#### 5 COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

The City of Santa Cruz held its Community Design Workshop for the General Plan 2025 on Saturday, September 16, 2006. The workshop, which was hosted by the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), gave community members an opportunity to decide how they would like Santa Cruz's natural character and built form to change during the next 20 years. About 100 community members attended the workshop, which took place at the Gault Elementary School on Seabright Avenue.

The workshop had the following key objectives:

- ♦ Describe Santa Cruz's existing community character
- Create desired outcomes to reinforce and enhance the city's character
- Decide what improvements are best for different parts of the city

The City worked with Design, Community & Environment (DC&E) to prepare and present the workshop. Appendix A shows the slide presentation that was given at the workshop.

### A. What Keeps You in Santa Cruz?

After introductions by GPAC Chair Don Lane, Planning Director Greg Larson and Senior Planner Michelle King, followed by an overview of the General Plan 2025 process, DC&E's David Early began the workshop by asking participants a question: "What are the physical attributes of Santa Cruz that brought you here, or keep you here?" Participants called out their responses, which were written on large pads of paper at the front of the room.

The responses showed that community members value Santa Cruz for its diversity; they like its "small-town character" and "unique neighborhoods," but they also enjoy having a "real downtown" and "access to a bit of everything." Participants also cited Santa Cruz's natural amenities, including its climate, beaches, parks, open spaces and wildlife. A complete list of responses, including those that are not directly related to physical form, appears in Appendix B.

# B. Background Presentation

DC&E's David Early and Jeff Williams gave a presentation describing Santa Cruz's existing community character. The presentation was designed to give workshop participants a shared understanding of the city and of several technical concepts related to community character, so that participants could draw from this shared understanding in their small-group discussions. During the presentation, David and Jeff asked the participants to think about whether the examples being shown suggested ideas for improving Santa Cruz's character, or whether they illustrated positive ideas that could inform the city's future conservation and development.

During the presentation, David introduced the concept of "community design" to participants. As David explained, community design includes the city's setting and natural environment, along with elements of its built environment such as buildings and streets. These natural and built elements work together to create Santa Cruz's overall "community character," or its unique look and feel.

The presentation also explained key aspects of DC&E's background research, especially the Community Design Focus Areas that are identified and described in Chapter 2 of this report. The complete background presentation is included within Appendix A.

### C. Group Exercise: Citywide Desired Outcomes

David Early facilitated a large-group exercise in which workshop participants were asked to describe the changes and improvements they wanted to see in Santa Cruz in the future. Participants' suggestions were recorded in one of the following categories:

- Built Features. Ideas for Santa Cruz's built form.
- ◆ Natural Features. Ideas for Santa Cruz's coastline, open spaces and other natural amenities.

- Neighborhoods, Districts, Corridors and Precincts. Ideas for enhancing specific neighborhoods, districts, corridors or precincts, or for generally enhancing all of the Focus Areas in any one of these categories.
- Other Topics. Ideas that are not directly related to community design, or that do not fit in any other category.

After participants suggested their desired outcomes, each participant received six colored dots, which they used to "vote" for the outcomes that were most important to them. They also received response cards, on which they could write specific ideas for achieving any one of these desired outcomes.

The following ten desired outcomes received the highest ratings from participants:

- ♦ Riverwalk with shops/restaurants near the San Lorenzo River: 37 votes
- ♦ Higher density housing near transit and along corridors: 23 votes
- ◆ Infill development/renovation on Ocean/Water/Soquel Streets: 19 votes
- ♦ Personal Rapid Transit (PRT): 18 votes
- ♦ Close Pacific Avenue to vehicle access: 18 votes
- ♦ Prohibit high impact development near residential areas: 17 votes
- ♦ Dense mixed use downtown (south of Laurel/Front Street): 16 votes
- ♦ High density around employment/mass transit: 13 votes
- ♦ Fruit trees/greening of corridors: 13 votes
- ♦ Planning for mass transit: 13 votes

All of the desired outcomes and their rankings, along with the specific ideas for achieving these outcomes, are listed in Appendix C. In addition, Appendix D lists the desired outcomes that were identified by GPAC members at their September 14 meeting, when they participated in a preview of the large-group exercise.

#### COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

# D. Small-Group Exercise: Focus Area Outcomes

After a short break, participants gathered in small groups to discuss the community character of specific areas in Santa Cruz. Each participant chose two of the following areas to discuss:

- ◆ Downtown and Beach. Includes commercial and residential areas of Downtown Santa Cruz, as well as the Beach Flats and Boardwalk areas.
- ◆ Upper Westside. Includes the Mission Street Corridor, as well as all parts of the city that are north of this corridor and west of the San Lorenzo River.
- ◆ Lower Westside. Includes the Mission Street Corridor, as well as parts of the city that are south of this corridor and west of the Downtown and Beach area.
- Upper Eastside. Includes the Soquel Avenue and Water Street corridors, as well as parts of the city that are north of the Soquel Avenue Corridor and east of the San Lorenzo River.
- ◆ Lower Eastside. Includes the Soquel Avenue and Water Street corridors, as well as parts of the city that are south of the Water Street Corridor and east of the San Lorenzo River.

The small-group exercise took place in two parts. During Part A, participants discussed one of the two areas they had selected; for Part B, they switched groups to discuss the second area. A City staff member or trained facilitator worked with each group, along with a GPAC member to act as the group's notetaker.

Facilitators asked their groups to consider the following questions:

• Are there places where new development should have a different character from what currently exists? What should the new character of those places be, and how could new development create that character?

- Are there places where new development should reinforce the existing community character? What makes the existing character special, and how could new development reinforce that character?
- Are there places that would benefit from improvements to public spaces, including streets, parks and other civic spaces? What should those improvements be?
- Are there any topics we haven't discussed that you would like to talk about?

The summaries that follow describe points of agreement and common threads among the small groups, as well as important conflicts or disagreements among participants. Appendix E shows the map drawn by each group, as well as a complete record of each group's notes.

# 1. Downtown and Beach

The five Downtown and Beach groups emphasized the Downtown commercial area, especially Pacific Avenue, as an important gathering place and center of activity. Participants said that they would like to have more places Downtown where people can meet and spend time together, including both public spaces, such as plazas, and private spaces, such as cafés. They also suggested finding ways to encourage more activity in Downtown at night. The weekly farmers' market on Cedar Street was specifically praised by several participants, although at least one group also suggested that it could be moved to Depot Park.

Participants said that they enjoy the existing character of Downtown and want new buildings to have high-quality design that reflects that character. Most people agreed that Front Street's parking lots should be augmented or replaced by new buildings that connect the street with other parts of Downtown. They said that new development should provide space for retail businesses that serve not just tourists, but residents as well.

There was widespread agreement that Downtown should have stronger connections to the San Lorenzo River. Participants also called for enhanced con-

nections between Downtown and the Santa Cruz Beach, especially for pedestrians. Several groups suggested that this connection could be created in part by enhancing the character of Lower Pacific Avenue; ideas for enhancing the street included denser development, fewer parking lots and a "green mixed-use" area.

Several groups also proposed a new conference center located near the Beach and Boardwalk. Participants suggested multiple locations for the conference center, all of which are currently occupied by surface parking lots.

Although participants applauded the pedestrian-friendly atmosphere of Pacific Avenue, they often disagreed about how to balance cars with other modes of transportation. Some people felt that improved bicycle networks, a trolley line or a personal rapid transit (PRT) system should be the primary alternative to walking in the Downtown and Beach area. Others called for additional parking on Front Street. On Pacific Avenue, some felt it was important to retain vehicle access, but others said it should be closed to vehicle traffic entirely, or on a specific day of the week.

Participants had fewer suggestions for the residential neighborhoods in the Downtown and Beach area. Most wanted the historic residential neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown to be preserved as they are. In Beach Flats, groups proposed various measures to enhance the area's character, including undergrounding of overhead utilities, a new public space, a special "gateway" treatment and improvements that reflect the neighborhood's Latino culture.

#### 2. Upper Westside

Participants in the two Upper Westside groups were especially concerned with traffic and transportation issues in residential areas. In particular, many people said that the UCSC campus creates increased traffic and parking conflicts in the neighborhoods below campus. Both groups suggested offsite parking lots near Highway 1 or Highway 9 that provide shuttle service to UCSC, and potentially to tourist destinations as well. There was also strong support for a personal rapid transit (PRT) system that would take people di-

rectly to campus. In addition, many participants called for new bicycle lanes on major corridors and in other locations, especially places that would increase east-west connections for bicyclists. Several groups said that bicycle and pedestrian traffic should be kept separate. There was also some interest in providing bicycle lifts on steeply-sloped streets, such as Miramar Drive.

While both groups also discussed the appropriate density for new residential development, they did not arrive at a consensus. Some participants said that residential densities should increase in the Upper Westside in order to provide student housing near campus, or to make the area's development patterns more sustainable. Others wanted to maintain the existing residential densities by limiting the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in many locations.

Finally, many participants felt that new development on Mission Street should have a different character than most existing development. They called for new buildings that are close to the street's edge, rather than set back far from the street. Some participants felt that high-density housing would be appropriate, and one group called for transit improvements. Also, the groups suggested public improvements to improve Mission Street's character, such as undergrounding of utilities and new street trees.

# 3. Lower Westside

The three groups that discussed the Lower Westside were especially interested in the area's parks and open space. Participants generally agreed that the area's green spaces should be better connected to one another and that more access should be provided to natural open spaces, especially Antonelli Pond. One group suggested that the pond could serve as a demonstration site for creative policies to manage the city's watershed. Several participants said that the city would benefit from having greater control over Lighthouse Field, so that maintenance could be improved and new amenities, including restrooms, could be provided. Also, many participants called for more community gardens and for new open spaces that support active recreation, such as sports fields.

In the Lower Westside's residential neighborhoods, participants agreed that new development should reflect the area's existing character. Several people mentioned West Cliff Drive as an area that needs special attention to this issue.

In the Westside Industrial District, some participants said that while new development should provide space for industrial uses, those uses could occur in mixed-use buildings that include residential units on upper floors. However, some felt the area should be reserved for industrial uses. Other ideas for the Westside Industrial District included community gardens, sports fields and height limits on new development.

The groups also suggested planting street trees and improving the condition of sidewalks throughout the Lower Westside, as well as creating new bicycle lanes that would improve connectivity for bicyclists. Participants urged the City to balance the needs of bicyclists with those of pedestrians, especially on West Cliff Drive.

On Mission Street, participants recommended using street trees and enhanced crossings to encourage pedestrian activity. They also said that the design of new buildings should include features that create a transition to the scale of the surrounding neighborhoods. The groups did not form a consensus about whether mixed-use development was appropriate on Mission Street, or whether the street should include bicycle lanes.

#### 4. Upper Eastside

The two Upper Eastside groups focused many of their comments on the Soquel Avenue, Water Street and Ocean Street corridors. There was a broad consensus that all of these corridors could use streetscape improvements to improve their appearance, especially street trees. Several people cited Morrissey Avenue's palm trees as a streetscape treatment that they found pleasing. Participants also called for more nodes of increased activity along the corridors, similar to the existing node at the intersection of Soquel Avenue and Seabright Avenue. Some people suggested that Soquel Avenue and Water

Street would be appropriate locations for mixed-use development that enhances the character of these corridors. Also, participants suggested improvements to the intersection of Soquel Avenue and Water Street, which they described as confusing; these improvements could include signage that describes the history of the Villa de Branciforte.

Both groups were especially interested in enhancing the Upper Eastside's parks and natural amenities. Participants suggested restoring Branciforte Creek to a more natural condition, and they proposed a trail along Carbonera Creek and improved connections to the San Lorenzo River. They also said that the area's parks, especially San Lorenzo Park, should have better lighting to improve safety and encourage people to use them.

Although most people said they like the existing character of the area's residential neighborhoods, they also called for sidewalks and street trees to be provided consistently throughout the Upper Eastside. Participants also noted that Prospect Heights is somewhat isolated by a lack of connections across Highway 1 and suggested that the neighborhood would benefit from more shops, services and neighborhood parks, and even a pedestrian bridge linking Prospect Heights to the Banana Belt.

#### 5. Lower Eastside

Many of the concerns raised by the three Lower Eastside groups were related to the density of new residential development. Participants generally agreed that high-density infill development is incompatible with the existing character of many parts of Seabright. Some people, though not all, thought that higher residential densities would be acceptable at the edges of the Seabright neighborhoods, near major corridors. A few groups called for improved development standards that would do more to prevent new buildings from obstructing their neighbors' access to sunlight and views.

Improved walkability was also a frequent topic of discussion. Participants called for more street trees and landscaping on neighborhood streets, as well as new pocket parks or community gardens that would create more destina-

# CITY OF SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY DESIGN BACKGROUND REPORT COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOP

tions for pedestrians. They also wanted to see improved connections to the coast, such as better signage or an enhanced "coast walk." Some groups suggested using traffic calming measures to slow down traffic and discourage cutthrough traffic, which could improve pedestrian safety. In addition, several groups suggested improving the Murray Street bridge to better serve pedestrians and bicyclists.

Several groups also felt that key nodes of activity, such as the intersection of Seabright Avenue and Murray Street, should be marked by unique, neighborhood-serving businesses. Participants were especially interested in seeing small businesses at these locations.