

## **Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #3.2**

**August 10, 2016, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Police Department Conference Room, 7301 Hanna Street, Gilroy, CA 95020**

### **Meeting Summary**

#### **I. Call to Order**

Members present: Peter Leroe-Muñoz (Chair), Toby Echelberry (Vice Chair), David Almeida, Steve Ashford, Tom Fischer, Guy Preston, Sharon Albert, Eldon Chappell

Members absent: Mark Turner, Craig Morris

Staff / Consultant: David Bischoff, Sue Martin, Henry Servín, City of Gilroy;  
Bruce Brubaker, Janet Chang, PlaceWorks

The agenda for this Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting was posted on August 4, 2016

#### **II. Welcome**

Mr. Peter Leroe-Muñoz welcomed everyone.

#### **III. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

There were no public comments on items not on the agenda.

#### **IV. Continuation of Discussion of Elements to Create a Draft Preferred Alternative**

David Bischoff explained that the objective of the meeting is to continue making progress on the discussion of elements for a preferred alternative. A follow-up community meeting is planned, after which the Committee will be asked to finalize its general vision for the Station Area.

Bruce Brubaker, Associate Principal of PlaceWorks, gave a summary of the last CAC meeting on July 13, 2016. The summary included comments from committee members on the following preferred alternative elements: building heights, housing, office, and commercial/retail development.

A detailed summary of the previous CAC meeting is available on the project's website at the

following link: <http://www.gilroyhighspeedtrain.org/documents/>

Bruce Brubaker also requested confirmation of the CAC’s direction or “Emerging Vision” of the intensity, type, and location of residential, office, and retail land use types for the Draft Preferred Alternative.

Below is a summary of the questions/comments and following discussion.

- One CAC member had a differing preference for the amount of housing shown in the “Emerging Vision.” She stated her support for a lower amount of housing (1,600 to 1,900 units) to limit residential development where existing residences are located. David Bischoff differentiated the effects of the proposed alternatives compared to the effects from the High-speed Rail (HSR) vertical alignments. The proposed alternatives would have little effect on existing housing, but the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) would need to acquire properties for the HSR right-of-way. There was also some discussion on existing non-conforming uses as well as whether CHSRA can use eminent domain to acquire properties for the use of surface parking. Guy Preston, CAC member and Northern Regional Delivery Manager of the CHSRA, explained that CHSRA’s goal is to utilize parcels adjacent to stations as high-intensity uses rather than surface parking. HSR parking would most likely be in the form of satellite parking located on existing vacant parcels or on parcels from willing sellers.
- One CAC member expressed concerns that Alternative 2’s high amount of residential units may cause parking/traffic issues in Downtown.
- Several CAC members reiterated support for a high amount of residential development.
- Several CAC members confirmed support for a mix of uses, especially residential with retail, because a mix would create a vibrant Downtown.

Bruce Brubaker continued his presentation with a discussion of the remaining elements to create a Draft Preferred Alternative. CAC members discussed elements related to impacts of HSR around Swanston Lane and Railroad Street, circulation, gateways, hotel land use, auto mall expansion, parking, and the Arts Center. Below is a summary of the questions, comments, and discussion of these elements.

#### **IMPACTS OF HSR: SWANSTON LANE**

- Several CAC members expressed preference for potential land uses at Swanston Lane created by a modified at-grade vertical alignment. With the potential to assemble new parcels that front onto Monterey Street, this area could become a gateway and have housing/retail.
- One CAC member expressed that although he prefers the aesthetic and concept of a

modified at-grade alignment, he has the following concerns about it: (1) the alignment would create a physical barrier dividing the east and west sides of Downtown and (2) the alignment would disrupt Downtown circulation with the closing of cross streets for construction. He would like to hear more input from Downtown business owners about their vertical alignment preference.

- One CAC member expressed concern that the modified at-grade alignment would eliminate the existing businesses north of Leavesley Road within HSR's right-of-way. David Bischoff explained that the businesses would be eliminated with either the aerial or modified at-grade option and the CHSRA would have to pay property owners fair market value and provide relocation assistance.
- **Would noise from CHSRA have negative impacts on the nearby South Valley Middle School?** David Bischoff explained that noise will be evaluated during the environmental review process and a potential sound barrier could help with noise mitigation.
- **What will happen to existing rail spur activity?** Guy Preston and David Bischoff explained that existing spurs would not be eliminated and would be accommodated by CHSRA.

#### **FIRST STREET TO MURRAY AVE CONNECTION**

- Several CAC members were supportive of creating a First Street to Murray Avenue connection. Some expressed that it would be more beneficial for drivers to use Murray Avenue rather than to use a parallel street through a residential neighborhood. One CAC member believed that this would help relieve traffic on Wellburn Avenue, but that it would be a challenge for people to use Murray Avenue as an alternative route to travel along First Street. Henry Servín explained that the City has explored creating a traffic signal to allow cars to make a left turn onto Murray Avenue after getting off US 101.

#### **IMPACTS OF HSR: RAILROAD STREET**

- One CAC member supported the option with Martin Street closed to vehicle access. He added that the area of Martin Street west of the tracks may be used as part of the proposed park/plaza shown in the Downtown Specific Plan on Fifth and Monterey Streets.
- One CAC member noted that the modified at-grade alignment would divide Downtown and make Downtown less walkable.
- Guy Preston noted that if the CAC supports a modified at-grade alignment, the Committee and/or the City should write a letter to Union Pacific (UP) encouraging collaboration with CHSRA. The City of San Jose is writing such a letter to UP.
- **Who would be responsible for maintenance of the area between UPRR and HSR in an aerial alignment option?** Guy Preston answered responsibility would fall on whichever

transit agency owns the right-of-way. State agencies, such as CHSRA and Caltrain, have more stringent and timely requirements for maintenance (i.e. graffiti removal).

- **Is parking a possible use in the area between UPRR and HSR in an aerial alignment option?** Guy Preston answered that parking could be possible as long as it is controlled (i.e. security, restricts access to certain types of vehicles).
- **Why would residences along Railroad Street require acquisition if the houses have garage access from the alley, are set back from the front property line, and have a sidewalk?** David Bischoff explained that these residences' front doors would face onto a 15-foot retaining wall, which is a very undesirable condition.
- **How would utilities function with a HSR alignment?** Henry Servín explained that parallel utility systems with pumps could be used along the HSR right-of-way or a gravity feed could be used at grade level.
- **What is the impact on UPRR for a modified at-grade alignment?** Guy Preston answered that there would be construction impacts, but it is possible to limit the impacts to UP's service.

#### **CHESTNUT STREET EXTENSION TO CONNECT TO MURRAY AVENUE**

- Several CAC members expressed support for the extension of Chestnut Street to connect to Murray Avenue.
- One CAC member expressed concern for the speed limit on a potential Chestnut Street connection to Murray Avenue. Bruce Brubaker answered that Chestnut Street could be designed in such a way that it encourages safer, slower-moving traffic.

#### **NINTH STREET EXTENSION THROUGH RAIL STATION SITE**

- City staff noted that the City owns land on both sides of Ninth Street through the station and that this street extension is supported by the City and CHSRA.
- One CAC member commented that a Ninth Street extension would relieve traffic on Tenth Street.

#### **NEW STREET AT PRINCEVALLE DRAIN TO CONNECT CHESTNUT STREET TO MONTEREY STREET**

- Many CAC members did not support removal of the existing Luchessa Avenue and Chestnut Street connection. Many employees and trucks use this connection to travel to Tenth Street, which provides foot traffic to other businesses along Tenth Street.
- Several CAC members expressed support for a new street at Princevalle Drain as long as the connection between Luchessa Avenue and Chestnut Street would remain.
- Bruce Brubaker noted that lowering the Luchessa Avenue and Chestnut Street

intersection may remove access to the parcel to the south.

- **Would there be any flooding impacts to a undercrossing at Luchessa Avenue since it is located within the 100-year floodplain?** David Bischoff answered that this issue may be resolved with pumps.

## **GATEWAYS**

- Several CAC members supported a two-tier gateway system: one tier to define the limits of Downtown and another tier to define the limits of the Downtown/historic core. Gateways would enhance Downtown and create a welcoming entryway.
- One CAC member suggested that the broader tier gateway could be located at Leavesley Road and Tenth Street. A smaller tier gateway could be located at Third or south of Third Street to define the northern limit of the Downtown core.
- One CAC member expressed that a gateway located too far south would extend Downtown into a long and narrow strip, which is not conducive of a walkable environment.
- Henry Servín noted that Chestnut Street and Tenth Street has planned gateway treatments for the auto mall, including medians and pilasters.
- **What are the requirements for the gateway district?** David Bischoff answered that the existing Downtown Gilroy Specific Plan established existing gateway districts at Leavesley Road and Luchessa Avenue with gateway requirements. These districts have higher design standards, including requiring gateway treatments such as public art, landscaping, wider sidewalks, and attractive building façades.
- **What is the status of the proposed gateway archway for Downtown Gilroy?** David Bischoff answered that the construction of the archway has been deferred because a location has not yet been determined.

## **HOTELS**

- **Do visitor-serving uses include hotels?** Bruce Brubaker clarified that visitor-serving uses include lodging (i.e. hotels), restaurants, gas stations, etc.
- One CAC member commented that visitor-serving areas are often unappealing and would like to see higher standards for the aesthetics of these areas such as landscaping and architectural quality.
- Several CAC members expressed support for a hotel/conference center near the HSR station.
- One CAC member expressed support for a medium range of hotel development (400 rooms) and believes that Gilroy could capitalize on new hotel activity.

- One CAC member commented that the Gilroy City Council should consider increasing the transit occupancy tax (TOT) for hotels to benefit Gilroy’s arts resources.

#### **AUTO MALL EXPANSION**

- One CAC member commented that land at a specific location should be set aside for a future auto mall expansion.
- One CAC member suggested that the auto mall use could include both auto sales and car rental services to accommodate HSR users.

#### **PARKING**

- One CAC member commented that parking should not be located in residential areas. David Bischoff noted that parking would be located in higher density residential areas and that those who park and walk to the HSR station could support retail located along the way.
- Bruce Brubaker noted that the alternatives map also show Downtown parking at the intersection of Seventh and Church Streets, a location currently being considered by the City.
- One CAC member commented that parking should be located away from the HSR station and that those who park would not typically spend money on retail while walking from parking to a train station.
- One CAC member expressed support for Downtown parking located at the intersection of Fourth and Egleberry Streets.
- One CAC member suggested that a parking location at the intersection of Church and Seventh Streets could be used as shared parking with the library.
- One Committee member, commented that constructing parking structures on Egleberry Street could be aesthetically inconsistent with the street’s historic character.
- **Why don’t the alternatives including HSR parking locations in the northern Plan Area?** Henry Servín explained that the majority of visitors will be traveling to the station from the south. Bruce Brubaker added that Leavesley Road is already impacted by existing traffic.
- **Are the proposed parking locations structure or surface parking?** David Bischoff answered that the parking locations would be parking structures and in the long-term, potentially mixed use.

#### **ARTS CENTER LOCATION**

- Sharon Albert, CAC member and former Gilroy Arts Alliance Board member, expressed preference that the Gilroy Arts Center stay in the same location and expand per

discussions with City Council and City staff. She explained that the Strand Theater is not a large enough space for the Arts Center, is too difficult to repurpose, and is privately owned. Also, relocating the Arts Center to the Wheeler Center would be very expensive. She added that the Gilroy Arts Center has established itself as an anchor in the southern portion of Downtown.

- Bruce Brubaker asked Sharon Albert whether the Gilroy Arts Alliance has considered joint-use development. Sharon Albert requested Bruce to send more information for consideration.
- David Bischoff noted that the project team’s economic consultant will be evaluating potential development opportunities for the Arts Center.

#### **V. Next Steps**

The date for the next community meeting is to be determined, but will be in September. At the next community meeting, the project team will seek more input from community members on the three alternatives to create a Draft Preferred Alternative. After the community meeting, the project team will create a Draft Preferred Alternative and the CAC will hold another meeting to confirm the Draft Preferred Alternative before it is presented for study sessions with the Bicycle Pedestrian Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council.

#### **VI. Adjournment**

- Summary by Janet Chang, 8-15-16