

# OCTOBER 8, 2009

## KICK-OFF WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The City of East Palo Alto held a public meeting on October 8, 2009, to initiate the public process for the Dumbarton Station Area Specific Plan. Approximately 70 members of the public attended the meeting, which took place at East Palo Alto City Hall. It was a diverse group of residents, youth, seniors and business owners. The meeting included presentations by the following individuals and groups:

- ◆ Mayor Ruben Abrica
- ◆ Carlos Martinez, Redevelopment Director
- ◆ Sean Charpentier, RDA Project Coordinator II
- ◆ Design, Community & Environment (DC&E)
- ◆ San Mateo County Health System
- ◆ Public Health Law & Policy

The workshop was intended to provide an overview of the Dumbarton Station Area Specific Plan project as well as discuss key project issues within the context of public health. The slideshow is available in PDF format at the following website:

<http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/economicdev/dumbarton.html>



## 1. INTRODUCTION BY MAYOR ABRICA

Mayor Ruben Abrica gave an introduction to the process, described how the Specific Plan was part of the continuing planning and improvement efforts in the Ravenswood Business District, and recognized the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee.

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Bruce Brubaker of DC&E opened the presentation by providing an overview of the Specific Plan, process, timeline, public input opportunities and project goals. The geographic location of the project area was also discussed, which includes the Ravenswood Business District, Four Corners, and surrounding neighborhoods. A brief overview of existing plans for the Dumbarton Rail Corridor Project was also included.

### 3. EXISTING HEALTH CONDITIONS IN EAST PALO ALTO

Crispin Delgado of the San Mateo County Health System presented data and statistics on current public health conditions in East Palo Alto. Mr. Delgado emphasized disparities in public health data between East Palo Alto and San Mateo County as a whole. As he explained, asthma and Type II diabetes have been found to be more prevalent in East Palo Alto than in San Mateo County.

Mr. Delgado explained that health issues vary by geographic location, income and race. For example, locations with access to fresh fruit and vegetables and open space are associated with improved public health.

Additionally, intersection safety and pedestrian crossings were identified as issues related to public health and safety in East Palo Alto.

### 4. PLANNING FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Pilar Lorenzana-Campo of Public Health Law & Policy presented an overview of the relationship between public health and urban planning. Ms. Lorenzana-Campo explained that land use decisions affect the public health by influencing diet, physical activity, and access to recreational facilities.

Ms. Lorenzana-Campo also discussed the policy tools available at the local level to address public health issues. The following tools can be used to improve public health:

- ◆ Creating Specific Plans with detailed ideas for community improvements
- ◆ Zoning controls that encourage land uses that contribute to public health
- ◆ Economic development efforts
- ◆ Providing incentives for farmers' markets and facilitating grocery stores
- ◆ Providing incentives for healthy foods in small corner stores
- ◆ Partnering with local agencies and organizations

Ms. Lorenzana-Campo closed by recommending that neighborhoods contain a mix of uses and be connected to transit to help address health issues. Providing for safety, mobility and access will positively influence community health. Ms. Lorenzana-Campo and Jeff Williams of DC&E identified several urban design principles that influence public health:

- ◆ **Building Frontages.** Buildings that are designed to “frame” the street create a sidewalk condition that is generally a more inviting and comfortable area for pedestrians as compared to buildings that are set back from the street and are dominated by surface parking.

- ◆ **Outdoor Seating.** Public resting and gathering places can be incorporated into building design and the design of public sidewalk areas.
- ◆ **Bicycle Activity.** Streets can be designed to accommodate and encourage bicycle usage, and bicycle parking can be provided near buildings and public facilities.
- ◆ **Safe Streetscapes.** Lighting, crosswalks and other features of public rights-of-way can improve pedestrian safety and comfort.
- ◆ **Connectivity.** A street pattern that is interconnected provides diverse circulation opportunities and encourages physical activity.
- ◆ **Access to Open Space.** Improved access to open space and recreational facilities provides opportunities for exercise and physical activity.

## 5. GROUP DISCUSSION

Following the presentation, Bruce Brubaker of DC&E facilitated an exercise in which the community identified issues facing the project area. These issues were categorized into the following categories:

- ◆ Land Use/Economics
- ◆ Physical Improvements
- ◆ Programs/Events
- ◆ Other Issues

The following issues were identified by attendees and recorded on large sheets of paper posted on the wall during the workshop. After the exercise, participants were asked to place stickers next to the issues that are most important to them. The number of stickers placed on each issue is shown in parentheses next to each issue listed below.

### Land Use/Economics

- ◆ Need multicultural performing arts center (8)
- ◆ Improve parking in neighborhoods (4)
- ◆ Provide small hot food stands (4)
- ◆ Provide buffer zones between residential/commercial/industrial (3)
- ◆ Preserve existing open space/wetlands (3)
- ◆ Need community gathering spaces (2)
- ◆ Address contamination issues in Ravenswood (2)
- ◆ Look at zoning changes (1)
- ◆ Provide jobs (1)

### Needed Physical Improvements

- ◆ Potential EPA transit station (6)



- ◆ Bicycle lanes (3)
- ◆ Public art (3)
- ◆ Street repaving (3)
- ◆ Midtown sidewalks (2)
- ◆ Stop lights at University & Purdue (2)
- ◆ Connect plan area with rest of EPA (1)
- ◆ Crime impacts on bike & ped opportunities (1)
- ◆ Myrtle Street – Safety improvements (1)
- ◆ No transit station in EPA (0)

### Needed Programs and Events

- ◆ More public schools (13)
- ◆ Youth programs (14 to 22 years) (11)
- ◆ Enhance/market local grocers, food, business (7)
- ◆ Support existing business & protect from displacement (6)
- ◆ Multi-family housing maintenance & health (2)
- ◆ Access to funding (1)

### Other Ideas

- ◆ Timing – do things soon (1)
- ◆ Review statistics for African-American health (0)
- ◆ Transparency from the City about plans (0)

## 6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Workshop participants were invited to submit additional comments to the City, using comment cards that were distributed to all participants. The comment cards are available for review at the project website:

<http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/economicdev/dumbarton.html>

## 7. OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS AND ISSUES

During the workshop, participants raised several additional questions and issues about various topics. These issues will be explored further at future workshops.

## Dumbarton Rail and Station

Several workshop participants asked for more information and certainty regarding the future of Dumbarton Rail, including the potential location of a station in East Palo Alto. One participant asked if this were connected to the past process that involved Omowale Satterwhite as a facilitator. Alvin James, the City Manager, clarified that the past process was the Dumbarton Dialogue and it was separate.

Carlos Martinez, the City's Redevelopment Director, provided an expanded explanation of the relationship of the potential Dumbarton Rail project to the Specific Plan.

The Dumbarton Rail Corridor Project is intended to provide commuter rail service connecting the Union City BART station in the East Bay to the Caltrain station in Redwood City. It would run along the existing rail line that passes just north of the project area. The timing of the Dumbarton Rail project has not been identified at this time. Current plans for Dumbarton Rail call for a station in Menlo Park, just west of the project area. However, Mr. Martinez explained that, as part of the Specific Plan process, the potential for a rail station near or within the project area would be analyzed and considered.

The City identified two possible locations for an East Palo Alto station in its Request for Proposals (RFP) for the project, which is available on the project website.

As Mr. Martinez explained, there is no requirement to include an East Palo Alto rail station in the Specific Plan. If the community does not want a rail station in East Palo Alto, the Specific Plan will not propose a rail station.

For more information on the Dumbarton Rail Project, please see this website:

[http://www.smcta.com/Dumbarton\\_Rail/information.asp](http://www.smcta.com/Dumbarton_Rail/information.asp)

## Goals of the Project and the Importance of Rail

There was some confusion at the workshop regarding the goals of the Specific Plan and the role of Dumbarton Rail within the process. The Specific Plan is intended to create a policy framework to implement a community-driven vision for the project area. The Specific Plan will address several issues, including land use, the form of future development, transportation, economic development and implementation strategies. The primary goal of this planning process is to set a vision and guide future development within the project area. A secondary purpose of the Specific Plan is to make recommendations about the role of Dumbarton Rail in East Palo Alto. Recommendations will be based on community input, a thorough analysis of existing conditions and the nature of the preferred alternative identified during the public planning process.

## Transportation Connections and Improvements

Questions were raised about a potential roadway connecting the Ravenswood Business District (RBD) to University Avenue, along a route located east of the University Village neighborhood.

Some participants expressed concerns about the location of this potential road and its proximity to the neighborhood.

This new road has been identified as a potential improvement to consider as a way to protect existing neighborhoods from traffic. However, no decisions have been made. The new road will be considered and analyzed as with other potential improvements in the project area. The City will present more information about the potential for a new road at future workshops. Community members are encouraged to attend these workshops and provide input on this and other potential improvements.