



SantaCruz
— corridors —
PLANNING AND ZONING UPDATE

**City of Santa Cruz
Stakeholder Interview Report**

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
	1.1 Goals and Objectives of Project	1
	1.2 Purpose and Format of Stakeholder Interviews	2
2	Stakeholder Comments	3
	2.1 Key Themes	3
	2.2 Stakeholder Comments	3
3	Next Steps	25
	Appendix A: Discussion Questions and Prompts	27
	Appendix B: Participants	29

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I Introduction

I.1 Goals and Objectives of Project

Santa Cruz has initiated a Santa Cruz Corridor Planning and Rezoning (“CP&R”) project that will comprehensively change the regulations that govern land use and development along certain major arterials identified in the General Plan for mixed use. The purpose is to implement the General Plan 2030 vision of more intensive “infill development” and higher-density housing along transit corridors while retaining the City’s small-town character and unique neighborhoods.

The 2030 General Plan provides guidance for the city’s primary mixed-use corridors (Soquel, Water, Ocean, Mission), which were identified as “change areas” served by transit. The ultimate objective for this project is to help implement that vision—produce innovative and integrated corridor planning and a Zoning Code Update that will serve as an effective tool to achieve the vision expressed in the General Plan, and to identify associated transportation system and parking improvements.

Through this effort, the City is taking a critical look at General Plan policies to see how zoning can best provide a roadmap for future development and protection of resources. Overall, the Update strives not only to ensure that regulations are relevant to today’s concerns, but also to produce an ordinance that is understandable and easy to use, and will meet the City’s needs over the next 20-25 years. Through this process, the objective of the CP&R is to craft new zoning regulations for the corridors that:

- Are consistent with and implement the General Plan;
- Encourage efficient and environmentally sensitive development, which is important to Santa Cruz residents;
- Support infill development, where envisioned by the General Plan;
- Promote a range of mixed use development and housing types;
- Support overall economic growth, without new impediments or hurdles;
- Provide enhanced opportunities for public input in the development process; and
- Are clear, concise, understandable, and easy to use.

This effort will also consider “Complete Streets”, or streets that are designed to accommodate all modes (cycling, walking and transit as well as cars), and coordinating new development with these street design concepts. As part of this, the CP&R will focus on:

- Multi-modal access: how the street right-of-way should be shared, recognizing that the City won't be able to widen any streets;
- Parking: how much and where, and can we reduce parking requirements with mixed use and with better multimodal access; and
- Integrating this study with the ongoing Active Transportation Plan being prepared by the City.

1.2 Purpose and Format of Stakeholder Interviews

As part of the community outreach effort for the CP&R, the planning team interviewed 19 stakeholders on June 3, 2015 at Santa Cruz City Hall. Two additional interviews were conducted over the telephone on June 25, 2015 and September 16, 2015. The interviews were conducted in groups of one to four, with one hour allotted for each interview session. Stakeholders included local property owners, developers, real estate brokers, architects, builders, neighborhood activists, several Planning Commissioners, and transit and pedestrian advocates.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn about stakeholders' experiences with the current Zoning Code to determine how well it supports high-quality mixed-use and infill development along the key corridors. Specifically, interviewees were asked to identify regulations that hinder the type of mixed-use development described for the corridors in the General Plan and to share their insight on specific changes to the current code that would result in "better" projects. Stakeholders were also asked questions about transition zones between different uses and development intensities/densities, whether or not new regulations should apply differently between the corridors, and if there are any concepts, approaches or standards that have been used in other areas that the planning team should consider. In addition to these particular topics, interviewees were also given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them.

The full list of discussion questions and prompts are included in Appendix A. The list of participants is included in Appendix B. The following summary presents the range of responses organized by topic area, without attributing any remarks to specific individuals.

2 Stakeholder Comments

2.1 Key Themes

During the stakeholder interviews, several themes were repeatedly identified. Key themes identified by multiple stakeholders are summarized below for quick reference. The following sections provide the varying individual perspectives on these topics as well as additional issues that were raised.

- In order to be adaptable to market fluctuations, allow flexibility of uses, including how much retail to require and where, whether buildings can be single-use or not, and incorporating form based regulations. However, some control of use will be needed to address neighborhood compatibility issues and nuisances.
- Height step-backs, landscaped buffers, screening and design of the whole building (not just the facade) should be used to buffer the transition zones between commercial and residential uses.
- Address small lot sizes by offering incentives for lot consolidation.
- Streetscapes should include active frontages, ground floor transparency, and pedestrian-friendly amenities.
- On-site open space should be meaningful, usable, and corridor appropriate.
- Parking should ideally be located away from the street, and more flexible parking standards should be considered.

2.2 Stakeholder Comments

A comprehensive list of comments received, organized by topic, follows.

CORRIDOR IDENTITY

While stakeholders discussed some basic similarities between the corridors, they also expressed notable differences, suggesting that different regulations might be needed for each. In particular, the need to treat Ocean Street differently than the east-west corridors was a recurrent theme. A few participants wanted to see more attention paid to the gateways, pointing to these highly visible locations as prime opportunities for development. Mission Street was largely viewed as an auto-centric corridor with fast moving traffic, a diverse mix of uses, and a connection to UC Santa Cruz. Ocean Street was generally described as a tourist corridor on the north end before becoming increasingly residential on the south end. Soquel Avenue was seen as a more locally

oriented corridor with some good retail spots and a growing design community. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Make the corridors destinations rather than thoroughfares.
- Not all of the corridors will be “future Pacific Avenues.” All will be transportation corridors, which are not the most desirable for walking. Don't try to make all of the corridors “walkable.”
- Can't envision a City Zoning Ordinance with a Mixed Use district that treats all four corridors the same. It is important to recognize the individual differences among the corridors.
- Soquel/Water/Mission: No real visions for each come to mind, justifying that there is no need for different treatment in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Not sure the east-west corridors should be treated the same way.
- Similar rules should apply to Mission, Water and Soquel, but not to Ocean.
- Currently, there is not a lot of difference between the corridors from a pedestrian's perspective.

Gateways

- Anchor tenants should be located at “gateway” sites.
- The visitor gateway at Ocean Street needs more attention and amenities to support the tax base.
- Gateways are important, and the gateways at Water and Ocean need more attention. New buildings/renovations for uses such as sewing and vacuum repair are not best use for this area.

Mission Street

- Mission Street is more neighborhood-serving, so it could be made more pedestrian-friendly for residents. However, this may be challenging to accomplish because of space constraints and existing residential uses on the corridor.
- Mission is somewhat of a tourist corridor, but it could serve residents as well as visitors.
- Mission Street is largely composed of auto-related uses that are primarily accessed by car. Given the variation of uses across the corridor, it might be worthwhile to consider zoning regulations and design standards in terms of individual blocks or corridor segments.
- Mission is a big mix of uses, and operates as a fast “pass-through” for traffic.
- On Mission, people aren't really stopping anywhere – more through traffic.
- The university has a big impact on Mission Street.

Ocean Street

- Ocean Street needs a vision.
- Ocean Street is still as seedy and unattractive as it has always been.
- Ocean Street has to change. It needs its own special standards in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Ocean Street was abandoned by locals to tourism a long time ago.
- Upper Ocean is geared toward travellers and business people. Allow more commercial and restaurants, but no more hotels! Make it an upgraded, up-scale gateway.
- On Ocean, people stop along the way to the beach.
- Ocean Street is a tourist corridor, not a local corridor. For this reason, there are seasonal differences over the year.
- Ocean should be treated differently than the other corridors.

Soquel Avenue

- Some things are happening on Soquel Avenue that can draw people in. There are home focused businesses in certain segments. Design hubs are popping up with local businesses specializing in this type of work.
- Soquel is more local serving.
- Soquel almost has the feel of a “city” street.

USES

Many participants wanted to see flexible standards that are less sensitive to use in order to be able to better adapt to changing market conditions. While some spoke of the high cost of housing and the need for additional multifamily units, others expressed concerns about introducing too much high density housing to the corridors. In addition, several stakeholders said they would like to see more active frontages, restaurants with outdoor seating, coffee shops and other neighborhood serving destinations along the corridors. However, many of these same people were hesitant about allowing restaurants, bars and other late night uses too close to residential units due to potential nuisance issues. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

Flexibility

- Shouldn't be overly prescriptive about uses on Mission.
- The code should be more flexible on uses.
- While more detail is good in theory, it can be problematic in practice. It is dangerous if flexibility is minimized and jeopardized.
- The corridors are mixed use already. Why couldn't there be horizontal mixed use instead of vertical mixed use? There needs to be flexibility with upper floors and ground level uses.

- Would like to see more flexibility in the Professional Office zone and relief from the burden of rules that don't really apply. The City needs to be more embracing of development changes, and work with people to make them happen. This happens in theory, but not in reality.
- Interested in doing things that make sense and not being so strict on the rules.

Housing

- The General Plan focused multifamily housing on the corridors rather than sacrificing single-family neighborhoods.
- The corridors may not have enough capacity for the amount of new housing envisioned in the General Plan.
- This type of mixed use environment will be attractive to some and not attractive to others. Provide choices for people when it comes to things like higher density housing.
- Some in the Westside are concerned about introducing more apartments in residential neighborhoods.
- Mission Street is a State highway, making it an undesirable corridor to live on.
- The City has not thought enough about apartments. Reportedly, Planning Staff has not accepted applications for housing-only projects on the corridors because they were not mixed use.
- The City shouldn't make a rule requiring that retail is always located below residential on transit corridors. Sometimes living spaces need to be on the ground floor.
- Rents are high. People are desperate for housing.
- Need more rental housing.
- Some single family housing may need to stay on the corridors. Lot depths are inconsistent. Shallow lots are challenging for larger scale development.
- It would be a bad idea to push lower income housing onto Ocean Street. Instead, Ocean needs amenities for visitors.
- Would like to see a mixed use density that provides both jobs and housing. Think about what jobs would best support transit.
- Encourage accessory dwelling units as another option for increased density. This would provide existing residents with more income that could help prevent them from having to move out.

Commercial, Office and Mixed Use

- Active frontages should include more than just retail. However, recognize that there is an added cost to plumb and vent for all potential uses. As much as possible, make buildings flexible.
- Want neighborhood-serving destinations, coffee shops, etc.

- Promote more outdoor eating.
- No more bars.
- No more hotels.
- Santa Cruz is not pushing the boundaries of zoning yet. Most of the existing uses are commercial, but there is the opportunity for mixed use development.
- The corridors are already mixed use, but the zoning is Community Commercial or Professional Office.
- We don't need more office space – there's plenty of it.
- Law offices are an acceptable use.
- Look at the three story mixed use building on Mission Street over by Jamba Juice. It has been vacant for some time since it was completed. The commercial component was forced on this project, and now it's struggling to make it viable.
- The new Starbucks at Soquel and Ocean is not a great model for mixed use development because it's really single use. The developer looked at mixed use options, but eventually decided against them.
- There is a project at Mission and Laurel at the site of the former PAMF offices. The offices will be converted to ground floor retail with two residential apartments above. The project has not had any problems with the City - they love it. While it hasn't been submitted yet, it's gotten conceptual approvals and a generally favorable response.

TRANSITIONS AND NEIGHBORHOOD COMPATIBILITY

Compatibility concerns due to transitions between commercial and residential uses were raised by several participants. Some spoke to the difficulty of locating tenants in vertical mixed use buildings with residential above, because residents often complain about nuisances, such as noise, loading, parking, and garbage pick up. For this reason, mixed use is more of an issue for residents than for businesses. Others explained that the incompatibility issues extend to adjacent neighborhoods, in addition to mixed use projects on single sites. As a result, the design of buffer space between commercial and residential uses is critical. Suggestions for transition zones included building step backs, landscaping, screening, and design of the backs of buildings (instead of only the facades). Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

Compatibility Issues

- In places where there's a mix of uses, noise, early garbage pick-up, and delivery trucks are nuisances for residential tenants.
- Impacts from high intensity development could destroy quality of life for nearby residents. Tall buildings that generate lots of activity and traffic would be problematic for adjacent lower density neighborhoods.
- Prior plans and/or development proposals for the corridors have not felt compatible with surrounding residential uses because of noise, lighting, traffic and trash.

- Real estate brokers don't see mixed use working well because tenants don't want to deal with compatibility issues.
- 24-hour uses have negative impacts, such as noise and traffic.
- Restaurants, bars, fast food, and possibly apartments could have significant negative impacts on surrounding single family residential neighborhoods.
- Consolidate times for garbage collection to reduce complaints about early morning pick-ups.
- Bars and their parking areas are not compatible with residential neighborhoods due to loud and drunk customers.
- In Capitola, there's a center that has delivery in the rear, but it can't be used due to neighborhood complaints.
- Many retail tenants are unwilling to locate in buildings with residential units above due to incompatibilities, such as noise concerns and a lack of parking and/or access.
- Petty crime occurs in the first block off the main corridor. (Car break-ins, quick in and out, etc.)
- PAMF and CVS made accommodations for impacts to the surrounding residential neighborhoods, which helped mitigate compatibility issues.
- Be proactive and anticipate impacts, issues and solutions ahead of time.
- Consider impacts to adjacent property.
- It is hard to mitigate the impacts of mixed use development.
- Minimize impacts on neighborhoods with low impact businesses.
- The transition to mixed use will not always be a smooth process.
- Transition areas should be rezoned to add more depth to the corridors.
- Neighborhood street controls that limit traffic are important.
- The Leonard neighborhood is less concerned about Soquel than they are about Water and Ocean.
- Residents of the small bungalows in the neighborhood across from the County building on Ocean feel extremely vulnerable.
- The Lower Escalona neighborhood (close to Mission) could potentially be highly impacted by this [CP&R] project.

Design of Buffer Spaces

- Design of the backs of buildings needs to be considered so residential neighborhoods located behind the corridors don't have unattractive views.
- The backs of buildings matter.
- 360-degree design - Make all sides attractive and inviting.

- Stepping down the massing and bulk of buildings as they approach transition zones may be an option.
- Buildings that are more than two stories are hurtful.
- Control massing with step backs that reduce height on the sides of buildings that face lower density districts.
- Commercial uses should be located on the street with apartments on the rear side of the site fronting the residential neighborhoods. As an alternative, physically stepping the building down could help the transition.
- If trash areas are pushed to the rear of lots to allow good frontages, make them enclosed. Look at 2030 North Pacific as an example.
- Landscaping and fencing should be placed between commercial and residential areas.
- Landscaping will help, but it won't eliminate the complaints. It softens the relationships between different uses.

DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Several participants talked about the need for the code to provide incentives for property owners to do something new with their properties. With so many small and irregular parcels, some incentive needs to be provided for lot consolidation in order to make redevelopment feasible on small lots and financially rewarding for long-time property owners. It was noted that many property owners have been around for a long time, meaning they have probably have paid off their mortgages and have a reliable income stream from these developments; the City would need to offer something with a compelling financial incentive for them to want to take action. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Owners face the economic realities of development. Zoning has to offer a real upside, such as allowing four stories, to justify taking on the costs of the approval process.
- Need development incentives to promote desired heights and densities along the corridors.
- Older property owners, especially those that have paid off their mortgages, would need substantial incentives for redevelopment.
- Lower Ocean is largely composed of hotels and marginal housing. Take into account the value of these properties today and create an incentive for redevelopment.
- Few local developers are interested in pursuing mixed use projects because of hurdles such as minimum ground floor ceiling heights and compatibility conflicts with residential uses. They need an incentive to make mixed use development attractive.
- There is an incentive to leave existing buildings as they are, because property owners perceive diminishing returns on redevelopment.

Lot Size and Consolidation

- There should be provisions in the Zoning Ordinance that enable more lot consolidation.

- “Postage stamp” redevelopment with independent driveways for each site would be horrible. That is why site assembly is important.
- Combining properties has been a challenge in the past.
- Provide incentives for parcel assembly.
- Consolidation of lots is okay, but not necessarily for affordable housing.
- Consider incentivizing lot assembly and setting egress limits.
- Height incentives offered to larger sites may help consolidate small sites. There should be no height bonus for a single, small lot.
- Graduated density (which allows higher density on larger sites) is a good strategy to encourage lot consolidation.
- Graduated density allowance based on parcel size is a good idea, but there also has to be a step down of building massing in transition zones that lead to residential neighborhoods.
- In order for higher density development to be feasible, the city must assemble lots, or create incentives for property owners to do so.
- Lot size is often a limitation, as many sites are not deep enough to support a “real retail use”.
- Lot combinations are an issue on Lower Ocean. Projects underway are not fitting in with the Mixed Use Visitor Uses concept.
- Lots are small. It took ten years to try to find a big enough site for the new PAMF. There are many property owners on Mission that don’t want to sell. The small lot issue applies everywhere, not just on Mission.
- Need for an overarching plan with the larger sites, such as PAMF.
- There is a mixed use development (two story residential above commercial) over by Jamba Juice on Mission between Baldwin and Berkshire. This should have had a larger site, perhaps combining with the standalone Jamba Juice.

URBAN DESIGN AND STREETScape

Many participants expressed that in order for mixed use development to be successful, it must be well designed with visually appealing buildings, nice landscaping and appropriate open space. The design of streets and sidewalks was also discussed, specifically as it relates to conflicts between pedestrians (including the elderly and disabled), cars, cyclists, and transit vehicles. The high number of driveways and curb cuts was seen as a safety concern, as well as lack of adequate ADA accommodations in numerous locations. Many spoke of the need for pedestrian-oriented streetscape design to encourage more activity along the corridors. However, others questioned whether it is reasonable to expect all of the corridors to be pedestrian oriented for their entire lengths. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Mixed use buildings with residential above commercial is good design.
- The mixed use project at Mission and Baldwin is “upsetting” because of its bad design. So is the new PAMF building.

- The PAMF building that has the door on Mission Street locked is troubling; it's a false front door.
- Landscaping is really important to make places pleasant.
- Appearance of buildings from the sidewalk is important. There's a residential building on North Pacific near River Street where the lower floors are multi-use, but you can't see through the ground floor windows. Rules for transparency should be written into the regulations.
- Consider including some Form-Based elements in this update to the Zoning Code.
- Windows that open are good.
- There are no parks or community gathering spaces on Ocean.
- The development at Mission and Laurel will have some balconies. But on Mission, who wants to sit out on the balcony? Balconies shouldn't face the busy street.
- In retrospect, the Mission Street Urban Design Plan guidelines should have been more specific. Sidewalks were supposed to be 10 feet wide and instead we see many sections of the corridor where they are less than that. There was also supposed to be more tree plantings (especially at the gateways) and shared parking, but that never happened. Guidelines are just that – they are not standards.
- The Safeway site on Mission was the best opportunity site identified during the planning process for the Mission Street Urban Design Plan. But when it came time to design the site, the Plan was not followed.
- New projects on Mission Street don't go far enough in following the recommendations in the Mission Street Urban Design Plan.
- Land use/zoning is a broken strategy and not a helpful way of creating pleasant urban design in neighborhoods. Residents have no real understanding of development and urban design, resulting is a patchwork of solutions.
- A patchwork of different designs along a corridor is a good thing.
- How do you design buildings that won't attract chain stores and restaurants?

Streetscape

- Create real design guidelines that promote wide sidewalks.
- Create walkable corridors that attract people to animate the space and draw businesses to locate there.
- Shaded walking areas offer pedestrians protection and comfort. People need to feel good about walking around on the streets and waiting for buses.
- Landscaping is really critical to pedestrian comfort.
- Poor sidewalk conditions and narrow sidewalk widths can be challenges for mobility challenged riders. At a minimum, ADA requirements must be met. Best practices include wider sidewalks, fewer barriers (such as utility poles and newsstands), and the use of

directional ramps that guide people into crosswalks rather than diagonal ramps that dump people into intersections.

- The notion that Mission Street is going to be walkable with buildings located at the sidewalk edge is ludicrous. PAMF and Safeway are examples of what results from this bad design. For the CVS building, the community agreed that it was okay for the building to be set back from the street.
- Pedestrian improvements on Mission Street should be focused at major intersections where neighborhoods meet the corridor rather than along the length of the corridor. Don't try to make it a pedestrian street, because it won't be.
- Ocean should be walkable from Highway 17 to Water and between Dakota and Broadway. The segment with the Government Center and apartments is not walkable.
- Pedestrian orientation would require land assembly on Ocean. It could be great, but it is unlikely to happen. It's a wasted space today. The Ocean Street Corridor could do more with shops to capture tourist-oriented sales.
- Integrate transit and street design.
- Bus bulbouts that project into the street are an interesting idea. They really reduce the amount of time buses have to spend trying to pull back out into traffic.
- Control drive-thrus, minimize driveways, and limit new access points.
- Whole Foods has three driveways and a large amount of surface parking in front of the store that encourages vehicle trips. Elderly transit riders want to be dropped off right in front of the store, rather than having to walk through a sea of parking. In addition, pedestrians, cyclists and buses should not have to compete with the steady stream of cars entering and exiting the parking lot.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Some participants offered specific feedback on a variety of development standards. In particular, several stakeholders spoke of the need to adjust height regulations. Some suggested allowing a specific number of stories (from three to five), and others stressed the need to get the regulations for ground floor ceiling heights right. However, some participants were also cautious about being too prescriptive with development standards, favoring flexibility for the end user and the ability to adapt a building to market demand. While some stakeholders responded positively to the idea of increased density and intensity along the corridors, many warned that terms such as “density” and “compact” would cause concern for surrounding residents. In addition, a few participants raised the issue of open space, with some suggesting a reduction of required open space for multifamily housing because of ample opportunities for recreation around the city. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Regulations about height, bulk, and setbacks don't really matter. The market is really what is important.
- Mixed use parcels should have a minimum depth of 200 feet.
- Minimum retail floorplates for the first floor are sometimes a problem.

- Increase density and relax standards.

Height and Density

- The General Plan says five stories is allowed in the mixed use nodes.
- Three-story heights along the corridors is fine.
- Six-story buildings along the corridors is too much. On Ocean (from Dakota to Leonard): three-story limit, which has not been changed, but this would have an impact on adjacent residents.
- There should be more height at the ground level to create engaging retail frontages.
- Set height based on the number of stories, not a specific number of feet. This recommendation comes out of experience with a mixed use building in Santa Cruz, where design was compromised to meet height limits. Lobby heights should have been greater. In the beach area, this is an issue.
- Ground floor ceiling heights need to be higher. All floors need to be a little higher.
- Density is an important factor. Projects often push up against limits on height and the number of stories.
- Minimum ceiling heights are an issue Downtown: The City did not always do a good job in rebuilding after the earthquake, and some retail space is not that viable as a result.
- Minimum ground floor ceiling height is 18 feet in the downtown area and 12-14 feet on the corridors. It's better to let the users decide. Do not set a minimum in the Zoning Ordinance.
- On Pacific, there was a minimum ceiling height, but it was found to be a problem, so it got reduced. The challenge is determining how to make an efficient building. Different floor-to-floor heights for residential and commercial uses don't always meld together.
- Height restrictions and the number of stories can affect the look of a building. Spaces that seem cramped are difficult to lease/sell. Look at projects at Laurel, between Pacific and Cedar.
- Rittenhouse building – Had to remove a floor to meet the height limit. The inside space ended up being very constricted and uncomfortable.
- Height limits are a problem on Ocean Street.
- New development wants to have more height, but that means more parking is required.
- When people hear “compact”, they get concerned about growth and change.
- Don't want to use the “low income” exemption that would justify increased height or intensity.
- People are concerned when you say “density” or “compact development.” Density is kind of a dirty word.

Open Space

- High open space requirements make it difficult to make high density development work.
- Open space requirements for multifamily housing are suburban in nature and not appropriate for urban development. Four hundred square feet of required open space is too much - maybe 100 square feet would be better. However, in the CC zone, the requirement for open space is 100 square feet + 150 square feet of common area. As a result, a developer cannot achieve the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) or development intensity allowed.
- If there is outdoor space, people will take advantage of it. But a lot of people also end up storing their belongings in private open space [e.g. on decks or balconies].
- Exercise some caution about requiring outdoor living area. Santa Cruz is already an open area. You can go elsewhere to get your outdoor space, like the beach or neighborhood parks. Larger, publicly accessible recreation areas have more value than smaller, less usable spaces that are attached to private units. On the corridors, private outdoor space doesn't seem that useful.

PARKING

Many participants saw parking as a restriction to higher density development due to the challenge of fitting the required amount of parking spaces on small lots. Underground or structured parking is an expensive alternative that is not economically viable for many developments. While there was some interest in relaxing parking requirements, a few pointed to the need for alternative parking strategies, such as shared parking or off-site parking to reduce the likelihood of “spillover” into adjacent residential neighborhoods. In terms of design, many stakeholders wanted to see parking located in the rear of buildings so as not to detract from active frontage along the corridors. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Parking drives building design because it is difficult to fit in, and expensive to provide.
- Parking is the most restrictive regulation because sites are not that big and it is challenging to fit in the required number of spaces.
- Can't do underground parking because it's too expensive.
- Below grade parking is expensive.
- Development in the downtown area needs more height in order to pay for structured parking.
- There should be interest in modifying parking standards. However, there has to be some tradeoff, such as ridesharing, carsharing, or other ways to mitigate the impacts of reduced parking.
- Relaxing parking requirements within these corridors could be acceptable to the community, but it will be important to consider the effects of the resulting parking spillover into the neighborhoods.
- Parking ratios need work for their locations. On Pacific, it's one space per dwelling unit, which is reasonable.

- Impose limits to parking access.
- Unbundle parking [rent or sell parking spaces separately, rather than automatically including them with building space]– regulations are needed.
- Current parking requirements are too old. Look to best practices.
- Some thought is needed on how parking is handled on auto-oriented corridors, such as Mission.
- Generally not interested in removing street parking where it's currently allowed because it provides a buffer for pedestrians.
- Allow parking for commercial uses in residential neighborhoods. (Example: 7th Day Adventists put the parking in the back.)
- Reduce the number of spaces required and change parking space dimensions. Allow mini-spaces for small cars like Mini-Coopers (12 or 13 foot depth).
- May need to relate parking standards to each corridor, with lower requirements near the downtown area.
- On Mission, there is no street parking.
- On Soquel, would like to see parking located in the rear of buildings and along the parallel streets to preserve an active streetscape.
- Parking should be located behind buildings.
- Provide parking midblock.
- Now is the time to approach parking!

Off-site and Shared Parking

- Encourage more public parking. Michael Rey, a consultant to the City from Sacramento, determined that it is impossible to achieve the density allowed by the City's Zoning Ordinance without offsite parking. Currently, allowable offsite parking must be within 300 feet. Loosen up this requirement to allow more remote parking. Allow new uses to get credit for existing off-site public spaces.
- Provide a centralized parking district to help increase density [and not require each development to provide parking on site].
- Consider more public parking and more shared parking. Set walking distance limits that are greater than today's limits.
- There is some shared parking in the County – look to the reductions offered by the County.

TRANSPORTATION

Those in the transportation sector believed that Santa Cruz is actually ahead of many other jurisdictions with regards to transit-supportive planning and zoning, in that the City is actively having discussions about fostering more compact land uses that are transit supportive. Several people highlighted car conflicts and heavy congestion along the corridors as a key concern. A

couple of participants spoke specifically about a Complete Streets approach, and many wanted to see improved facilities that would create enjoyable and safe options pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders. Some intersections were highlighted as dangerous, particularly for pedestrians. More protected crosswalks, better signal timing and even roundabouts were offered as suggestions to improve safety at intersections. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Very interested in a Complete Streets approach (designing streets to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, cars and transit riders). Encourage projects that incorporate all of these components as much as possible.
- Would like to see pedestrian and bike facilities within a walkable environment with good transit access, following the Complete Streets guidelines.
- It's good that this project is concurrent with the city's Active Transportation Plan because the issues for both are linked.

Cars and Congestion; Roadway Design

- There is a trend of declining car ownership, especially in younger populations. New regulations need to consider today's needs as well as those of future generations.
- Give an alternative to current traffic for circulation. Identify parallel streets for access and parking. Smaller feeder streets into arterials cause conflicts.
- Would buses be okay with 11-foot lanes as a standard? Or is 12 feet the only acceptable option?
- Eleven-foot lanes shouldn't be a deal breaker, as some of the older roads are already narrower than that.
- On-street parking is a bigger safety conflict for buses than the standard lane width. If you're going with the narrower lane, the parking needs to be designed better.
- The City is unrealistic in its requirements for travel lane width. Nine and a half foot wide lanes on side streets should be fine. You don't want people going too fast on side streets anyway.
- Larger patterns of traffic have an impact on these corridors and their character.
- Recognize there are different traffic volumes over the length of the corridors. In some segments, traffic volume is lower than in others.
- There are real traffic problems on Ocean (seasonal issue due to beach and Boardwalk visitors), which impacts the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Avoid negative traffic impacts.
- Create single-egress [driveway] standards to avoid creating more traffic conflicts if at all possible. Consider vehicle "throughput" capacity.
- Local people avoid these corridors because they're so congested. If intensity is increased, people are going to have to get to the corridors by another mode of transportation.

Bikes and Pedestrians

- What are the pedestrian corridors? Do the corridors being studied in this project overlap and/or connect to the pedestrian corridors?
- Need pedestrian activity and street design that accommodates bikes.
- There is a need for pedestrian traffic on all of the corridors. Its necessary for safety and other reasons.
- Overlap with pedestrian and bicyclist travel patterns creates opportunities at the mixed use nodes. Consider both current patterns and desired patterns.
- How do the Study Corridors relate to bike corridors? Knowing this may inform solutions.
- Green bike lanes help drivers stay aware of the cyclists.
- The more the City can do to increase bicycle ridership, the more it helps transit run efficiently (fewer cars, more range in access to stops).
- On Ocean Street, there is the opportunity to put in continuous bike lanes. Removed parking could be replaced on side streets at the south end of the corridor, where the ROW is wide enough to accommodate diagonal parking, so there would be no net loss.
- Broadway/Brommer is a good parallel route for Soquel – A lot of the traffic that might have been on Soquel now can go on this route. The non-car travelers can go that way and get off Soquel.

Transit and Rail

- Santa Cruz Metro is about to embark on a system wide realignment of services, possibly with some reduction. The University constitutes 45 percent of ridership. Most routes cross Mission rather than running along it. It doesn't go where we need it to go. Some potential routes might go along Mission from Laurel to Western Drive.
- Soquel is a "transit emphasis" corridor – trying to increase frequencies. Current uses are pretty conducive of ridership, and the General Plan indicates that it will become more so.
- Long term, Metro would like Soquel to be the main growth opportunity, with a 10-15 minute headway.
- Water Street is not as transit-oriented as Soquel. Perhaps transit services can be consolidated.
- Transit runs on Ocean Street, but not past Water Street. Traffic issues on Ocean south of Water make it too hard.
- A major connecting point from Highway 17 and eastbound travel is at Ocean and Water. Metro would like the transfer point to be Ocean and Soquel, but it's hard to get there because of the traffic. Metro would like to work with the City to make some improvements so that they can get the buses down to this intersection (queue jumps, using the shoulder, etc.)
- There was going to be a bus-only lane on Ocean Street – even the merchants agreed to it – but the Tourist Info Center fought it.

- Need more capacity to take bikes on buses. There are three-bike racks on every bus that are full all the time.
- Transit stops that are safe, comfortable and easily accessible are important.
- There are currently conflicts between bikes and buses. Redesign bus stop spacing so they are further apart. This will help prevent leap frogging with bikes.
- Density of both jobs and housing is critical for transit.
- Connections to the potential rail corridor would be fantastic. Regardless of whether the rail transit is on the corridor, there will be a big ped/bike path to connect to.
- Potential train station locations: Natural Bridges, California and Bay, seasonal at the Boardwalk, Downtown at the tracks “Y”, Seabright in some scenarios, 7th Avenue.

Intersections

- “Intersections are abysmal” for pedestrians, especially the free right turn for cars at the intersection of Ocean and Water. Try standing at that tiny pedestrian island and see how safe you feel!
- The Dakota intersection on Ocean Street is dangerous for pedestrians.
- Need a higher number of protected pedestrian crossings, on Ocean Street in particular.
- At the intersections of Soquel/Seabright and Soquel/Branciforte, people dart in and out and create conflicts with buses.
- Walk signals should come on automatically if there is no difference in walk time versus drive time. It’s frustrating and unnecessary to have to push the button every time - it should be the default. Also, tiny walk signal buttons should be replaced with the larger, easier to push variety.
- Consider roundabouts. These would be good on Ocean and Mission. They slow people down, calm traffic. The first one in Santa Cruz is operational at Depot Park. Initially there were some striping problems for bikes, but those have been corrected. Pedestrian movement has been fine. The second one is going in at the Wharf. If roundabouts can be successful there, they can work elsewhere.

PROCESS

The development community expressed frustration at the highly discretionary nature of the development and project approval process. A few suggested that the City “define the box,” or outline a building envelope with a prescribed set of standards that if followed, would bypass the need for discretionary review. Some praised the Planned Development (PD) review process as a good model because it allows good design to be approved, even if standards are not met, while others wanted to see PDs phased out because they allow for “loopholes.” Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- The City sticks to its rules and it's not actually that business friendly. But, it's not that different than other cities in the area.
- The City says it is business friendly, but it's not. It took a year to move someone into an available space on Swift Street.
- Collaboration between departments is important on these development issues. Right now, it is more difficult than it needs to be. It should be a one-stop shop, but there is too much fighting within City Hall.
- There been no implementation of some older plans like the Beach Flats Area Plan. As a result, some are skeptical of the process.
- Don't do master design.
- It's difficult to rent commercial spaces because the fees the City is charging are too high. People would rather go to Scotts Valley where there's more space and lower fees. The cost to locate Downtown is about \$11 per square foot per year. On top of that, the parking permit fees are high - \$25-45 per month in addition to the deficiency fees. You don't want to make it more expensive to be in the best location.
- Traffic impact fees are a big problem.
- Consider what happens in minor moves. One tenant moved across the street and had to pay the fees all over again!

Development Review

- A well-defined zoning envelope is preferable to discretionary review.
- Define a building envelope, with a prescribed set of standards and no discretionary review.
- Seabright neighborhood: If your project fits within the defined building envelope, no hearings or notice would be required, making the development process predictable. This is good, because public processes often reduce density (15 dwelling units to 5 dwelling units, for example).
- Regulating design is not helpful, but instead an excuse for a discretionary process and permit denial. We should regulate performance, not design.
- The City's planning and review process is not working, because there is a disconnect with the real world. It does not allow for changes in the market or different needs/demands.
- While this project is underway, the standards in the existing Zoning Ordinance should be ignored where out-of-date. Instead, project review should be based on the best available info, such as ITE parking standards, and these would be presumed to apply. City planners should defer to newer data.
- Incredibly onerous to build anything – too long, too expensive.

Planned Developments

- Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are sometimes a better way to go.
- Phase out PDs because there should be no loopholes.
- 20,000 square foot minimum lot size for a PD is too high - lower it.
- Golden era of planning and development in Santa Cruz was when the City allowed Planned Development (PDs) under a PD ordinance. This was an enlightened period because the PD ordinance acknowledged that zoning does not always work well. The City then had a process that allowed City planners to approve a good design even if it did not meet the standards.
- PD approvals were previously used only to require good design. Now the process is used to extort money from developers for community benefits and revenues. As a result, now no PDs are coming forward.
- The portion already written for conceptual planned developments could be a useful tool going forward. Take design far enough to know where exceptions are needed. Don't require that projects have to go through design development. Answer all the "how much" questions: square feet, parking, setbacks, height, etc.

CP&R PROJECT

Several stakeholders shared their overarching concerns and suggestions for the CP&R project. One person urged for this project to consider smart growth with equity so that it does not lead to the displacement of lower income residents. Another was concerned that the project's timeline would get dragged out, similar to the General Plan 2030 planning process. Others suggested amendments to the Study Area, such as extending the Mission Street corridor to Natural Bridges where a potential future train stop may be located. Many people asked for the project to make use of visuals, renderings and other graphics to communicate the vision and proposals for this project. Finally, several described the highly active and vocal local community who should be included early on and often in the process in order to gain authentic input and minimize push back. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

- Supportive of corridor emphasis.
- When you make a town pretty, you make it expensive. When we talk about improvements to these corridors, we are talking about displacement. This project should strive for smart growth with equity, so as not to price everyone out.
- Concerned that the General Plan planning process took eight years. Hopefully this project can be done in 18 months.
- Expected zoning to be updated right after the General Plan was adopted.
- The Mission Street Study Area should extend to Natural Bridges because that's where the potential train stop might be located. Also, the university is expanding, and mixed use spaces could be a good fit.
- Concerned that the General Plan set land use boundaries for the Mixed Use Corridors that are too shallow. People were told that the City would come back later and change the

lines, but this hasn't happened. When the City did the Corridor plans, residents raised issues about the land use boundaries again. Again, they were told that it would be dealt with later. Now is the time to address this, or it will be too late. Boundaries are the wrong size. Do we have the right edges?

- Illustrations and graphics will be important to communicate the vision for the corridors.
- The art of this project will be to keep the discussion positive. Use graphics to communicate the positive things about this project: Corridors will be convenient, walkable, pleasant, etc. Help people visualize the proposed changes.
- Have a public discussion illustrated with boards showing before and after drawings of what outcomes will look like with the recommended mixed use zoning standards.
- It is important to test out recommendations on real sites.
- Carefully choose the sites for development prototypes. Tackle some challenging sites as well as some easy ones. Figure out what can be done on a small lot that is typical of many on these corridors.

Public Involvement

- Santa Cruz has a very vocal population. (Example: There was a development proposed on Soquel, where Barrios Unidos was previously located. By people's reactions, you'd think that the proposal was for the Empire State Building.)
- Santa Cruz has an outspoken and somewhat "jaded" population.
- Traffic in the neighborhoods, trucks in the neighborhoods, noise, etc. are key issues for residents.
- Residents want development that they personally can take advantage of – local-serving, not tourist-serving.
- Neighbors are going to push back, so education about the project will be important to remove the fear. People do not like change.
- Santa Cruz has lots of NIMBYs (not in my back yard). People who live next to big commercial corridors need to recognize that they're going to have some impacts based on where their properties are.
- Education of the process needs to take place.
- In order to come up with a productive plan, the planning team should hear what the people have to say.
- Give the neighborhoods notice of the project and get early involvement.
- Recognize the concerns of neighbors.
- Neighbors will provide pushback for this project because they weren't consulted early enough.
- The City has not done a good job of explaining the benefits of various actions it has done and positions it has taken. Some projects have positive aspects, but these are not sold well

to the public. For instance, taller buildings actually block the sound of traffic from Mission. This is a benefit to neighbors, but it was not mentioned or sold to the public that way. Taller, interesting buildings also serve as “side friction”, slowing drivers down. Coupled with good intersection design, this can have a positive effect on traffic calming.

BEST PRACTICES

Participants suggested numerous examples from a wide range of places to look to as best practices for the CP&R project. Specifically, examples of mixed use corridors, urban design, streetscapes, transition zones, parking standards, transportation strategies, and approaches to public involvement were identified. Specific comments from stakeholders on this topic are summarized below:

Mixed Use Corridors, Urban Design and Streetscape

- **Lower 41st Avenue in Santa Cruz** has seen a big renaissance. Could the focus corridors for the CP&R project generate this kind of business attraction or mix of uses?
- **Downtown Santa Cruz** has wide sidewalks with businesses that spill out onto them. People like to spend time there. The pace of traffic is slower, so it’s safer and more comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists. Housing is placed above office or retail on the ground floor. The area attracts a variety of populations and uses.
- The Santa Cruz **Downtown Recovery Plan** involved negotiations with all property owners on every design, every tree well, etc. Listen to people, but don’t waver on principles.
- People like the downtown area. Many would like to see **Pacific Avenue** become a pedestrian mall, but changes need to be incremental.
- **Pacific Avenue at Front Street**: Barry Swenson’s project is a perfect model of mixed use development.
- No other cities come to mind when thinking of examples for this project. I love **Santa Cruz!**
- **Santa Cruz County’s Sustainable Santa Cruz** project for the unincorporated parts of the county plans to increase density, mix land uses, and redesign some streets to be more transit and pedestrian friendly.
- **Healdsburg** has a good scale and easy navigation. It’s very pedestrian-friendly, supporting every-day living for residents with tourism.
- **Davis** and **Sacramento** are good examples to look to for pedestrian friendly design.
- **State Street in Santa Barbara** has a great feeling with a good scale. It is a nice place to visit and shop.
- Look at **Grand Avenue in St. Paul, Minnesota**. It’s a classic corridor with wonderful nodes along the way. It’s not commercial the entire length, because there is not enough demand for retail uses along whole corridor. This is why apartment buildings are important on mixed-use corridors.

- **Birkdale Village in Huntersville, North Carolina** is a great example of a mixed use community with restaurants, stores, cafes, apartments, townhomes and houses. The area now has a strong sense of community in what was a formerly depressed area.
- **Paris** has many examples of appropriate height limits, active gathering places and walkable neighborhoods.
- Basic design ideas are missing. Standards and guidelines about architectural modulation, transparency, etc. are not that useful for architects. Look at **Principles of Urban Retail Planning and Development** by Robert Gibbs.

Transition Zones

- The growth of **San Luis Obispo's** downtown area has not seemed to have had a negative impact on the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Parking

- **Palo Alto** and **Mountain View** provide good examples of off-site parking regulations in their zoning ordinances.
- **San Francisco** and **Portland, Oregon**: Both cities have relaxed parking. However, in Portland, too much apartment building occurred on the Eastside, which changed street character very quickly.

Transportation

- Look at the **Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)** Complete Streets Guidebook.
- Look to **San Francisco's** new "Vision Zero" strategy, which has a goal of zero traffic deaths in the city by 2024. Also, look to multi-modal improvements along **Market Street**.

Public Involvement

- **RTC** has done a great job with public outreach and public engagement by listening to what people want and working with them to get it done.
- **RTC** got a grant from Caltrans to prepare visualizations of station areas. Showing before and after images really helped to communicate the project's vision.

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3 Next Steps

The findings of this report will be shared with the Corridor Advisory Committee, decision-makers, and the Santa Cruz community. Along with input collected from a series of four community workshops, the project website, and several meetings and hearings, ideas and recommendations will directly inform the preparation of the revised zoning regulations for the four study corridors.

Moving forward, draft development and streetscape standards will be prepared, which will be based on a series of technical analyses on development feasibility and prototyping. The draft standards will be presented to the public for review and refined based on feedback from the community, the Advisory Committee, and decision-makers.

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Appendix A: Discussion Questions and Prompts

The interviewees were provided with a brief introduction of the project and the objective of the interviews. They were then asked the below series of questions, which were slightly tailored based on each participants' background, expertise, and/or interests.

1. Talk about how familiar you are with the City's current zoning regulations, and in what capacity. Based on your experience, what is working well or not working well with regards to development(s) or areas that you are familiar with?
2. How effective do you think the City's current zoning regulations are in achieving infill development and higher density housing along the corridors in question?
3. Review the descriptions of the mixed use designations in the General Plan [included on last page of this sheet], for which this project will create the zoning regulations.
 - Are you aware of any particular zoning issues (e.g. height restrictions, use limitations, development requirements) in the existing code that currently affect development in the transit corridors and hinder implementation of what's described for the corridors in the General Plan?
 - When writing zoning regulations to implement these mixed use districts, what should we focus on? Think about development standards (height, setbacks, intensity, etc.), uses, review process, etc.
 - Which of these issues do you think are most significant in terms of their effect on the nature, location, and quality of development and why?
4. Thinking about a specific project or projects with which you are familiar, how did the City's Zoning Regulations affect the outcome?
 - Would different regulations have resulted in "better" projects?
 - If not, what would have made a difference?
5. During the General Plan update process, some residents expressed concerns about how intensification of the corridors would impact adjacent neighborhoods. How could the Zoning Code improve the transition between different uses, and development intensities/densities? Think about transitions between uses along the corridors—where they change use and character—as well as transitions from the corridors to the adjacent neighborhoods or districts (neighborhood compatibility).

6. Think about the corridors relative to each other. How should the new zoning regulations apply differently between them? Are there some places where allowable intensity or uses should differ?
7. Are there any concepts, approaches or standards that have been used in other areas that we should look at as examples?
8. Are there other issues we have not covered that are important for us to consider?

**MIXED USE GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATIONS FROM THE
GENERAL PLAN – *Provided as Reference for Question 3***

Mixed-use Medium Density (MXMD), 0.75 to 1.75 FAR, 10 to 30 du/ac. This designation may be applied to sites along the Ocean Street corridor and the Mission Street corridor between Swift Street and Laurel Street. It accommodates mixed-use development at a scale that is similar to existing buildings along the corridor. The typical commercial uses are similar to those in the Community Commercial (CM) designation, and pedestrian-oriented commercial uses are encouraged on the ground floor.

Mixed-use High Density (MXHD), 1.0 to 2.75 FAR, 10 to 55 du/ac. This designation may be applied to sites along Water Street, and Soquel Avenue corridors. The typical commercial uses are similar to those in the Community Commercial (CM) designation, and pedestrian-oriented commercial uses are encouraged on the ground floor.

The MXHD designation allows a maximum FAR of 1.75 as of right, including a maximum of 30 dwelling units per acre. However, a project that meets a number of specific criteria, as determined by the Planning Commission, may have an FAR of up to 2.75, including up to 55 dwelling units per acre. Details are contained in the Zoning Ordinance.

Mixed-Use Visitor Commercial (MXVC), 1.0 to 2.75 FAR, 0 to 55 du/ac. This designation may be applied to sites along the Ocean Street corridor, as well as sites within 1,000 feet of Ocean Street's centerline and which front on Water Street, Soquel Avenue, May Avenue, or Broadway. The designation is intended to encourage high-quality visitor-serving commercial development along Ocean Street, particularly hotels and motels. However, it also accommodates other multi-story commercial development, such as office buildings.

The MXVC designation allows a maximum FAR of 2.75. It does not allow any dwelling units as of right. However, a project that meets a number of specific criteria, as determined by the Planning Commission, may include up to 55 dwelling units per acre within this FAR. Details are contained in the Zoning Ordinance.

Appendix B: Participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Debbie Bulger	Mission Pedestrian
Carol Canaris	J.R. Parrish
Harry Dong	DBR Properties
Deborah Elston	Santa Cruz Neighbors, Inc.
Erich Friedrich	Santa Cruz Metro
Timerie Gordon	Nielson Studios Architecture & Design
Kathy Graff	Commercial property owner
Trevor Jones	Nielson Studios Architecture & Design
Greg Larson	Neighbor/Former City of Santa Cruz Planning Director
John Lee	Developer
Jacquie Low	Architect
Deborah Marks	Neighbor
Marco Montesclaros	Nielson Studios Architecture & Design
Christian Nielson	Nielson Studios Architecture & Design; Planning Commission
Mark Primack	Planning Commission
Karena Pushnik	Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
Bill Schultz	Builder
John Swift	Developer
Matthew Thompson	Architect

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