

Community Working Group Workshops - Workshop Summary April 16-18 2019

Transit Oriented Communities (TOC) Strategy Study

With VTA's BART Phase II Transit Oriented Communities Strategy Study (the Study), VTA seeks to build upon existing transportation and land use plans and policies, and provide advanced analysis and recommendations to inform future policy adoption and implementation.

The Study includes three major tasks: Background Conditions; Corridor Opportunities and Constraints; and Implementation Strategies and Tools. The resulting information and proposed strategies will be compiled into a Final Report for each Station Area, which will be available in the Fall of 2019.

Working with the cities of San José and Santa Clara, as well as BART, the approximately 18-month study that began in February 2018 is focusing on feasible and implementable land use strategies and financing tools to maximize transit ridership and Transit-Oriented Development at three future BART Stations (Alum Rock/28th Street Station, Downtown San José Station, and Santa Clara Station) and the corridor between them. The Study will also provide specific recommendations to enhance access to the stations and TOC's in and around the station corridor.

Workshop Introduction

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, April 16th, 17th and 18th 2019, VTA hosted workshops following the ongoing established Community Working Groups (CWGs) to discuss various elements of transit oriented communities and gather input from workshop participants. For each workshop, the focus was the station area corresponding to the appropriate CWG (San José Alum Rock/28th Street, San José Downtown and Santa Clara). The workshop sessions were led by members of the consultant team that includes Perkins+Will (architects and urban designers), Strategic Economics (economists and market analysts), Nelson Nygaard (transportation consultants), and Kimley Horn Associates (access and circulation consultants).

Workshop Purpose

The purpose of the workshops was to provide an opportunity for the consultant team to preview the high-level recommendations for addressing previously identified opportunities and constraints (as discussed in the November 2018 series of workshops) with respect to zoning/land use, placemaking/identity, parking, affordable housing and small business anti-displacement. Participants were encouraged to comment and provide feedback on the recommendations.

Workshop Format

The three workshops lasted approximately ninety minutes each, with slides presented in segments to allow for the introduction of each set of recommendations, followed by group discussion, before moving onto the next topic. The recommendations for achieving successful Transit Oriented Communities are different for each of

the Station Areas, such that the presentation material developed by the consultant team and VTA was unique for each Station Area.

Summary notes from each of the three workshops are included below, in the order the workshops occurred.

Workshop Attendance and Participation

April 16th- Downtown San José Station

- Approximately 30 people (including VTA staff and consultants) participated in the workshop.
- Workshop participants included Downtown CWG members, community members, and technical staff from the City of San José.

April 17th- Alum Rock/28th Street Station

- Approximately 36 people (including VTA staff and consultants) participated in the workshop.
- Workshop participants included Alum Rock/28th Street CWG members, community members, and technical staff from the City of San José.

April 18th- Santa Clara Station

- Approximately 32 people (including VTA staff and consultants) participated in the workshop.
- Workshop participants included Santa Clara CWG members, community members, and technical staff from the City of Santa Clara.

Summary of Breakout Discussions

Downtown Station – April 16, 2018

Participants were generally supportive of the VTA/consultant team recommendations for addressing opportunities and constraints in order to ensure good Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in the Station Area, subject to the following observations and discussion points;

Zoning and land use

- Consultant team confirmed the reports will include recommendations for minimum density requirements in each Station Area sub-zone, with the highest densities recommended closest to the station.
- How do the recently established Federal Opportunity Zones factor into the Study? Consultant team confirmed they are tracking this recent development and anticipated that the overlay of the Opportunity Zone was more likely to encourage development to occur rather than have specific impacts on zoning requirements.
- The primary differences from current zoning requirements that this study will recommend relate to minimum densities, lower parking ratios, more residential units and commercial development more concentrated near the station.

- City of San José (CSJ) staff noted that the boundaries of this study differ slightly from the Urban Village and other planning area boundaries, making a direct comparison with existing requirements and goals difficult. CSJ is awaiting confirmation of the recommendations of this study prior to assessing if and how to implement them.
- The tension between possibly getting higher density development by waiting for improved market conditions versus missing current opportunities was discussed. Consultant team confirmed that the need to 'act now' is more geared to getting the right policies in place rather than expecting development to happen immediately. Ongoing simultaneous BART construction and private development at the Milpitas BART Station was noted as successful and desirable.
- Could the VTA Block (bounded by Santa Clara, Market, St. John and First Streets) be developed with a ground-floor sports and entertainment theme, similar to LA Live?
- How will the recommendations of the study compare with Senate Bill 50 (SB50) if passed? The consultant team confirmed that the minimum densities being recommended by the Study would be higher than the SB50 requirements.

Parking

- There is a risk that unrestricted on-street parking could be used for overspill parking to adjacent neighborhoods. The implementation of a Parking District with Residential Parking Permits will be necessary to address this.
- It is better to optimize existing parking supply before building any more.
- Reduced parking ratios can be justified with the implementation of transportation demand management (TDM) measures that encourage the use of transit, walking, and biking over private automobile use.
- CSJ staff noted parking standards are currently applied within the Urban Village frameworks; these boundaries may have to be adjusted to accommodate reduced ratio recommendations.
- Despite the results of the survey, which showed underutilized parking spaces in the streets surrounding the Downtown Station, it was noted that Sobrato and San José State University are both currently increasing supply by building more parking structures.
- CSJ staff noted the need to confirm that the proposed lower parking ratios are fully aligned with their 'Climate Smart' Initiative.
- The Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP) is also looking at shared parking strategies. Coordination between the TOCs Strategy Study and the DSAP is crucial due to proximity between station and overlap in station areas.

Affordable housing

- Proposed recommendations; how can VTA help with implementation? CSJ's current commitment of \$10 million to facilitate new affordable housing can only go so far. VTA can help as an agency partner and as a landowner within the Station Area. VTA will commit to on-site affordable within its own residential developments.
- The need to find the right balance between encouraging more market-rate development to go ahead with the requirement for inclusionary affordable units (or in-lieu payments) was noted.
- CSJ staff noted that City Council will be considering removing the current exemption that waives the requirement for high-rises to provide on-site affordable housing.

Placemaking

- Attendees agreed the seamless transition from street to station plaza to station entrance is desirable.
- Retail spaces around the station plaza should be reserved for small and local businesses.
- How are bicycles and e-scooters integrated into the seamless environment?
- Separation of bicycles and pedestrians is a necessity for the safety of both. The BART representative noted that the ambitious BART bicycle parking policies will be implemented.
- BART foot-traffic is a precious commodity that should be recognized when locating active ground floor uses.
- The station entrance and plaza will become a new Downtown 'hub' within the wider context of other 'hubs', such as SoFA district, CSJU, San Pedro Square. Proposals should include the activation of the connections between these 'hubs'. People will walk more than the referenced half-mile radius and bike more than the one-mile radius if the streetscapes are well designed and comfortable.

General comment

- Short (2 to 4 minute) videos are much better than written material for disseminating information about the study with the community.

Alum Rock/28th Street Station – April 17, 2018

Participants were generally supportive of the VTA/consultant team recommendations for addressing opportunities and constraints in order to ensure good TOD in the Station Area, subject to the following observations and discussion points;

Zoning and land-use

- We need to ensure that any adjustments to the Urban Village land-use and density policies can be implemented quickly and simply by revisions to land-use definitions rather than costly rezoning procedures.
- Relaxed requirement for commercial FAR should not eliminate the requirement for some ground floor retail space. The consultant team confirmed that the study's recommendations will focused on the provision of retail spaces that are more aligned with the needs of small and local businesses.
- BART Warm Springs/South Fremont Station is experiencing significant residential development but there is very little employment-focused growth. The BART representative noted that the surface parking lots adjacent to the station are being reserved for higher density commercial development when market conditions are favorable.
- CSJ staff noted that City Council will be considering adjustments to the Urban Villages plans to allow residential development to occur prior to BART funding and construction.
- Height limit recommendations will recognize sensitivity to Five Wounds Church and single-family residential neighborhoods by requiring new development to step down in transition zones.
- Community members inquired as to when CSJ may be able to commence the next Urban Village Plan to include the area east of Little Portugal.

Parking

- Could spaces in the BART commuter-parking garage be shared with TOD? VTA staff noted that VTA is looking at opportunities for shared parking that will reduce total parking requirement. The currently approved BART parking requirement of 1,200 spaces. This has been analyzed through the environmental process based on VTA's travel demand model.
- VTA staff noted the ten-acre station site owned by VTA is sufficiently large for the station, commuter parking and good TOD.
- Safe street design with an emphasis on pedestrian safety is necessary to deal with the BART commuter traffic at peak travel times.
- Current community perception is that there is already a shortage of parking. Although the neighborhood is generally low density (single-family homes), there are multiple families and multiple vehicles in many households.
- Residential Parking Permits will be necessary to discourage commuter parking on City streets. How to prevent people using scooters to get to vehicles parked just beyond the boundaries of the permit zones?
- The impact of autonomous vehicles is still under review and not yet conclusive. If autonomous vehicles simply replace driver vehicles, there will not be any positive impacts in terms of the number of vehicles on the road. The real benefit of autonomous vehicles, as it relates to vehicular traffic, comes when they are used as a shared resource.

- Any measures to improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity from east of US 101 should have a benefit in reducing parking demand.

Affordable housing

- Two out of every three new units in this station area are affordable. However, these are displacing small businesses because they are replacing single-story strip malls but are not including appropriate new retail spaces on the ground floor.
- Commercial space should be concentrated in 'Main Street'-type locations, not required everywhere.
- CSJ staff noted challenge of providing preference for existing local residents due to Fair Housing laws. CSJ is looking into possibility of designating some deed-restricted units.
- The affordable housing that is being developed does not include units for extremely low income. A more balanced mix is needed.

Small business anti-displacement

- Use small business policies to promote cultural identity and avoid gentrification by requiring culturally sensitive development.
- Infrastructure improvements should be planned ahead to anticipate the needs of small businesses.
- Parking requirements must be included in the small business anti-displacement strategy.
- A food court would be welcome, but it would need a strong non-profit management entity.
- Too many small businesses currently close early; with the advent of BART and good TOD, more businesses should be required to stay open into the evening hours to better serve the surrounding community.

Santa Clara Station – April 18, 2018

Participants were generally supportive of the VTA/consultant team recommendations for addressing opportunities and constraints in order to ensure good TOD in the Station Area, subject to the following observations and discussion points;

Zoning and land-use

- Residential uses are not suitable on the opportunity sites northeast of Coleman Avenue due to proximity to the airport.

- Current maximum densities in the City of Santa Clara (CSC) general Plan (GP) are 90 dwelling units per acre. The introduction of recommended minimum and higher maximum densities would best be achieved with the preparation of a Specific Plan for the Station Area.
- Developers say that Type 1 construction (steel frame, taller buildings) is not economically viable. It was noted that the proposed Gateway Crossings project includes a 13 story Type 1 building. Furthermore, reserving properties nearer the station for future development by requiring higher minimum densities allows for changing market conditions that will be more favorable to Type 1 construction costs.
- Residential growth should be viewed within the larger regional context currently being studied by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).
- CSC uses Floor Area Ratio (FAR) metrics for commercial development, especially for properties along El Camino Real.
- The imbalance between CSJ and CSC was noted; CSJ has 0.8 jobs per resident, CSC has 1.3 jobs per resident. This puts an unfair financial burden on CSJ, which is trying to retain tax-generating land uses. It was noted that residential densities above a certain threshold (approx. 55 dwelling units/acre) are also tax generating.
- Much of the available land within the station area is in CSJ; how best to ensure highest and best use for good TOD? VTA representatives confirmed that the properties owned by VTA will be developed to their maximum potential, including looking into the potential for development over the Newhall maintenance facility.

Parking

- The risk of reducing or eliminating residential parking requirements on adjacent neighborhoods can be addressed with a Residential Parking Permit policy and the introduction of travel demand management (TDM) measures for new developments. The use of TDMs has been shown to reduce parking demand by as much as 50%.
- A district parking approach with shared supply would help mitigate the concerns of retail businesses about their need for convenient parking. Redwood City's 'Park Once' program is a good example of how one parking place can be used for multiple trips on foot.
- VTA confirmed that they are researching dynamic pricing for Phase II of the BART extension. This could help free up shared spaces for retail and restaurants on evenings and weekends.
- Strategies for replacing temporary parking or repurposing parking structures should be included in phasing recommendations.
- Reduction of parking and driving for Santa Clara University (SCU) needs to be geared more towards faculty and staff rather than students, who generally do not drive to the campus.

Placemaking and identity

- Proposed streetscape improvements address bicycles and pedestrians; are there other mobility initiatives such as a motorized trolley that should be considered? This could connect Downtown, the BART station Area and SCU and help with 'aging in place'.
- Exiting pedestrian undercrossing below the railroad tracks is perceived as a safety issue. Will a wider or second tunnel be needed to accommodate increased ridership with BART service? Additional foot-traffic from Gateway Crossings, when built and occupied, will help alleviate safety perceptions.
- El Camino Real is still a major barrier to non-auto mobility. Is it possible to depress this section into a tunnel, so that Benton and Franklin Streets could connect across to the Station? This could be an art and gateway opportunity.
- Preserve heritage and culture within the Old Quad area but the new development around the station should include iconic designs, not more pastiche.
- Avaya stadium is not in use very often. Is there an opportunity to increase the number of events and create a pleasant walkway from the station to the stadium?
- Franklin Street represents the 'Town and Gown' interface and could become more of an art corridor and stronger connections to Downtown.
- Retail businesses on El Camino Real are unlikely to compete with historic downtown businesses; the environment will attract different kinds of retail offers.

Affordable housing

- Are affordable housing requirement affecting the overall feasibility of development, especially with construction costs increasing rapidly?
- The community should see benefits of increasing land values through reinvestment into the station area.
- Primary community concerns are related to traffic, not affordable housing.
- The older supply of affordable housing is not in great condition. Replacement with newer, higher density will improve living conditions and increase supply.
- There is not much tension between CSU students and the community over affordable housing; the areas of conflict are related more to different lifestyles. Densification around the station should help alleviate this conflict.
- Young professionals are more willing to live in micro-units and/or dorm-style units. The study should recommend more of these types of units for the Station Area.
- Senate Bill 50, if passed, will also include provisions for anti-displacement. These will not be in conflict with the recommendations of this study.