

**San Jose Redevelopment Agency
Winchester Boulevard Enhancement Strategy**

**Workshop #4: Land Use, Zoning, and Physical Improvements:
March 28, 2009
Meeting Notes**

Prepared by Field Paoli Architects
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Introduction

On Saturday, March 28th, 2009, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency held the fourth in a series of community workshops to obtain input from the public for developing an enhancement strategy for Winchester Boulevard. The Winchester Boulevard study area covers the length of Winchester Boulevard between the City of San Jose's southern boundary with the City of Campbell at Impala Drive and its boundary with the City of Santa Clara at Stevens Creek to the north. The focus of this workshop was to discuss potential strategy ideas for improving the identity of Winchester Boulevard.

The meeting was held at the Bethel Church on Winchester Boulevard, from 10 am to 12:30 pm. Approximately 30 community members were in attendance, in addition to Agency and City staff and the consultants. Participants included local business community members and residents from neighborhood communities, including representatives from Neighborhood Associations.

Councilmember Pete Constant (District 1) and Councilmember Pierluigi Oliverio (District 6) began the meeting by introducing the purpose of the workshop series and the project team. Urban design consultants from Field Paoli Architects, Frank Fuller, Dennis Dornan, and Jane Lin, presented potential ideas for traffic network improvements, public transit improvements, traffic calming, commercial clusters and streetscape strategies for each of four clusters. Ray Salvano and Hans Larsen from the San Jose Department of Transportation also presented traffic improvement measures that are both ongoing and proposed in the Winchester Boulevard area. Community members were invited to ask questions during the presentation and to make comments on the potential strategy drawings that were posted on the walls around the room.

A. Traffic network improvements, public transit improvements and traffic calming

The first half of the meeting focused on potential traffic improvements. Any potential development can have an impact on the traffic at Winchester Boulevard. An overlay on an aerial of the Winchester area was presented and showed the network of regional traffic being carried on I-280, I-880/Hwy 17, San Tomas Expressway, Bascom Avenue and Hamilton Avenue, with more local traffic using Winchester Boulevard, Williams Road and Payne Avenue to access the surrounding regional network.

Local traffic improvements were also discussed. Potential local traffic calming opportunities for neighborhoods on both sides of Winchester Boulevard included possible new roundabouts, additional crosswalks at key intersections, new mid-block crosswalks, restrictions on through traffic across major cross-streets, enhancements of surface materials at intersections, and pedestrian connections to existing streets. These possible improvements were illustrated graphically with an overlay of the existing neighborhood street grids.

There has not been a clear consensus in past workshops on whether Winchester Boulevard should remain an arterial street that carries 3 lanes of through traffic each way or should be reduced to 2 lanes each way to allow for more walkability. Alternative street sections were presented that showed the existing conditions and possible streetscape improvements. If Winchester is reduced to 2 travel lanes each way, there is more space for a striped bike lane, on-street parking, and, where allowable, more space for landscaping.

When combined, these additional changes help to improve the walkability of the street. On-street parking and bike lanes help to provide a buffer between pedestrians and traffic. Reducing the number or width of traffic lanes shortens the distance required to cross active traffic lanes. Shorter distances between crosswalks make it more convenient to experience both sides of the street. Retail could be clustered in order to enhance identity and connectivity. Some of the

proposed streetscape ideas would encourage more cross-street pedestrian activities.

Reducing the number of travel lanes on Winchester is a potential strategy between Williams and Impala and could be associated with concentrations of pedestrian-friendly environments, such as new or enhanced commercial clusters.

Ideas for improving the pedestrian experience at the section between Moorpark Avenue and Tisch Way, including the overpass at I-280 were also presented. An initial idea suggested widening the walkway with a cantilevered structure that could provide shade. The surface facing the freeway could be used as a large-scale 'canvas' for public art. Widening the walkway at this location would also provide room for a bike path next to the sidewalk.

Feedback from past workshops has suggested that alternative modes of transportation should be explored for Winchester Boulevard, especially for the long-term vision. One vision for transit could include a new public transit route along Winchester Boulevard, Stevens Creek Boulevard and connecting to Diridon Station in the north and the Winchester Light Rail station in the south, thus creating a transit loop with the existing Light Rail line. The type of transit would depend on the ridership and development of the sites.

Following the presentation of possible long term visions for traffic network, streetscape and transit, Ray Salvano from the Department of Transportation presented major projects that affect the Winchester Boulevard area in the near term. There were four key projects:

1. A direct connector to Valley Fair from southbound I-880: On the west side of I-880 at Stevens Creek Boulevard, there will be a change to the off-ramp that will provide a direct connection to Valley Fair. Southbound I-880

- traffic will be diverted on to Monroe and out of the Stevens Creek Traffic Flow. This project is scheduled to be completed 2010/2011.
2. Southeast of the I-880 and Stevens Creek Boulevard is currently a series of traffic loops. The interchange will be reconfigured to reduce the weaving movements and to distribute traffic more effectively on Stevens Creek Boulevard.
 3. A new flyover will connect traffic northbound I-280 to northbound I-880
 4. A proposal for an off-ramp from northbound I-280 onto Winchester Boulevard adjacent to Tisch Way. The Department of Transportation is currently studying alternative configurations for this connection. This improvement is envisioned for 2020, or beyond. There was an environmental scoping meeting at O'Conner Hospital January 2009. The draft environmental impact report (EIR) is due out in the summer of 2009 with a Final EIR to be completed in 2009/2010.

Participants were then given an opportunity to ask questions. Public comments and questions, with staff/consultant team responses in italics, are listed below.

1. Will there be a connection from southbound I-880 to Winchester Boulevard? *No.*
2. Will the changes at Stevens Creek Boulevard and Tisch Way introduce more traffic onto Winchester Boulevard? *The impact is not expected to be significant. Department of Transport studies show that about one third of the traffic exiting in this location has Winchester Boulevard as a destination.*
3. What is a hook ramp? *The existing off-ramp from southbound I-280 onto Moorpark Avenue is a hook ramp.*
4. What will happen to Monroe Street? *Monroe Street is the root of traffic problems, the epicenter of frustration. Monroe is Valley Fair's "frontage road." The reconfiguration will direct traffic onto Monroe from southbound I-880 with through traffic continuing on Monroe Street..*

5. How does additional traffic from Tisch Way affect building occupants on Winchester Boulevard? What is the area covered by the Tisch / Winchester Environmental Study? *The scope for the Environmental Study takes a long-term view by looking at how much traffic is displaced / diverted south. Preliminary findings are in the range of 200 more vehicles during the peak hour and not a significant impact on neighborhoods. To put this in perspective, typical traffic on Winchester Boulevard is approximately 2000 cars during the peak travel hour, so this impact represents a 5-10% increase.*
6. If Tisch Way becomes a one-way street, will it cause backup onto Winchester Boulevard? *The Winchester Boulevard exit for northbound I-280 will be a dedicated ramp, not a merge onto Tisch Way. Alternatives for widening Tisch Way to maintain two-way traffic are currently being studied. For reference, the northbound 87 off-ramp at Julian Street has a similar movement and configuration.*
7. How does this affect Hamilton Avenue / Highway 17 exit? How do these changes affect Levels of Service? *This will be part of the environmental study.*
8. *VTA is currently studying future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) / light rail routes along existing high-use transit corridors, such as Stevens Creek and Alum Rock. Winchester Boulevard is not currently included.*
9. Who are these streets for? Those passing through or for the neighbors? *That has been a question throughout the workshop series. How can the right balance between local and through traffic be achieved?*
10. Isn't there a potential conflict with traffic if there is diagonal parking? How does it work backing out into traffic, especially with an increase of traffic on Winchester Boulevard? *Yes, it would be more difficult; it is one idea for changing the street character. Diagonal parking does not work well with traffic moving at 30/35/40 mph. If the actual speed of the traffic reduces below these levels as a result of some of the other traffic calming measures being proposed, then diagonal parking becomes more viable.*

Diagonal parking also takes a lot of space to accommodate cars reversing out.

11. What about bicycles and diagonal parking? *Diagonal parking is an obstacle; drivers have to be more alert and encouraged to slow down. In balancing the priorities of through traffic, the safety of cyclists and maintaining traffic speed with on-street parking, parallel parking may be a better option. The question is also whether 3 lanes or 2 lanes are appropriate, or a combination? In Portland, OR, reverse-in diagonal parking has been introduced. The advantage of reverse-in parking is that the doors protect the passengers from traffic as they move around their parked car. It also makes it easier to pull forward out of the parking spot when leaving and to look out for cyclists before pulling out.*
12. Will there be a speed limit change? Winchester Boulevard is currently 40 mph. What would the speed limit be, given all of these proposed improvements? *Speed limit is set by State law, and is based on actual measured travel speed. The City cannot arbitrarily alter the speed limit, but if the street is designed to create a slower-moving environment, then it becomes possible to lower the speed limit accordingly.*
13. Can you accommodate 2 lanes of traffic, transit and on-street parking within the existing width? *The right-of-way on Winchester Boulevard is not wide enough to accommodate everything. Trade-offs need to be made between a combination of bus/ transit lanes, traffic lanes, bike lanes, the sidewalk and on-street parking.*
14. How will the pedestrian experience at the I-280 overpass be affected by a new off-ramp? Will the additional traffic further impair the pedestrian experience? *This will be addressed as part of the environmental study associated with that project.*
15. There is disconnect between on-street parking and the self-parked cluster concepts. *Some of the proposed clusters are on existing parcels of land which are not large enough to accommodate parking structures. Therefore the parking demand must be satisfied with on-grade parking spaces. If*

some of this is provided by on-street parking spaces, this alleviates the need for new developments on these smaller 'opportunity' sites to meet their parking needs on-site, thus allowing more buildings.

B. Commercial clusters and streetscape strategies

In the second half of the meeting, Field Paoli presented near-term and long-term visions of development for Winchester Boulevard. Each concept illustrated one of many possible ways of developing each of the sites. Speculative concepts were presented for properties in private ownership as a tool for fostering discussion about the identity and future development of Winchester Boulevard. The purpose of the workshop was to look 25 years and beyond into the future character and identity of Winchester Boulevard.

The concept of commercial clusters was introduced in Workshop #3 and developed further for this workshop. A fourth study area was added as well as expanding some clusters onto the eastern side of Winchester. The idea is to concentrate new and existing retail into clusters in order to improve the retail offerings, strengthen the businesses, create neighborhood nodes and distinguish between retail and non-retail stretches of the Boulevard. Four areas were identified as potential locations for commercial clusters. These include:

- Cluster 1 – located north of I-280 on Winchester Boulevard at Olsen Drive where the Century 21, 22, and 23 theaters occupy the site
- Cluster 2 – located on both east and west sides of the segment of Winchester Boulevard between Moorpark Avenue and Magliocco Drive
- Cluster 3 – located around the intersection of Williams Road and Winchester Boulevard
- Cluster 4 – located on both east and west sides of the intersection of Winchester Boulevard and Payne Avenue and extending south towards David Avenue

Participants were then given an opportunity to ask questions. Public comments and questions, with staff/consultant team responses in italics, are listed below.

1. If there are more crosswalks, will there be more lights? *Not necessarily, but further traffic studies would be required before any implementation.*
2. What about the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Corridor? What about residential uses and mixed use? *This section of Winchester Boulevard is a designated TOD corridor, in which residential units above ground floor retail would be encouraged. However, TOD is difficult to achieve on smaller parcels. Any necessary zoning or policy changes would be influenced by community preferences.*
3. What about multiple individual ownerships? Why are parking structures on individual properties being recommended? With this consolidation are you taking out residents? *The possibility of realizing these long-term visions is dependent on property owners recognizing a common advantage. There is also possible joint participation between property owners and city agencies. It depends on mutual benefit and market reality (cost of new structures vs. revenues), partnerships and cooperation of land owners. The Redevelopment Agency will encourage cooperation. First we need to establish a master plan based on community consensus, and then discussions with individual property owners can follow.*
4. For neighborhood serving retail, surface parking is preferred. *Each cluster needs a critical mass of retail and parking supply to meet retailers' needs. . It is possible that we may not be driving and needing parking in the same way in 30-years time. Parking ratios and other development policies are all subject to change over time.*
5. Does the long-term plan cause intermediate stagnation? *It is meant to set vision for community's preference. The idea is not to discourage development, but to encourage it. The Redevelopment Agency is willing to work with individual property owners to help establish appropriate levels of*

near-term improvements which are consistent with any long-range plans which come out of this study.

6. How does this translate into reality or policy? *This is a strategy. We need community input. If this study is taken to the next stage to establish priorities and an implementation strategy, the process would include further extensive community input.*
7. *So far the 2035 Transit Plan does not accommodate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) / VTA on Winchester Boulevard, but does include Stevens Creek and San Carlos.*
8. How do we develop our individual parcels? We need suggestions for individual parcels. *The Redevelopment Agency has staff in house to help, but it is not part of the scope of this envisioning study to look at near-term improvements on individual properties.*
9. How does all this potential development affect livability here in respect with traffic, building size? Will more development make it unbearable? *In developing these potential visions, the idea was to keep development from being too dense; 3-4 stories maximum with minimal impact on traffic in the neighborhoods. We are striving for the right balance, in designing a place that is more livable.*
10. In looking at the regional traffic network, Winchester is surrounded mainly by single family residences that rely on it as a primary feeder route. We need to use Winchester to get into neighborhoods but need to keep non-local traffic out of neighborhoods. Parking within the clusters is good but we do not want commercial on-street parking on residential side streets.
11. Two lanes each way continues to be a viable option for slowing down traffic as long as this strategy does not push cut-through traffic into the neighborhoods.
12. Gas stations are needed, don't take them all out.

Field Paoli recorded all the information presented and has summarized it in this document. The next workshop will be held on April 29, 2009 from 6-8pm at the Winchester Mystery House.

JCL/DRD/Field Paoli
1 April 2009