at 28th Street. Encourage SANDAG to quiet down the trains.
- Make the corridor more aesthetically appealing: more color, trees, paint jobs. These improvements will increase everybody's property values. We can keep our identity and make it unique, but we can make some specific beautification improvements in the short term.
- Identify culturally relevant uses or identity, as described in the vision, in the concepts. Smart growth is necessarily culturally relevant.

4. Brainstorm Charrette Outreach

Mr. Bhatia explained the next steps for bringing alternatives to the community as a whole. A charrette or community workshop is tentatively being held in October.

5. Public Comments/Announcements

Sherman Heights Historic District walking tour on Sunday, October 2nd at 1-3pm, 20th and K streets, Villa Montezuma Museum. No charge.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

Working group members were asked to contact their networks to encourage participation in the community survey. Ms. Bucey summarized the purpose of the Commercial/Imperial Corridor Master Plan for those participants who had not yet attended a meeting on the project.

The next Project Working Group Meeting will be held December 7, 2011, 5pm, at the Sherman Heights Community Center.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.