

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency Winchester Boulevard Enhancement Strategy

Workshop #3: Strategy and Overall Identity: February 21, 2009 Notes

Introduction

On Saturday, February 21st, 2009 the San Jose Redevelopment Agency held the third 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 strategy ideas for improving the identity of the area and its surroundings.

The meeting was held at the Bethel Church on Winchester Boulevard, from 10 am to 12 noon. 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.

Richard Keit, the Redevelopment Agency's Director of Neighborhood and Business Development, and Pierluigi Oliverio, Councilmember for District 6 in the City of San Jose, introduced the team and the purpose behind the workshop series. Frank Fuller and Dennis Dornan, urban design consultants from Field Paoli architects, presented the format for the workshop and a potential strategy for each of three retail clusters to be discussed in smaller groups at the workshop.

The purpose of this workshop was the strategy and overall identity of Winchester. Concepts were presented for properties in private ownership as a tool for

fostering discussion about the identity and future development of Winchester Boulevard. The big picture for the workshop was to look 20 years, and more, into the future. The next workshop, Workshop 4: Land Use, Zoning, and Physical Enhancements, will incorporate feedback from this workshop and elaborate on more detailed strategies for public realm enhancements.

The feedback from past workshops was summarized into a list of primary recommendations from the community that helped inform the February 21st presentation. These include:

1. Keep Winchester with 3 lanes of vehicular traffic each way; Winchester is too wide to create a “main street environment”
2. Winchester is too long (1.5 miles) to be considered pedestrian for its entire length.
3. It would be better to create pedestrian ‘clusters’ with neighborhood retail to break down the length of Winchester.
4. We do not need more retail; we need better retail.
5. One approach is to consolidate new and existing retail into clusters and to identify ‘opportunity sites’ for clusters.
6. Winchester should have a different character in between retail clusters and could be more of an ‘automobile-experience’.
7. We could introduce some urban plazas within the retail clusters.
8. We need to improve pedestrian crossings:
 - a. Across I-280
 - b. Between Valley Fair / Santana Row / and the Winchester Mystery House
 - c. From neighborhoods to commercial zones

Three retail clusters at major intersections along Winchester Boulevard were chosen for study. These included Cluster 1, located near the intersection of Winchester and Magliocco, Cluster 2 at Williams and Winchester, and Cluster 3 that looked at the area south of the intersection of Payne and Winchester

Boulevard. The idea of concentrating new and existing retail into clusters so that a distinction could be made between retail nodes and non-retail portions of Winchester was presented using diagrams.

The concept presented for Cluster 1 included introducing the potential for new infill commercial buildings located at the edge of Winchester Boulevard and locating the majority of surface parking to the back for the site to provide more activity at the street. An urban plaza near the intersection of Magliocco was included with new retail that was additional to remodeled existing retail at the site.

The concept presented for Cluster 2 showed the potential for new retail at the western corners of Williams and Winchester. The new retail is integrated with the existing retail to orient with surface parking along Williams. The reconfiguration of the retail would include an urban plaza.

The concept presented for Cluster 3 at Payne and Winchester showed the potential for a remodeled shopping center, with the surface parking reconfigured to allow the introduction of two new urban plazas and adding a small amount of new retail.

Following the presentation, participants divided in to three groups to discuss the three clusters. The groups were given half an hour to discuss and exchange ideas. A spokesperson reported back to the larger group at the end of the workshop.

Field Paoli recorded the information presented and has summarized it in this document. Workshop #4 will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2009 at the Bethel Church, with one Final Community Meeting to be held on Wednesday, April 29, 2009 at the Winchester Mystery House.

Community Input

Cluster 1 – Winchester at Magliocco

- Improve pedestrian access across Moorpark near I-280. It is very dangerous and difficult to cross the street.
- Explore potential sites on the east side of Winchester and identify potential clusters that address both sides of the street.
- Improve connections across Winchester Boulevard and accessibility from the neighborhoods.
- Bring in retail that serves the neighborhood, including small anchor stores like a small grocery store.
- Retail could serve Santana Row residents and those going to destinations north of I-280.
- Include potential sites on Winchester at Moorpark and Riddle
- Include the sites on the east side of Winchester with large parking lots and try to reconfigure to share parking and build a concentration of commercial buildings
- There need to be more breaks in the medians for left turns
- Urban plazas complement retailers and encourage customers to stop and stay.
- People don't want to sit by the side of a noisy road.
- What are the DOT plans for I-280 and I-880? How is it going to affect the off-ramp at Moorpark?

Cluster 2 – Winchester at Williams

- Note: This group engaged in debate about the objectives of the strategy for enhancing Winchester, rather than specifics about the Cluster.
- Winchester is a hodgepodge. The street looks best where there are buildings with a generous landscaped setback, for example just north of Bethel Church.

- Why put buildings on the street? If the clusters are organized around urban plazas, they will be facing away from the street. If this is the case, they should have a landscaped setback to soften their edge, unlike Santana Row which has blank backs against the sidewalk.
- Build close to the street so people and drivers can see the retail. It is unsightly to have parking lots close to the sidewalks/street. Buildings can be put in front and parking behind.
- We are trying to attract people to park once and walk to various stores
- Retail clusters can help inform public improvements, e.g. sidewalk width, etc.
- Introduce green space. How wide should sidewalks be? Provide space for trees and landscaping. Should there be landscaped setbacks for clusters along street and other frontages?
- The plaza area would be quieter and safer away from Winchester.
- How can we incentivize private property owners? It costs a lot of money (millions of dollars) to upgrade private properties.
- We need to keep some gas stations on Winchester. There are 7 gas stations now, which is excessive.
- Check cashing businesses are trouble spots.
- We can design ideas to be what we need/want.
- Cluster could/should match the ample setbacks of neighbors.
- Let's brainstorm regarding Winchester's identity.
- Think about history with respect to identity. Should we use the Winchester Mystery House or the previous history as an orchard area as a theme for Winchester?
- Retail clusters seem to be the wave of the future.
- Make sure the success of the street is not detrimental to the neighborhoods. We want to be sure traffic doesn't go into the neighborhood.
- We need to look at the "big picture" before we go into details and think 30-40 years into the future.

- In this group, there was not a consensus on whether 3 lanes each way are necessary.

Cluster 3 – Winchester at Payne

- The gas station affects traffic
 - o Change gas station? Relocate?
 - o Possibly relocate it in the center?
 - o Gas stations are convenient, the other gas stations are farther away
- Access to the existing rear parking area of center is not obvious.
- Improve the facade and look of the shopping center and street frontage.
- Improve access to the retail cluster by foot and by car from Winchester and from adjacent neighborhoods. There is lots of foot traffic at Winchester and Payne and Winchester and Driftwood currently.
- Create walkability; improve safety to cross Winchester. The students at nearby schools walk in this area.
- Build a pedestrian overpass or walkways, but these are pricey and people don't like to use them.
- Do not add any traffic signals.
- Create better access for residents. Improve the access to shopping center from neighborhood streets, right now the only access to the center is from Winchester and Payne. Possibly create new access from cul-de-sacs that are adjacent to the shopping center / cluster.
- Improve the neighborhood center model.
- The Driftwood area has transients and issues with loitering youth.
- Improve pedestrian safety at Driftwood and Winchester.
- Improve access to businesses on the east side.
- Create connectors and multiple neighborhood clusters.
- Median is a drawback to northbound traffic.
- Keep businesses on Winchester, not further back into the neighborhood like the current condition on Driftwood.

- Attract new businesses to Shopping Center; improve retail options at neighborhood center.
- Safeway is too small for neighborhood; we want a 'Fresh and Easy'-type market experience.
- Businesses on the east side of Winchester need improvement
- Make the site multi-use.

General Feedback

- The east side of Winchester needs to be addressed. Identify more retail clusters on the east side of the street.
- Preserve and capitalize on character that is there so that Winchester can be unique and memorable. We don't want a place that is the same as everywhere else. Establish a neighborhood or regional identity.
- Include underground utilities as part of the streetscape improvement.
- Add more median breaks for left turns along Winchester.
- How will the I-280 Interchange Project – the off-ramp at Winchester affect this area? How will the configuration of Tisch and access to northbound I-880 affect traffic on Winchester?
- Identify a strategy that does not emphasize the car. Go further; think bigger in terms of what will happen in the future. How will the infrastructure serve residents 20 to 40 years from now? Does it include cars and/or transit? Will it be completely different from now?
- Plan for alternative transportation such as light rail, monorail, or dedicated transit lanes for future mobility on Winchester. Provide an alternative to fighting traffic on the street. Traffic deters customers. It is one way to connect all the retail clusters.
- Parking for electric vehicles should be included.
- Keep the parking on-site and out of the neighborhoods.
- Traffic might increase with new and improved retail. Avoid adding traffic to the neighborhoods. Traffic may be minimized in the new retail

clusters if people are required to park only once to access multiple services.

- Pedestrian safety is a priority. There are 30,000 to 40,000 cars that travel Winchester Boulevard each day. Safety while crossing the street is an issue. Perhaps this can be achieved with adding more signalized intersections, but generally crossing the street needs to be made safer. The neighbors on the predominantly residential side of the street (the east) need to cross safely to the businesses on the west side. Pedestrian overpasses may be a solution.
- A better pedestrian connection is needed at Moorpark and Winchester (near the I-280 overpass). The light and crossing could be improved for that area.
- Economic factors, such as the recession and high rents, currently impact the survival of local businesses. A business strategy is also needed to help out retail on Winchester.
- Improve the Safeway at Westpark Plaza. Discussions with Safeway are underway for stores smaller than existing typical sizes.
- Seek organic produce retailers for the area.
- The three clusters identified are good but do not go far enough to establish a strong identity. Now is the time to plan and think about something more ambitious.

JCL/Field Paoli
24 February 2009