

Neighborhood Councils Respond to New Community Plan

By Paul Rosenberg, Senior Editor

On Sept. 5, Los Angeles city planners presented the Draft San Pedro Community Plan at a meeting of the Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council Land Use Planning and Public Works Committee.

The meeting took place in conjunction with the Northwest and Coastal neighborhood councils.

Committee Chairwoman Sue Castillo spoke with *Random Lengths* about the recommendations her committee made, which were subsequently approved by the neighborhood council

as a whole. Castillo generally sees the plan in a positive light, in need of further tweaking. Representatives of Northwest, however, voiced some more serious concerns, as described below.

Turning to the Central Neighborhood Council's recommendations, the first and broadest one concerned the expansion and further development of the Community Design Overlay (CDO) area.

"The (Community Redevelopment Agency) did a lot of work making things that were built much better coordinated," Castillo said. "Prior to

that, things were built pretty much randomly."

But with the CRA's demise, she doubts that its design guidelines will endure on their own, despite assurances to the contrary.

"I'm worried that that's just going to go away," she said. Consequently, "I look now to the CDO to be the guiding document into the future, at least trying to guarantee that anything that does get built in downtown San Pedro will be an enhancement."

The recommendation has three parts—first that the CDO area "should be expanded to include Gaffey Street north to its intersection with the freeways near Summerland Street;" second that "the City Planning Department should hold a community workshop addressing the detailed planning for our CDO;" and third, that "creation of a street tree plan should be added as a pro-

gram" for the CDO area.

"We have a lot of great urban appeal in downtown San Pedro, but it's fragile, and you need to keep that vision" Castillo said.

It's key not only to reflecting what the community wants for itself, but also to making it attractive as a regional destination, so that downtown develops synergistically along with the waterfront.

As for the street tree plan, this subject has repeatedly arisen in public planning meetings over the past decade. "The trees on Gaffey are awful. There's just a row of palm trees," Castillo said. Which may be just fine for driving by in a Hollywood movie, but have been the source of repeated community complaints throughout the years—they are non-native, and provide little shade, variety or relationship to the built environment—in short, little reason to stop just driving by.

The impact might seem secondary to those urgently concerned about empty buildings, "but that's what we can do now," Castillo points out—not replace all Gaffey's trees all at once, but be-

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Cast Your Two Cents into this Bucket Opinions Sought for Economic Development

By Tami Jackson, Contributing Writer

A penny for your thoughts.

That's what the Port of Los Angeles may be paying, according to the Harbor Community Benefit Foundation (HCBF) and Bay Area Council Economic Institute (BACEI) at two recent town hall meetings in Wilmington and San Pedro.

The two organizations are working together

to inspire more residents and business owners to cast their two cents worth into the collective pool of surveys, so the Port's mitigation funds can ripple out into the most optimal neighborhood communities and programs.

Organizers for this land use study hope to scoop 1,100 surveys out of the San Pedro and Wilmington pool before Oct. 31. The surveys are designed to reveal local trends in employment, economic development, culture and residential real estate values. Planners expect the surveys will help quantify all the negative impact that the port has made on the local demographics so they can better prioritize who and what projects should receive mitigation funds first.

John Haveman, chief economist at Bay Area Council Economic Institute, has been working on analyzing port impacts for more than 10 years. As a speaker at the town hall meeting, he mentioned how the "cranes tower over everything" and showed a slide of a single home that became surrounded by a stockpile of maritime containers and its view completely blocked after the Port expanded into that neighborhood.

According to Haveman, that home was visibly crowded by containers. But other residents of San Pedro and Wilmington are negatively impacted by Port activity in many other significant ways. That's why each survey, one designed for residents and the other for business owners, asks how neighborhoods and business districts in San Pedro and Wilmington have changed relative to the port's aesthetics, air quality, ground vibration, Harbor water quality, incidents of crime, invasive lighting, noise, traffic and whatever else survey-takers identify as a looming problem where they live, work, learn and play.

Probing Questions Make Survey More Valid

Although surveys are filled out anonymously, questions therein ask residents to identify where they live, such as what cross-streets are nearby, relative to the sources of port impact. Questions also inquire of the survey-taker's age, income and education and can be completed in either

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"I'm running for office for Pete's sake, we can't have illegals" September 21 - October 4, 2012

Photo by Mary Sue Roberts

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gin planning a long-term process of coherently shaping a diverse mix, that could take decades to fully realize.

After that, the recommendations largely shift focus to specific items or stretches of streets, starting with Center Street, classified as a "Secondary Highways" between First and Seventh streets—arguably the shortest "highway" in the world. It's not simply a silly designation, it "calls for a 90-foot right-of-way with a 70-foot-wide roadbed," the recommendation notes. This is the direct opposite of what the Central Neighborhood Council has been trying to do, creating a more pedestrian-friendly downtown. Both Center and Mesa should be prioritized for pedestrians, along with the Sixth and Seventh streets, which they interconnect.

Bike prioritization is less developed. It's clear what doesn't work—the plan's current designation of First Street, despite heavy vehicular traffic loads and a narrow right-of-way. The recommendations cite 13th Street is "a practical east-west bicycle route," but an additional route

closer to the downtown core is needed as well.

"I don't think we've had enough input to come up with a good plan," Castillo said.

Zoning on Pacific south of 13th Street and Grand Avenue between Fifth and Ninth streets also drew specific recommendations to encourage and support residential development.

Recommendations also called for inclusion of the Ponte Vista development area in the San Pedro plan, as well as "additional references to the California Coastal Trail," and inclusion of "the 2010 Federal Census statistics for our community demographics."

Northwest President Diana Nave has some more serious concerns, tied to the use of different demographic information in the plan's draft environmental impact report. These issues will be discussed with city planners in the next meeting, scheduled for Sept. 20. Northwest's comments will be finalized after that meeting, Nave told *Random Lengths*.

"What I can say at this point is that the (draft environmental impact report) contains a lot of good mitigation measures however we have a

number of questions and concerns, not the least of which is concern over their use of the 2005 Southern California Association of Governments projections rather than the 2010 census data," Nave said.

"According to the 2005 SCAG estimate there were 82,112 however the 2010 census reported only 76,651. The capacity of the draft plan is 83,354, a potential growth of 1.2 over the SCAG estimate, but 8.74% over 2010 actual population figures. Consequently the use of the 2005 estimate results in fewer potential impacts than if the 2010 data were used."

Nave mentioned one more issue related to potentially under-estimating growth impacts.

"Another overall area of concern is how the plan would be impacted by (Senate Bill) 1818, which allows for density bonuses of up to 35 percent under certain circumstances," she said. "We would like to know the projected impacts on traffic, schools, utilities and public services if SB 1818 density bonuses were incorporated."

Early Success Story

As proof of the land use survey's early success, the Harbor Community Benefit Foundation has already secured \$350,000 from the Port Community Mitigation Trust fund. On Sept. 20, Councilman Joe Buscaino will congratulate four health care facilities, as they receive shares of that allotment.

The four facilities receiving shares of the grant are: Wilmington Health Center, Tzu Chi Community Clinic, Long Beach Alliance For Children With Asthma, and The Children's Center, also in Long Beach.

These grants are intended to provide diagnosis, treatment, medical supplies, education and outreach to help prevent and treat asthma and other cardiopulmonary diseases. The award ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. at the Tzu Chi Community Clinic, 1355 Broad Ave. in Wilmington.

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Spanish or English. According to Haveman, the reason such probing questions are important is because analysts need to guarantee the surveys adequately represent the general demographics of area's larger population.

In addition to allowing individuals to voice their opinions, survey options also include a scale for rating how strongly the respondent feels about a particular topic and that scale ranges from one-to-five, five being most severe irritation of all.

According to Haveman, the Harbor Community Benefit Foundation and Bay Area Council Economic Institute want to dip into the community's bucket of consciousness so badly, "At the end of the survey there is even a section for additional comments and you can always write, 'Please call me. I'd like to talk to you more.'"

Survey Focus: Port Impacts, All Viewpoints

The survey is about the port, and the impact that it has on the larger community.

"We are not interested in (dialoguing about) transient housing and trash in the streets," Haverman said.

To that announcement, a citizen at the meeting argued that truck drivers for the port often

throw trash in the street and conduct their oil changes on the side of the road only to discard their oil in a manner that contaminates the area. So, Haverman clarified that the foundation and the institute are interested in all such port-related complaints, but transient housing is obviously not among them. During the meeting, speakers took turns suggest-

ing they also want to dip into the pool of folks who maintain a very positive mindset and have nothing negative to say about the port. Such survey participants will have the option to skip a particularly probing section of the survey that's designated in the questionnaire.

The survey for businesses is intended to be completed by business owners who are either directly or indirectly related to port activity. If a business owner also happens to be a resident of San Pedro or Wilmington, he or she can fill out both business and residential surveys.

According to Mary Silverstein, executive director for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, \$350,000 in grant monies have already been collected from the port for taking care of Wilmington residents in regards to air quality. Those funds will be formally distributed on Sept. 20 to pre-selected health care facilities and the money will help prevent and address any asthma or cardio-pulmonary problems that citizens might encounter there in Wilmington.

"There will be another round of health care grants going before the board soon," Silverstein said. "The more surveys we get, the more meaningful this land use survey will be."

To take the survey, which requires roughly 10 minutes, one member of each household and/or business, age 18 or older, can simply log-on to: <http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/port-survey/>. Participants are asked to be as specific as possible when answering survey questions because the more details given in the responses, the more accurate will be the study's results.

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...and had he [George Romney] been born of, uh, Mexican parents, I'd have a better shot at winning this."

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