

**Western Avenue Vision Plan
Vision Committee Meeting**

**Tuesday, November 11, 2012
Coco's Bakery Restaurant
28300 S. Western Avenue
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275**

AGENDA

1. Project update
2. Analysis and Ideas
 - a. Three segments
 - b. Transit opportunities
 - c. Bicycle infrastructure
 - d. Signage and branding
3. Open Discussion

VISION COMMITTEE CHARGE

- » Represent the broader community and stakeholders in the Western Avenue planning process.
- » Help to identify opportunities, issues, and challenges to address in the planning process.
- » Provide feedback on research conclusions and planning concepts to the project team.
- » Serve as advocates of the process, assist with publicizing community involvement opportunities, and attend workshops.
- » Work cooperatively with other Vision Committee members, listening and considering different perspectives.
- » Participate in Vision Committee meetings.

**Western Avenue Vision Plan
Vision Committee
Meeting Summary**

Vision Committee Members:

Present:

Carolyn Lehr (City Manager, City of Rancho Palos Verdes)
Crystal Killian (Los Angeles Department of Transportation)
Eileen Hupp (Palos Verdes Chamber of Commerce)
Jacob Haik (Council District 15)
Jeanne Lacombe (Rolling Hills Riviera HOA)
Joe Rich (Property owner)
John McCowan (Rolling Hills Riviera HOA)
John Mavar (Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council)
John Papadakis (RPV business owner and resident)

Absent:

Anthony Misetich (Mayor of Rancho Palos Verdes)
Alison Becker (Council District 15)
Allen Bond (RPV business professional and resident)
Debbie Lawrence (Los Angeles City Planning)
Yunus Ghausi (Caltrans)

Project Team:

Eduardo Schonborn (City of Rancho Palos Verdes)
Joel Rojas (City of Rancho Palos Verdes)
Gaurav Srivastava (Project Manager, AECOM)
Ana Nolan (Community Outreach Specialist, AECOM)

Proceedings:

- I. Project Update by Gaurav Srivastava
 - a. Review of guiding principles and aspirations (Cross-refer to Appendix A). These principles look at:
 - i. Addressing the needs of locals
 - ii. Making economic development a priority
 - iii. Improving the experience long Western through additional landscape and vegetation
 - iv. Public realm improvements
 - v. Exploring joint marketing and other partnership opportunities with adjacent communities
 - vi. Recognizing the need to create a greater amount of amenities for residents and business owners
 - b. Today's meeting includes presentation of the analysis to date and exploration of possible improvements
 - i. Initial ideas are meant to be provocative and are designed to get committee feedback

- ii. The goal is to bracket the complete range of possibilities along Western Ave. and then work with the committee to determine realistic possibilities to present to the greater community
- II. Presentation (Cross-refer to Appendix B)
 - a. The study area is a 2.5 mile straight stretch, approximately a 45 minute walk
 - b. Study area comprises three distinct segments – each with contrasting patterns of use and street character (northern, middle and southern segments). Ideas and explorations were organized around these segments.
 - c. Analysis includes the following data (data may be 2-3 years old so committee members should keep in mind that it may not be completely accurate):
 - i. Demographic and potential capture audience studies of retail areas
 - ii. Parcel information, including turn-over rates and historic development information
 - iii. Business data, numbers of employees
 - iv. Developed square footage along the corridor
 - v. Parking inventory
 - d. The analysis included grouping uses together and it was found that commercial uses are clustered in three areas:
 - i. The “center of gravity” is at the southern end of Western Ave. (Summerland to Caddington) characterized by retail located on both sides of street
 - ii. The second cluster, the middle segment, (Caddington to Montgomery) has retail on one side of the street and residential on the other
 - iii. The third area, the northern section, has no commercial uses at all. It is home to the cemetery and defense uses, in perpetuity.
 - 1. Northern segment will most likely remain an auto-oriented
 - e. Elements with the potential to tie the segments together include:
 - i. Median and how it is treated
 - ii. Biking and bike lane infrastructure and how they are approached
 - iii. Signage and public realm (such as sidewalks, landscape, street trees and street furniture, lighting)
 - f. Review of northern segment
 - i. Characterized by no retail and no visitor destinations
 - ii. Across from cemetery there are opportunities to explore public art amenities or experiences
 - 1. Daytime and nighttime monumental experience opportunities
 - 2. Possibility of combining public art with green infrastructure
 - g. Review of middle segment
 - i. Characterized by blank walls (along the backs of homes) on east side and malls and surface parking along the west side
 - ii. Sketches within the presentation demonstrate the possibility of rethinking how the current configuration could reverse the experience by bringing more activity along the edge of the street
 - iii. Ideas include:
 - 1. Backyard decks and entries with direct pedestrian access off Western Avenue
 - 2. Softening the edge. Replacing cinder block walls with a picket fence, for example
 - 3. Creating granny flats incentivized by the City

- a. The city could buy a parcel, strategically located at the end of a street and along Western and punch through with a pedestrian connection
- h. Review of southern segment
 - i. Characterized by retail on both sides of the street. These three blocks are what people imagine when they think of Western Ave.
 - ii. The need for surface parking used to be a priority. However, best urban design practices believe that surface parking located as the street edge is a disservice to the pedestrian environment.
 - iii. The Terraces site should be considered a significant development opportunity
 - 1. 10-acre parcel (similar to the Americana and Grove)
 - 2. The Terraces could serve as an anchor for the southern segment
 - 3. The design could be a wholesale redevelopment or a less dramatic rehab of existing structure (use and work with what currently exists)
 - 4. One idea is to rehabilitate and reconfigure the site with activity-generating uses at ground level and parking in back
 - iv. Streets that have gone through the same rehab/renovation include:
 - 1. Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood
 - 2. Brand Blvd., Glendale (this street is still in transition)
 - 3. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena
 - 4. Sunset Strip (This is similar to Western because it deals with a bluff on one side of the street and potential issues with sight lines and view. The solution to this along Sunset was developing low-scale retail.)
 - 5. Ventura Blvd., San Fernando Valley (Includes a grand gateway, which could be an idea for the northern end of the study area.)
 - 6. Pine Ave., Long Beach (This area is dramatically different to the conditions along Western Ave. If this is what the committee would like to see, then they need to recognize that a lot will have to change, incrementally and over time.)
 - a. The committee and the community must ask themselves if they are comfortable going through all of that changes that would be necessary for this transformation
- i. Contextual signage challenge
 - i. Each segment has its own identity
 - ii. The question is whether to tap into each identity vs. creating one, new identity
 - iii. Western Ave. has many communities that see themselves very differently. Question is how to combine these identities and create something new and different
 - iv. More recently, as boulevards try to create new identities, they draw from a contemporary stylistic family as opposed to drawing from the past.
- j. Review of Bicycle Infrastructure
 - i. Cyclists want to loop around along Western Ave. because of its amenities
- k. Review of transit issues and ideas to create better transit connections
 - i. Possible Green Line (light rail transit) spur down Western Ave.
 - ii. Existing bus rapid could extend down Western Ave. to the study area
 - 1. Questions were raised regarding the safety along a bus line going all the way up and down Western
 - iii. Western Ave. as a bike corridor

- iv. Local idea #1: Revision of local transit options (DASH service). Frequency of PVPTA bus service (which are very infrequent) could be explored
- v. Local idea #2: Revise local transit stations so that no resident would have to walk more than 5 minutes to get to a local transit stop

III. Open Discussion

John Papadakis

- Priority must be outside-in. The needs of residents are better served if there is strong economic development
- Consider the historical perspective – what is being interpreted for the future is what used to make Western meaningful in the first place
- The identity of the entire area must improve to create attractability. The same thing has happened along the waterfront in San Pedro.

Jeanne Lacombe

- What is the overall budget?
- To grow ideas, you must look at area that you are building in, and understand that there are only certain levels of ideas that can be presented as feasible
- Different places require different budget parameters
- It is better to have a ballpark idea for budget and throw out ideas that are appropriate to that sum

Response:

- There was agreement that there needs to be fiscal responsibility, however, the goal is to explore ideas, develop a plan and then look for funding sources
- Recommended that the budget be put aside for now
- It is understood that the more grand ideas will be more expensive. The group should review all ideas and give feedback about what ideas are appropriate
- The Vision Study is to create a vision and parameters for development and developers
- Once there is a vision, that vision can be marketed to attract companies
- The ideas will get implemented over time when developers are obligated to build to the vision and principles that have been adopted
- Creating the vision will show people that the city is serious about redevelopment

Jeanne Lacombe

- Consider breaking up the plan into phases and small improvements that could happen immediately, such as:
 - Bike lane and parking stripes
 - Landscaping along existing medians
 - Resident wall rehab – If this were to happen, residents might be more willing to make improvements on their properties.
- Does not like the terracing back yards towards Western because of access and crime

Crystal Killian

- If parking is not being utilized along residential frontages, take that area away from roadway and dedicate it to the pedestrian experience and landscaping

John Papadakis

- Likes the white fence post look which would help create a definition between RPV and San Pedro
- Should not worry about individual needs when we are talking about making things better for everyone
- Consider including Spanish names (“Paseo”) and find an identity that everyone buys into
- Residents originally fought the development of Terranea. When Donald Trump decided to invest in the area, perceptions changed and now Terranea means a lot to the area.

Carolyn Lehr

- Is it helpful to work on some of the public improvements (landscaping, signage, new theme) to set the stage and evoke a new way of thinking so that residents and developers see these improvements first? Or is it better to immediately implement a grand vision?
- What attracts the developers?

Joe Rich

- Developers cannot change things because they are locked into long term leases
- Small things must happen when the opportunity presents itself (termination of a lease, for example) then developers are able to make bigger changes
- Park Place and the Terraces recently changed hands and needs to be redeveloped

Joel Rojas

- New buyers like to hear that there is a plan

Crystal Killian

- Developers see potential when there is a plan in place
- Developers can keep the new vision in mind when looking for new tenants as they turn over
- The area has good traffic flow, however, traffic is a sign of a healthy economic community

Gaurav Srivastava

- It would be helpful to find a catalyst project
- There is a need to find a project in the southern segment where public funds could be used in partnership with a developer who believes in and wants to help implement the new vision

Gaurav asked group members for confirmation regarding what they have in mind when they think of creating a new environment? Does this include removing surface lots along the street edge because, at the end of the day, that will be the biggest determinate of how this plan moves forward. Design guidelines would be put in place for how future developments relate to the street.

Jeanne Lacombe

- Would like to see the visual aspects tie into the local architecture
- Multi-story shops and the LAX/modern light elements do not fit within the local fabric
- Prefers lower buildings with higher-end shops

Eileen Hupp

- Business owners need enough density to get a return on their investment

IV. Next steps

- Package ideas and revise them based on what was heard today
- Create a public meeting workshop to receive public input
 - Draft public meeting materials will be circulated to the group for input prior to the public meeting
 - Committee members are encouraged to attend
 - Preference is a Saturday morning or afternoon meeting
 - Date: TBD
- Vision Study to be finished by spring of 2013