



MEMORANDUM

1625 SHATTUCK AVENUE
SUITE 300
BERKELEY, CA 94709
TEL: 510 848 3815
FAX: 510 848 4315

DATE August 25, 2008
TO Michelle King
City of Santa Cruz
FROM Jeff Williams
RE **Results of Ocean Street Area Plan Community Workshop #2**

The City of Santa Cruz held its second community workshop for the Ocean Street Area Plan on the evening of Monday, August 11, 2008. The workshop gave community members an opportunity to provide input regarding the plan alternatives, which were created to respond to the issues, vision and goals identified in Workshop #1, and to discuss issues such as building heights and potential Ocean Street widening. This input will be used to create a Preferred Alternative, which will form the basis for the development of the Area Plan. About 45 community members attended the workshop, which took place at the University Inn & Conference Center.

The City worked with Design, Community & Environment (DC&E), a city planning and design firm based in Berkeley, CA, to prepare and present the workshop. This memorandum summarizes the results of the workshop.

I. PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Using the ideas developed at Community Workshop #1, as well as input from stakeholders and City staff, DC&E worked with City staff to prepare a series of maps, illustrations and plan alternatives. The plan alternatives addressed a range of topics that will contribute to enhanced design and development in the Plan Area, with an emphasis on land use mix, building heights and setbacks, design of opportunity sites and potential streetscape improvements.

A. Illustrative Plan

An Illustrative Plan (shown in Appendix A) identified opportunity sites for development and potential change in the Ocean Street Plan Area. The Illustrative Plan showed potential new development in the Plan Area, as well as potential retail development fronting on Ocean Street and other major streets. It also included a site plan showing potential change on the

County Government Center and the University Inn & Conference Center properties. These sites incorporated parking structures wrapped by retail, a new plaza/public space and a potential hotel/conference center. The Illustrative Plan also showed potential gateways and public art locations, placement of signs for access to the river levee, and the possible widening of Ocean Street below Soquel Avenue.

B. Land Use Alternatives

Two land use alternatives (Figure 1-1 and 1-2 of Appendix A) showed different potential combinations of four new land use designations: Visitor Commercial, Visitor-Oriented Mixed Use, Residential-Oriented Mixed Use and Residential Neighborhoods. The land use alternatives were based on desired changes identified by participants in Workshop #1, to create a destination for visitors while meeting the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.

C. Building Heights and Setbacks

The Height Ranges map (Figure 2 of Appendix A) showed potential new height limits for the Plan Area that would accommodate more intensive development in some locations, while also responding to the surrounding neighborhood context. The map was developed based on community input from Workshop #1, as well as a review of existing building heights and parcel sizes.

D. Potential Streetscape Improvements

The following streetscape sections (Figures 3-1 to 3-6 of Appendix A) illustrated potential improvements to Ocean Street's streetscape:

- ◆ **North of Water Street.** Addition of street trees and wider sidewalks.
- ◆ **Water Street to Soquel Avenue.** Addition of street trees and wider sidewalks.
- ◆ **Soquel Avenue to Barson Street, Option 1: Widened Street.** 84' required right-of-way with the addition of on-street parking and bike lanes in both directions, street trees and underground utilities.
- ◆ **Soquel Avenue to Barson Street, Option 2: Existing Width Preserved.** Addition of street trees, pedestrian-scaled lights and underground utilities.
- ◆ **South of Barson Street, Option 1: Widened Street.** 84' required right-of-way with the addition of a southbound bike and traffic lane, on-street parking on the northbound side, street trees and underground utilities,
- ◆ **South of Barson Street, Option 2: Existing Width Preserved.** Addition of street trees, pedestrian-scaled lights and underground utilities.

II. RECAP OF AREA PLAN PROCESS

After introductions by Planning and Community Development Director Juliana Rebagliati and Redevelopment Agency Executive Director Bonnie Lipscomb, David Early of DC&E began the workshop by providing a recap of what an Area Plan is and how the Ocean Street Area Plan will fit within the context of the City's General Plan. Fundamentally, an Area Plan:

- ◆ Is adopted as an amendment to the General Plan
- ◆ Provides focused policy direction for part of the City
- ◆ Can address any topic covered in the General Plan (for example, land uses and community character)
- ◆ Can also propose streetscape improvements and provide design guidelines

David described the overall project timeline, then presented the Plan Area boundary on a map and pointed out key places to help orient people.

David also reviewed a list of issues that the City is already planning to address in the Area Plan, based on feedback from Workshop #1. This list is provided in Appendix B. David gave people a chance to ask questions about this list and identify additional issues that should be addressed in the Area Plan. Some of their questions/comments focused on:

- ◆ **Neighborhood Compatibility.** Residents were concerned about whether tall buildings on Ocean Street would be compatible with their neighborhoods.
- ◆ **Residential-oriented Services.** There is a need for retail on Ocean Street to serve residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- ◆ **Gentrification Issues.** Some felt that the existing lower-income housing in the Plan Area needs to be preserved.
- ◆ **River Levee Improvements.** Due to concerns about safety, improvements to the river levee were suggested, such as benches and lighting.
- ◆ **Multi-modal Access.** In addition to vehicular circulation, access routes for bicycles and scooters should be considered.

III. PRESENTATION OF PLAN ALTERNATIVES

Jeff Williams of DC&E gave a presentation providing further details of the plan alternatives described above in section I. The presentation was designed to help workshop participants

understand how the land uses alternatives, height ranges and streetscape improvements were developed and to prepare participants for the small-group exercise of creating a preferred alternative. The presentation included examples of how potential development might look, based on the proposed plan alternatives.

The background presentation is included in Appendix C.

IV. SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: CREATE A PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Participants gathered in small groups to create a “preferred alternative” for specific changes that should occur over the next 20 years along Ocean Street. Six tables were set up, with approximately seven participants to a table. A trained facilitator worked with each group. Facilitators asked their groups to spend 90 minutes to discuss the following topics:

- ◆ **Illustrative Plan.** Focused on general comments about the Illustrative Plan, such as locations for public art or potential new development.
- ◆ **Preferred Land Use Map.** Utilized the two land use alternatives as a starting point to create a preferred land use map for Ocean Street.
- ◆ **Building Heights.** Focused on the proposed heights in each area and how they fit with their surroundings.
- ◆ **Streetscape Improvements/Ocean Street Widening.** Focused on street sections for each of the four areas described in Section I.D. In addition, the groups discussed whether Ocean Street should be widened below Soquel Avenue.

The summaries that follow describe points of agreement and common threads among the small groups, as well as notable conflicts or disagreements among participants. Appendix D shows the map drawn by each group, as well as a complete record of each group’s notes.

A. Illustrative Plan

In general, the groups all supported the idea that the County Government Center and the adjacent University Inn & Conference Center area are the hub of Ocean Street, with one group calling this the “heart of Ocean.” Most groups wanted to see more public art, and one group suggested thematic art, such as surfboards on Ocean Street. One group suggested courtyards on properties along Ocean Street to provide a place to relax away from the street noise and traffic, and another group was in favor of a public plaza at the County Government Center. In addition, several groups agreed that the County Government Center was an ideal site for a parking structure.

B. Preferred Land Use Map

Most groups preferred Alternative 1 with some modifications; in particular, it was suggested by some groups that Visitor Commercial uses should not front onto May Avenue. One group noted that residential mixed-use development along Ocean Street creates potential for neighborhood-serving commercial to serve residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. Another group wanted to see more residential uses north of Water Street and mixed-use south of Soquel Avenue.

C. Building Heights

In general, the groups supported what was shown on the Height Ranges map. Most groups agreed that buildings on the west side of Ocean Street between Water Street and Soquel Avenue should have the greatest height, and one group suggested that height should relate to parcel depth. Participants were more concerned about heights at the rear of properties along Ocean Street abutting residential properties; many groups liked the idea of stepping back on the upper floors at the back of buildings to transition heights into adjacent neighborhoods.

Two areas of concern for some groups were the parcels fronting on May Avenue between Hubbard Street and Water Street and the southeast corner parcels near Broadway; some groups preferred 2 to 3 stories in these areas rather than 3 to 4 stories. Also, some groups were concerned that 2 to 3 stories may be too high for the parcels on the east side of Ocean Street across from the County Government Center, and preferred to have no more than 2 stories in this area.

D. Streetscape Improvements/Ocean Street Widening

The groups were unanimously in favor of adding street trees, pedestrian-scaled lights and underground utilities along Ocean Street. In general, the groups suggested taking a more innovative approach to Ocean Street's streetscape to create a special destination for both residents and visitors. Some suggestions included bike tracks, a highly-landscaped residential parkway, more public art and landscape buffers along sidewalks.

Although no consensus was reached in regards to Ocean Street widening south of Soquel Avenue, most groups did not favor widening the street or felt it would be too difficult to achieve. One group felt they needed more information regarding street widening to make a decision. Two groups supported widening; one of these groups felt that street widening would be a good way to revitalize the lower Ocean Street area.

E. Circulation and Traffic

Some groups were concerned that Ocean Street would be too auto-oriented, even with the proposed streetscape improvement. These groups felt that there needs to be more of a balance between automobiles and pedestrians/bicyclists, with better links to downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. In particular, several groups would like the Ocean Street area to have stronger connections and access to the San Lorenzo River, as well as the existing pedestrian bridge that connects San Lorenzo Park to downtown. One group proposed improvements that would allow bicyclists to reach the top of the levee at the foot of Ocean Street.

Finally, many groups suggested a trolley line or visitor shuttle that loops from motels to the beach and other areas of the city. A new parking structure for visitors, perhaps at the County Government Center, was seen as necessary to ensure that visitors have a place to leave their cars. To resolve traffic delays that reduced ridership when a beach shuttle was provided in the past, one group advocated a “part-time” dedicated bus lane to improve efficiency during peak hours in the summer months.