

**City of Redwood City General Plan Visioning
Community and Planning Commission Comments
Taft Elementary School - 2/18/04**

The comments below were recorded during the course of discussion. Individual comments were recorded and grouped according to general topics.

Citywide Conditions

- The city's weather, diversity, and schools are all assets.
- The Red Morton recreation center is great (but crowded); Fair Oaks needs more local recreational facilities; for example a teen center, maybe coordinated with a branch library.
- The downtown library, museum, and Lathrop House are all very nice facilities.
- The city's homeless shelters work well, and the city's policies toward the homeless are good.
- The Fair Oaks Neighborhood Association helps with homeless referrals. The police work well too, and the R (?) Family house has been a big help.
- The city's location at mid-peninsula makes it central to Bay Area destinations.
- The city and the neighborhood's proximity to the Bay is wonderful too. But it's underutilized. Friendly Acres is so close, but isolated. The Bayfront's community recreational opportunities need to be much more accessible to the city and this neighborhood.
- We need more affordable senior and rental housing.
- There used to be a municipal transit system with small buses that connected this neighborhood to downtown.
- The General Plan needs regional thinking. How do we share resources and ideas and efforts with our neighbors? We need to bring the county in to help, invite their input, maybe a presentation from them on their plans?
- Redwood City lacks an identity, "Deadwood City," etc. Not to compare with other cities, but an entertainment center (downtown) is the right idea to get things started. Mountain View did this successfully. Downtown's historic buildings are great, and I like the downtown trees too!
- We need shuttles all through the city. SamTrans just doesn't work; it takes 40 min. just to get downtown from here on current bus routes. We need an easier, better way to get everybody around.
- High density housing could support this (i.e., more transit, shuttles, etc.) It's a controversial thing, but it's needed to keep housing affordable. The growth here is internal, not from outside. Our kids have to move away to Modesto and Tracy for affordable housing. High density housing can be extremely attractive (architecturally) these days. It's not at all what it used to look like in the 60's and 70's.
- Who will live here in 10-15 years? We need to have a place for them.
- I would prefer that we solve the transportation issues first ...
- There should be community open space at Bayfront, with publicly-accessible, boats, harbor, etc.

- Streets in town are too car-oriented. They are not pedestrian or bike friendly (25%). They need to be more accommodating.
- I would like to see the latest census figures for Redwood City for comparison, to know what the trends are.

Neighborhood Conditions

- Neighborhood safety is a big concern. For example, there are no logical, safe bike paths around the neighborhood and to downtown.
- The Woodside/Middlefield and Woodside/Broadway intersections are a barrier for the neighborhood.
- The pedestrian crossing signal(s) at Woodside is too short.
- We can't get to the Bayfront from the neighborhood either.
- Bay Road is wide, and seems like it could have bike lanes.
- A pedestrian crossing would be nice at the west side (of the Woodside interchange); a lovely ramped crossover.
- This area is not seen as a vibrant part of Redwood City. Proximity to the (unincorporated) county area is an issue. Clear entrances to City, a clear dividing line, would be good to highlight the neighborhood's identity.
- This area feels physically isolated.
- What about annexing the nearby county areas? We could apply zoning restrictions and other measures to upgrade the area.
- We should (at least) press the county to upgrade their facilities, regulations, etc.
- The nearby Middlefield Road commercial area is a "diamond in the rough." It could be a nice little community commercial district.
- What about a future pedestrian under crossing of US 101?
- The Woodside overpass is Caltrans, and it's hard to work with them on pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Code enforcement needed (in the commercial area) on Middlefield. "Squeaky wheels" need to be squeakier.
- The spanish-only signs could be an issue for business; i.e., bi-lingual signs might help draw more business, not seem an exclusively latino district.
- The street trees on Middlefield are new, must be a county project. Also, some of the businesses have new paint and other improvements. This is encouraging.
- If we get organized, the local community(s) can get lots of things done. For example, it was a group of "soccer moms" who talked Trader Joe's into opening a store in San Carlos. Citizens can do it. We should get a volunteer corps together for neighborhood clean-ups and other community efforts.
- We have a "shadow population" in the city today, with overcrowding of existing houses, on-street parking, etc. The extra units are sort of hidden, people are living in RV's, for example. It is preferable to have legal units for these folks to live in.
- The "R-2" zoning designation with a 7,500 sf lot minimum conflicts with goal of adding second units or building duplexes. Should be go back to the 5,000 sf minimum?

- If we had a shuttle, maybe we could control some of the cars (traffic and on-street parking). Then it might be fine to switch to back to 5,000 sf lots for the R-2.
- The housing market should mirror our local population needs and diversity, with a variety of apartments. It's better to go "up," not real tall, but 2-3 stories maybe. Perhaps we could maintain and provide more open space.
- Duplexes could maintain a nice, tight-knit community, like there is in some neighborhood areas today.
- ... or allow duplex conversions that are more controlled, and limited in total number.
- The City Center project is fabulous, with the residential above and commercial below. This could be a great model for Middlefield Road.
- Is Rollison Road still "out" for apartments? That area is not comparable to Fair Acres, gangs are based there...
- The kids from those apartments on Rollison just need a place to go. There should be facilities in the complexes for classes, study groups, etc.
- What about a neighborhood/community building?
- The PAL building (right next door to Taft) will be a focus for the neighborhood. Hoover Pool has a similar function for the three months that it's open.
- The Fruitvale Transit Village (in Oakland) has 47du's, plus community services, retail, social organizations, a plaza, etc, and is right next to BART. It took 10 years of planning but came out very well.
- What about more open space? Taft is not always open, but when it is it is well used. A small "urban park" is not good, not enough open space; they are too open to traffic, no shade, street people.
- Mid-Point Technology Park has no green space, or no green space that is usable. Maybe if there is some new development there it could include some.
- St. Anthony's, Taft, Hoover School (and park), Garfield are the local open space facilities. It's hard to get to Hoover along the local streets; they are just not "people streets." The streets are straight, no stop signs; they encourage speeding.
- All the schools that have green space are taken on weekends for soccer leagues: Hoover, Garfield, St. Anthony, Fair Oaks. What about converting some of the excess parking areas at these schools to green?
- We should get in-lieu fees from new development to do more parks.
- What about the open space at the end of Woodside Road? What is it? It should have be public access. The existing signs are not good - there is supposed to be public access there.
- We need more open space paths, trails, and similar "quiet" facilities too (i.e., non-sports). A dog park like Burlingame's would be great.
- Local residents perceive Fair Acres, Middlefield Road, the county areas, Fair Oaks, and Redwood Village all as discrete areas. It's not really one big neighborhood.
- Street cleaning is constrained by too many parked cars. The leaves and litter builds up and blocks the storm drains, causing flooding after it rains.
- The local business community needs to be involved in this process.

Downtown and Retail Development

- Entertainment venues downtown is good, but we need to focus on more retail as well. I'm concerned about opening a store in an area that is too entertainment- and visitor-oriented for shopping.
- More range is needed in downtown's businesses, restaurants, and shops. More like San Carlos.
- Downtown is too dark. The trees are too big and block the light. Downtown needs more lighting.
- The city should develop more retail, especially near US 101, to support Redwood City. I'm tired of big box stores, though.
- Redwood City's downtown is twice the size of San Carlos or Burlingame, and it's not the same in a lot of ways. For example, downtown RC is not surrounded by neighborhoods like other downtowns on the peninsula. But, San Carlos did surveys of residents to find out what they wanted to see there and would support. The most support was for restaurants, bakeries, boutiques, etc.
- We need a downtown survey. I personally think there is a demand for a children's and women's clothing stores.
- I don't want to spend my dollars outside Redwood City. I would like see more diversity of shops ethnically.

El Camino Real

- Potholes are real problem in some spots.
- Caltrans is not cooperative in terms of improving the appearance and amenities for the street.
- Nothing along ECR encourages you to stop and look around. Broadway maybe.
- It's scary to open your car doors with cars going by so fast.
- What about taller buildings, with residential over retail?
- In north San Mateo and Burlingame the high density residential frontages are the nicest part of the street. The 1980 Specific Plan has a good vision for El Camino; we should revisit some it's recommendations.
- The Franklin Street Apartments are nice, but you can't see the retail. Also, you don't know where to park, there no signs. I like (the basic residential over commercial) concept a lot. I think that it's good, that height is fine.
- The development in San Mateo with Whole Foods is great. Keep buildings to 4 to 5 stories. City Center is very nice, too. But buildings should not be too tall, for light.
- ECR shows the presence of different neighborhoods. We need to improve pedestrian and bike connections.
- The auto area (near Main/Maple) is ugly, but the creek bit could be really nice. Maybe close some streets there (Maple) to create outdoor open space.

Community Outreach

- We need to incorporate the local latino business community with the rest of City. The Chamber is bringing in 5 to 10 businesses from the area, and we hope to get them involved in our economic development efforts.
- It has been difficult to get the Hispanic parents involved in the school district. But this year word of mouth really did it. That seems to be the best way, neighbor to neighbor.
- How do we reach out to different parts of the community? We need another better way to get to the people we are missing.
- We should pursue more one-on-one individual efforts, house-to-house, "coffees," etc.
- The workshop notice is a bit "dry" in terms of its appeal. We have a bit of a marketing problem here. We need it say things like "Be Heard!" More personal approach, and some color!
- We need to mobilize a small army to get the word out, go to the people directly.
- What about a mailer/questionnaire where we pose hypothetical questions, about parking, streets, rile up the people, etc. We could use the same form as we have here at the workshop.
- A blank form like this doesn't sell ... it needs to have some specific questions or ideas.
- How many people were notified for this meeting? (R) The neighborhood associations for Fair Oaks, Fair Acres, were all contacted through their chairpersons.
- It's a big Catholic neighborhood, and Fat Tuesday is not a good night for attendance, especially for a Latino neighborhood.
- We need to get to them on their turf.
- What about distributing surveys in restaurants, community centers, churches, etc, with some leading questions.