

City of San Carlos  
Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

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**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

This supplemental information serves as a companion document to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines developed for the City of San Carlos as the outgrowth of “Visioning Downtown San Carlos”, a seven month community process, and adopted on July 23, 2001 by the City Council.

The intent of this document is to provide background material that describes the community process that informed the Guidelines. The contents are for reference only—no portion of them should be considered as guidelines.

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**Appendix A**  
**Community Process Summary**

## Appendix A — Community Process Summary

Tom Richman & Associates served as Urban Design and Community Facilitation consultants to the City. Their primary role in the Visioning process was:

- to accurately ascertain and report the community's sentiment on a variety of urban design issues as expressed through the workshop process and,
- to prepare a set of design guidelines that will help to realize the citizen's vision for their downtown.

The following executive summary identifies the key topics discussed at each workshop.

The workshop process is documented thoroughly on the project web site:

<http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision>

Total individual participants: 349

Total number of people who attended four or more workshops: 57

Total number of people who attended all seven workshops: 6

Total citizen hours invested (assuming 2 hours per meeting): 1,348



*Tom Richman addresses participants at the first community workshop*



**WORKSHOP 1**

Date: August 10, 2000

Attendance: 135

*Agenda*

7:00 Registration

7:15 Introduction &amp; Welcome

7:30 Laying the Groundwork – Why we're here,  
where are we going?

7:50 What Makes a Village?

8:10 3-D Computer Visualization Technology Intro

8:30 "Village Economy" by guest speaker Bill Lee

8:50 Closing

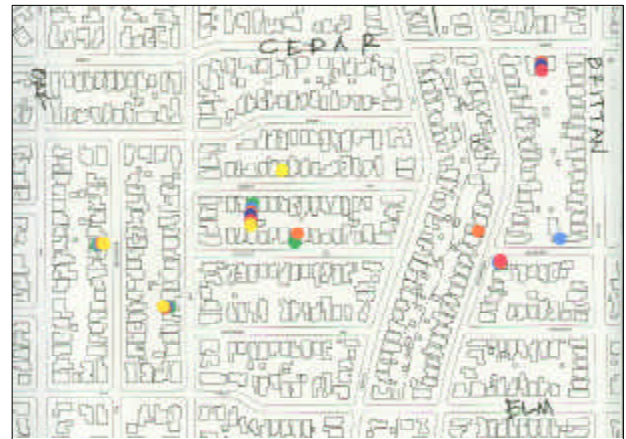
9:00 Adjourn

*Interactive Exercise: Where Do You Live?*

After people registered, they were asked to find their house on a large map and place a tiny green dot sticker on it. This showed instantly that the participants represented a wide geographic distribution. People came from all corners of the City. At each consecutive workshop, participants will locate their houses with a different color dot, so that the workshop attendance can be tracked over time.

*Historic Slideshow*

Tom Richman presented a slide show illustrating the development of San Carlos. He noted that even before there was a town, there was a railway station. "Transit Oriented Development" is a current buzz-word in planning circles to identify towns and higher density developments that are oriented to rail or transit lines. In this way San Carlos, hav-



*Workshop participants place colored dots on a map at each meeting, as a way to identify the geographic distribution of attendees.*

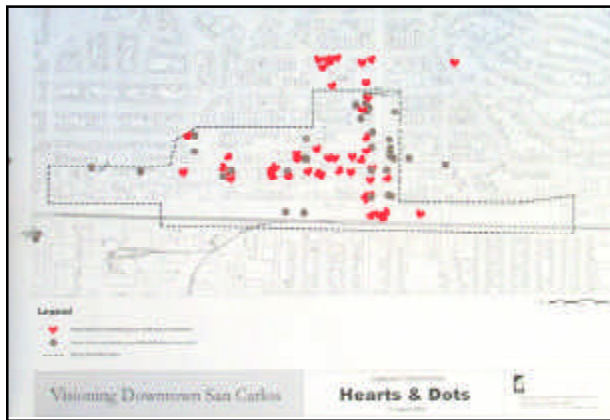
ing its genesis from its location at one of the first train stations on the Peninsula, is a proto-typical “transit-oriented development.”

*Interactive Exercise: What Makes a Village?*

Everyone present at the workshop agreed that their vision for the future includes preserving or enhancing the “village” or “small town” character of San Carlos. To identify “what makes a village,” workshop participants broke into pairs. They shared stories of specific experiences of village life.

*Interactive Exercise: Hearts & Dots*

On a map of the project study area, Workshop participants placed a red heart sticker on something they liked about downtown, and a gray dot on something they disliked about downtown.



*Workshop participants placed hearts on something they liked and dots on something they disliked about downtown*

Responses were varied, but everyone liked the historic Train Depot and Laurel Park (received only heart stickers). Everyone disliked the Sam Trans building on the corner of San Carlos Avenue and Laurel Street (received only gray dot stickers).

In the discussion that followed, the group learned that the people’s reasons for locating hearts and dots were varied and personal.

The Drake Building, on the corner of San Carlos Ave. and El Camino received all hearts except for one dot. The man who placed the dot shared that he loves the Drake Building but placed the dot there because the current use of signage and advertising detracts from the beauty of the historic building.

A similar pattern was found concerning Hacienda Gardens, which had both hearts and dots. The dots reflected a dislike of either the disrepair of the existing buildings or disapproval of the proposed redevelopment. Hearts reflected an affection for the historic buildings, even though they are run-down.

One couple present shared that they placed a heart and a dot on the same building. The husband placed the heart on it because he loves the food that restaurant serves. The wife placed the dot on it because she does not like the view of the business across the street, which has changed over time from a flower shop with attractive window displays to a gym that has blocked the view from outside – there is nothing for a pedestrian to look at.

*Bill Lee speech on "Village Economy"*

Bill Lee, the Executive Vice President of Economics Research Associates, presented a discussion on village economics. Mr. Lee has previously authored the Market Analysis and Economic Development Strategy Study (Jan. 2000) for the City.

Bill stated that Economy has different implications for the City, the land owner, individual retail businesses, and land use in general. There are two basic economic models: the Village model and the Suburban model.

The Village model is characterized by:

- Mix and integration of land uses, e.g., retail, office, housing, entertainment
- Pedestrian vitality
- Social interaction occurs both in the day and evening, and often in public spaces such as streets and plazas

The Suburban model is characterized by:

- Isolation of single uses (areas of concentrated retail, office, and housing use are separated from one another).
- Automobile dependency because a car is needed in order to get from one use to another.
- Social interaction tends to be in private spaces, such as the home or office because people are making single-purpose trips, engaging with a narrower range of people.

As we grow as a region, the Suburban model becomes more expensive since more land in parking and traffic circulation. It is a less desirable model as land values increase. Integration of land uses re-

sults in less dependency on the automobile. There are lifestyle and economic advantages to this. The Village model has primarily pedestrian activity, whereas the Suburban model has primarily auto activity.

In a downtown like that of San Carlos, a good balance of uses would be something like 30-50% retail/entertainment, with the remaining balance split between housing and office (measured on a square footage basis). The uses would share parking.

After Bill Lee's presentation a general discussion of economy followed. Residents expressed concern over the loss of independently-owned businesses to large national chains. Bill Lee observed that national chains can create a critical mass of shoppers that can enable smaller, independent businesses to thrive.

Tom Richman observed that national chains, like Starbucks, understand how to create effective retail spaces, and asked how the City can foster small business. There was agreement that the City and Chamber of Commerce might consider programs to help small business. Indeed, the City currently has grants for small business facade improvements and other uses. Bill Lee observed that ultimately, market competition determines which businesses are successful.

**Workshop 2**

Date: September 7

Attendance: 114

*Agenda*

- 7:00 Registration
- 7:15 Introduction & Welcome
- 7:35 Downtown Image Survey
- 7:55 Land Use & Traffic Panel by guest speakers  
Gary Black, Neal Martin
- 8:35 3-D Computer Visualization – Existing Downtown Conditions
- 8:50 Downtown Image Survey Results and Discussion
- 9:10 Closing & Info about next workshop
- 9:15 Adjourn

*What We Heard*

Tom Richman reviewed the results of the Hearts & Dots and What Makes a Village exercise from the previous meeting. He pointed out that because of the large turnout, many tools will be used to collect citizen comments and input. Interactive exercises such as those mentioned above are more efficient ways of collecting citizen comments than if each participant took turns speaking individually at the meeting. As the workshop series moves forward, there will be more opportunities for individuals to discuss the issues and express themselves in a variety of ways.

*Old-timers and Newcomers*

The residents present who had lived in San Carlos for the longest and shortest time were asked to identify themselves. They were asked to write down:

- a. One thing you liked about San Carlos when

you first arrived here.

- b. One thing you would like to see for the future of San Carlos.

The intent of this small exercise was to focus on the fact that though there are a high proportion of long-time residents, there are also many newcomers. San Carlos is a city in transition. As shown in the responses of the longest and newest resident, as well as the discussion that followed, both have a similar reason for coming to San Carlos — the small town feeling. But there may be dissimilar attitudes towards new development, with some residents more in favor of the status quo, or longing for a simpler past, and some more supportive of change. This is an important issue to recognize as this process moves forward. Tom acknowledged that there is potential for the group to divide along these lines, and he held out the hope that they could accept each other's frame of reference. In particular, he observed that it may be possible for the newcomers to appreciate the quality and character of the town that the long-term residents have created, while the long-term residents can appreciate the needs of the new-comers for expanded housing and business opportunities.

*"Land Use: Projects on the Table"*

Neal Martin, City of San Carlos' Director of Planning, gave a brief talk about land use and presented conceptual and proposed projects that are currently being discussed in San Carlos.

*Traffic and Parking*

Gary Black, President of Hexagon Transportation Consultants, presented a talk on traffic and

parking in downtown. Hexagon authored a Downtown Parking Study in July 1999 for the City's Redevelopment Agency, which, following a citizens' committee recommendation identified the Wheeler Plaza as the preferred site for a downtown parking structure. The study identified a potential parking deficit of approx. 350 spaces given the current development plans. The SamTrans Building has excess parking, but it is not available for public use at this time.

Gary also discussed traffic patterns. He noted that a city-wide traffic study is underway which will be used to assess impacts of potential downtown development. He then took several questions from the audience about local traffic and parking issues.

### 3-D Computer Visualization

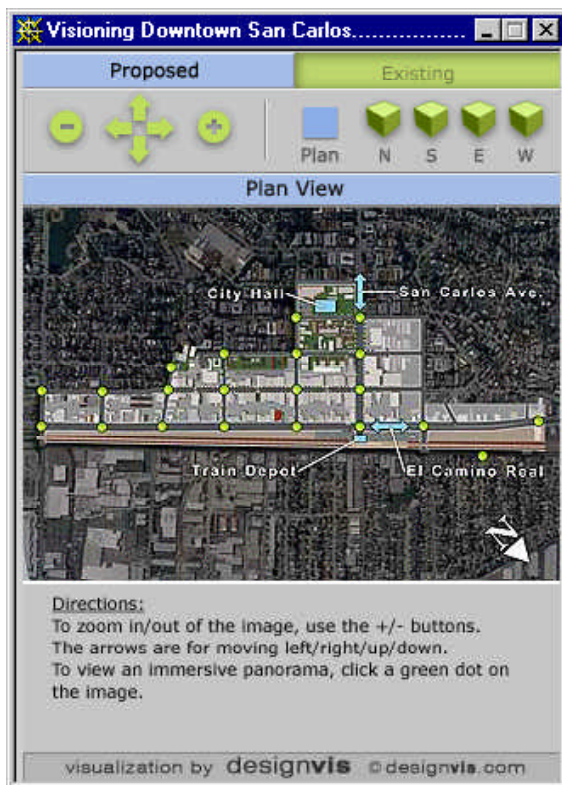
A three-dimensional computer model of the

downtown was developed as a visualization tool. Tom Richman demonstrated the model, which shows the existing conditions in the study area.

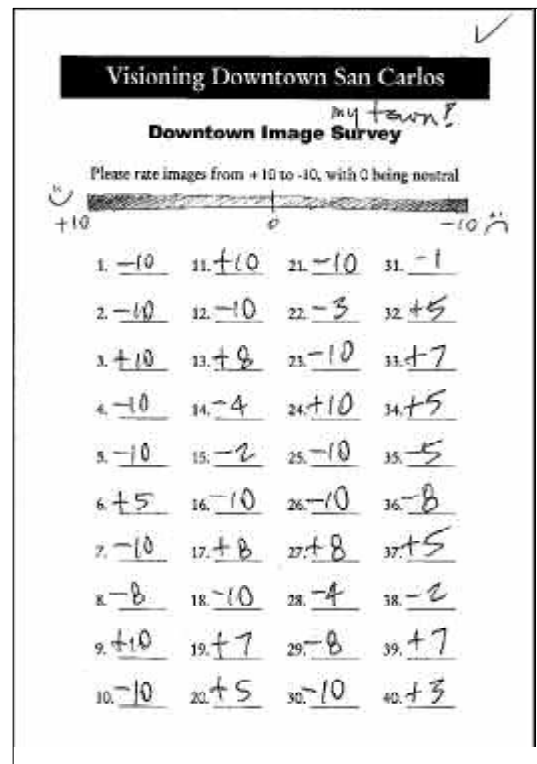
### Downtown Image Survey

Everyone has a different image in their mind of what they want to see downtown. Different images may also come to mind when general words like "mixed-use" and "pedestrian-oriented development" are used.

In order to document and quantify likes and dislikes, a Downtown Image Survey was administered. Workshop participants were shown a series of forty downtown images and asked to rate their visual preferences for each one based on whether they liked the image and whether it is appropriate for the study area.



3D model



After participants took the survey, the forms were collected. A representative sample was tallied for average positive, negative, or neutral scores. Some of the images that received broad consensus were presented back to the group for discussion.



### Workshop Number 3

Date: October 5

Attendance: 87

#### *Agenda*

7:00 Registration

7:15 Introduction & Welcome

7:20 Affordable Housing talk by city planner Lisa Costa-Sanders and guest speaker Bill Lee

7:30 Downtown Image Survey Results

8:00 Current Development Projects – Break Out sessions and large group discussion

9:10 Closing & Info about next workshop

9:15 Adjourn

#### *Outline the Process*

Tom Richman reviewed the Visualization Study work plan and schedule. Three workshops have been added in order to allow for more participation from the community. An outline of the goals and intentions of the workshops is as follows:

*Aug 10: Introduction & Village Economy*

*Sep 7: Downtown Image Survey, Land Use, & Traffic*

*Oct 5: Urban Design Guidelines Discussion & Current Proposed Projects Modeled*

*Nov 2: More Discussion on Current Proposed Projects*

*Dec 7: Urban Design Guidelines Review*

*Jan 4: Current Proposed Projects Modeled*

*TBD: Urban Design Guidelines to Planning Commission*

*TBD: Urban Design Guidelines to City Council*

#### *Housing*

Lisa Costa-Sanders, a planner with the City's Planning Department and Redevelopment Agency, and Bill Lee, Executive Vice President of Economics Research Associates, gave a brief presentation on affordable housing. They reviewed the income and occupation guidelines for affordable/workforce housing, which indicated that relatively high sala-

ries and a variety of professions qualify for affordable housing. They also stated that as the economy and housing demand continue to grow, the lack of affordable housing on the San Francisco Peninsula will have economic and social impacts, such as:

#### Economic Impacts

- Younger people in moderate paying jobs - teachers, fire fighters, sales clerks, waiters or waitresses, gardeners, etc. - will be priced out of the market.
- In order to fill these positions, public and private employers will bid up wages.
- To offset the higher cost of labor, prices and taxes will need to increase.
- Selected businesses that are not able to raise prices will be forced to move off the Peninsula, resulting in less convenient services for local residents.
- As a consequence, Peninsula households will pay more for a wide range of goods and services.
- The real purchasing power of Peninsula households will decrease.

#### Social Impacts

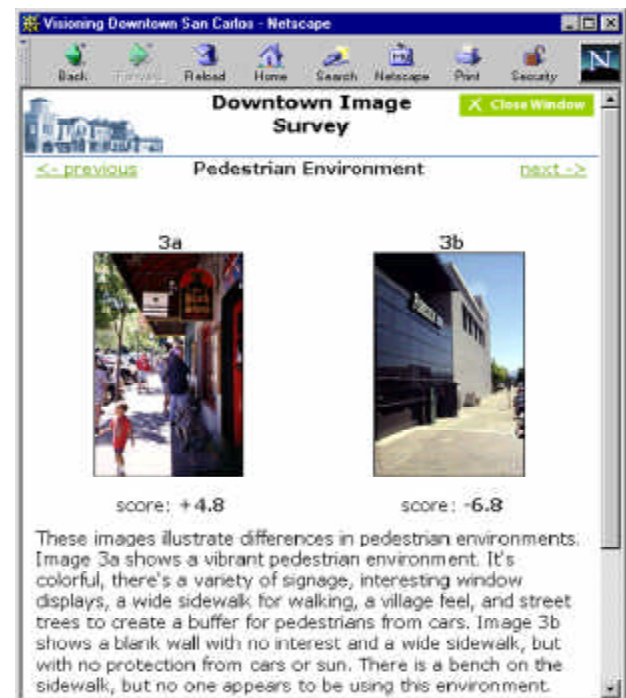
- The children and grand children of Peninsula families are often not able to afford to reside locally.
- Employees of Peninsula firms must commute from greater distances.
- The additional time spent in commuting places more stress on the family life of those employees.
- The longer commutes also generate more regional air pollution.

After this presentation, participants asked questions and discussed the pros and cons of potential

solutions to the issue. Participants indicated an acceptance of the need for affordable housing in San Carlos, including the downtown.

#### Downtown Image Survey Results

Tom Richman reviewed the results of the Downtown Image Survey that was given at the September 7 workshop. He presented examples of how the community's preferences could generate design guidelines. The purpose of design guidelines is to specify design direction in order to shape the development of downtown in the direction of the shared vision of the community.



The following are potential urban design guidelines that will be revised, developed, and incorporated into the context of an entire document as the Visualization process continues. The potential guidelines have been written under four categories:

- “Required”
- “Prohibited”
- “Recommended”
- “Discouraged”

In the discussion, there was general agreement to emphasize “recommended” guidelines rather than “required” to give more flexibility. These will be discussed in more detail in future meetings.

*Potential Urban Design Guidelines:*

These are examples of the type of guideline that can be written to maintain the character of downtown that is preferred by the community:

Parking Garage

- Required: Side panels shall be broken up by color or material change and architectural detail.
- Recommended: Uppermost deck and corners shall be stepped back from the street.

Pedestrian Environment

- Prohibited: Walls without doors or windows on the ground floor (blank walls) for distances of more than 30 feet.
- Recommended: Doors are encouraged to be not more than 60 feet apart in any building frontage.

*Current Proposed Projects*

Tom Richman presented a summary of four currently proposed development projects in various stages of consideration: Laurel Street Improvements (including 1200 block of San Carlos Avenue), South Plaza, Garden Hacienda, and the Southeast Corner of Walnut and San Carlos (incorporating Wheeler Plaza and Imagine Foods). He discussed the main features of each project and showed them rendered into the 3-D Model.

He also showed the information that was provided by the City to generate the model. In some cases the information was preliminary, freehand sketching.

Participants then broke out into two smaller groups to discuss and comment on the projects. City staff members and guest speakers Bill Lee (Economics Research Associates) and Gary Black (Hexagon Transportation Consultants) were available to answer questions and provide more information on land use, traffic, parking, and how the projects fit in with the City’s planning and development context.

The large assembly reconvened for further discussion.

**Workshop Number 4**

Date: November 2, 2001

Attendance: 62

*Agenda*

- 7:00 Registration
- 7:15 Introduction & Welcome
- 7:20 Urban Design Guidelines: introduction and purpose
- 7:45 Current Development Projects: large group discussion
- 9:10 Closing & Info about next workshop
- 9:15 Adjourn

*Urban Design Guidelines*

Showing a series of images illustrating typical street sections and building details, he discussed the nature of the urban design guidelines that will be developed as a result of this visualization process. The bulk of the guidelines will likely be in the following three categories:

**General Guidelines**

- Building articulation and massing
- Building height
- Storefront and façade design
- Street design and setbacks
- Parking lots and structures
- Network of open space

**Site-specific Guidelines**

- Retail Core: 600- 800 blocks of Laurel Street, 1100-1200 blocks of San Carlos Avenue, and 600-800 blocks of El Camino Real
- South Plaza
- Wheeler Plaza & 1100 block San Carlos Avenue

Railroad Property right-of-way

**Architectural Detailing**

- Materials and finishes
- Windows and doors
- Exterior wainscot
- Street furnishings and outdoor eating

During the discussion of the guidelines, someone raised the issue of chain stores versus small businesses in the downtown. A lengthy discussion about the pros and cons followed. Some people expressed concern that small, independent retail shops would be forced out if national chain stores developed within the downtown. Some were concerned that chain stores would cause San Carlos to lose its identity. Others observed that chain stores can help bring vitality and a higher standard to businesses in the downtown. It was also reported that the City and the Chamber of Commerce have programs, such as the Redevelopment Agency's Façade Improvement Grant Program, to help small businesses improve and stay competitive.

Tom explained how a set of good Urban Design Guidelines can influence, to a degree, the way chain stores would be integrated with the fabric of the existing downtown.

There was general consensus that, even though people may share different levels of comfort with the amount of proposed development, everyone agreed that if there is going to be new development, it should be of high quality. Tom observed a primary purpose of the Design Guidelines is to require a level of quality that San Carlos expect.

### *Current Development Projects*

Tom presented a conceptual summary of two currently proposed development projects in various stages of consideration: the Southeast Corner of Walnut St. and San Carlos Ave., including Wheeler Plaza and Imagine Foods, and the Railroad Property right-of-way. This was the second presentation of the Corner of Walnut and San Carlos project, and the first of the Railroad Property. Both of these projects are in the preliminary conceptual stages and are subject to the standard City review and approval process required of any new development project (i.e., environmental reports, public hearings, etc.). They were brought forth in this Visioning workshop to foster discussion about general development and planning issues.

During the general discussion of current development projects, it was observed that there appears to be rapid change proposed for San Carlos. Tom pointed out that the projects being discussed in the workshops will take years to develop and pass (if ever, for some of them). He also called attention to how much of the downtown area is not changing. Participants generally appeared reassured by this long-term perspective, although some people still expressed discomfort with the extent of change. One person pointed out that projects outside the study area are also being proposed and should be taken into account.

### *Corner of Walnut and San Carlos (Wheeler Plaza)*

Tom showed a second version of the conceptual project at the Corner of Walnut St. and San Carlos Ave., including Wheeler Plaza and Imagine Foods, that was rendered into the 3-D Model. This version

incorporated the community's primary concerns about the version presented at the October 5 workshop.

There was overall consensus among workshop participants that the new design was good overall, and significantly better than the last time (some applauded). Participants particularly thought the parking was improved: it appeared better and felt safer with some parking above-grade. There were several comments from participants recommending further consideration for more open space and space for children to play.

### *Railroad Property right-of-way*

Neal Martin, City of San Carlos' Director of Planning, introduced a conceptual study for a new project along the railroad property. He highlighted the draft Railroad Land Use Study recommended by a citizens' advisory committee. Now in conceptual planning phases, this project would be developed in the strip between El Camino Real and the Railroad Tracks (from Oak Street south to the City limits). Improvements would include housing, office space, some retail, parking, and gardens.

The community expressed issues that may be incorporated into the Urban Design Guidelines as site-specific requirements or at the consultant's initiative.

## Workshop 5

Date: December 7, 2001

Attendance: 57

### *Agenda*

7:00 Registration

7:15 Introduction & Welcome

7:20 Urban Design Guidelines: review and comment

9:10 Closing & Info about next workshop

9:15 Adjourn

### *Visualization Study Goals*

Tom Richman reviewed the goals of the Visualization process:

- help the community educate itself and build a shared vision for change in the downtown.
- develop a set of Urban Design Guidelines to document the community's vision and shape the future development in downtown.

During the discussion of the guidelines, someone raised the issue of chain stores versus small businesses in the downtown. A lengthy discussion about the pros and cons followed. Some people expressed concern that small, independent retail shops would be forced out if national chain stores developed within the downtown. Some were concerned that chain stores would cause San Carlos to lose its identity. Others observed that chain stores can help bring vitality and a higher standard to businesses in the downtown. It was also reported that the City and the Chamber of Commerce have programs, such as the Redevelopment Agency's Façade Improvement Grant Program, to help small businesses improve and stay competitive.

Tom explained how a set of good Urban Design Guidelines can influence, to a degree, the way chain stores would be integrated with the fabric of the existing downtown.

There was general consensus that, even though people may share different levels of comfort with the amount of proposed development, everyone agreed that if there is going to be new development, it should be of high quality. Tom observed a primary purpose of the Design Guidelines is to require a level of quality that San Carlos expect.

### *Urban Design Guidelines*

Tom handed out copies of the draft Guidelines and discussed them with participants, recording citizen comments throughout. The Urban Design Guidelines include general development guidelines for the study area and site-specific guidelines for current development projects. They also outline the project approval process that would be proposed to streamline approval for projects that conform to the Guidelines as an incentive for developers to propose projects that meet the community's vision for downtown.

Participants were generally satisfied with the content of the Guidelines, though some concern was expressed regarding larger issues such as building height. On this issue, some citizens are concerned about the impact of height on the "village character" of downtown. Some participants with experience in building design and development supported the overall intent of the guidelines, and offered suggestions to ensure that the guidelines met both the

intent of the community for quality architecture and the reality of building technology constraints.

Based on participant comments throughout the discussion, the major items that will be further reviewed and/or modified for the next draft include:

- Moving “Village Character” to the top of the list of challenges and opportunities of the community process that have informed the Guidelines.

- Clarification of zones within the downtown and their applicable guidelines (e.g., are buildings on El Camino Real required to be treated the same as those on Laurel Street within the study area?).

- The discussion of building height to reflect community concerns as well as comments from developers and architects on the relationship of height to modern building practices, and reconciliation with City zoning ordinances.

- Clarification of “broad support,” “general agreement,” and “consensus” when discussing workshop participant sentiment towards issues. In general, workshop participants have come to general agreement, not consensus, about issues. The one issue that everyone has agreed on is that a primary goal of this process is to maintain the “village character” of downtown, though people have different definitions of village character.

- Minor revisions to reflect other comments

## **Workshop 6**

Date: January 4, 2001

Attendance: 83

### *Agenda*

7:00 Registration

7:15 Introduction and Welcome

7:25 Urban Design Guidelines Review and Building Height

8:15 Current Development Projects

9:15 Closing

### *Land Use and Village Character*

Land use has a direct relationship to achieving the “village” or “small town” character that citizens have expressed they want to preserve. Village character is a function of economic vitality, housing, and transportation within the context of design.

After a lengthy discussion there was broad general agreement on the need for some degree of housing downtown. Of the total participants, only two or three voiced opposition to any kind of housing. Many reluctantly accepted the need, and some saw housing downtown as a positive benefit. Everyone agreed that if there is going to be housing downtown, good design was critical. One citizen suggested that “if we have to do it, then let’s focus on how we do it.” Citizens are concerned about the following issues related to housing:

- Location: concern with concentrating of housing near Train Depot
- Look and feel: how it fits in with the existing village character (and how much is there)
- Availability to people who work in San Carlos

- Open space and traffic/transportation implications

#### *Urban Design Guidelines / Building Height*

At the workshop in December there was general agreement that, if there is to be development in San Carlos, it needs to be of high quality. Tom Richman explained that the Urban Design Guidelines will cover the key elements that help achieve high quality architecture.

One element of the design guidelines that would significantly affect the village character of the city is building height. Based on community comment, Tom Richman & Associates proposed adjusting the height limits from the current City zoning, which allows a 50' building height throughout the entire study area, to a height limit be based on the number of stories, not absolute height (with a maximum average height per story), and that the number of stories permitted vary by street. In general, citizens seemed to like the concept of varying building heights better than the uniform height. Comments were expressed both in support of this approach, and against increased heights in general.

#### *Long term view of development*

There was a lot of discussion about development in downtown, but City planners indicate that the overall land use is quite stable. One long-time planner reported that there have been only four major projects in the last 20 years downtown. Looking ahead, there are only about six parcels on Laurel Street that have the land ownership and parcel size that could easily accommodate a major project. None of these property owners have expressed any

interest in development, so at this point the only known projects are those that have been discussed in the community workshops.

#### *Current Development Projects*

Tom presented a summary of two potential development projects in various stages of planning: the Railroad Property Right-of-Way Study and Salvatore's Restaurant project. There was limited time for discussion, but there was a general expression from participants that the Railroad Property Right-of-Way Study project was too large, that the concentration of housing was too high, and that the tall buildings would create a barrier between the east and west side of San Carlos. There were few comments about Salvatore's but those spoken expressed concern for closing off the existing service alley and a general interest in high quality architectural design and materials.

**Workshop 7**

Date: February 8, 2001

Attendance: 140

*Agenda*

7:00	Registration
7:15	Introduction and Welcome
7:20	Review Community Process
7:40	Present Recommended Urban Design Guidelines
8:10	How to Stay Informed & Involved
8:30	Thank You Celebration
9:00	Adjourn

*Interactive Exercise: Where Do You Live?*

After people registered, they were asked to find their house on a large map and place a tiny purple dot sticker on it. This showed instantly both the geographic distribution of participants as well as whether this was the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh meeting that participants attended.

At each workshop, participants located their houses with a different color dot so that the workshop attendance could be tracked over time. A review of the final map reveals the following:

- Within the Study Area, most people came once in the first three workshops.
- Within 4 blocks of Study Area, most people came for the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting only.
- East of the railroad, most people came to one of the last three workshops.
- At the final workshop 30% of attendees lived east of the railroad and were attending their first Visioning San Carlos meeting.
- Chilton Court had the best overall attendance.
- Sixty percent of the participants at the final workshop were first-time attendees.

Overall,

- People from all parts of residential San Carlos have come to at least one meeting.
- People who attended four or more meetings came from all parts of San Carlos.
- People who attended all meetings most likely live five or more blocks from the study area.

*Review Community Process*

Tom Richman began the meeting by providing an overview of the community process to-date. He reviewed the workshops as documented on the web site, and reminded participants of the varied activities designed to elicit response and preferences from the community.

*Workshop attendance records*

- Number of individual participants: 349
- Number of people who attended 4 or more: 57
- Number of people who attended all: 6
- Total number of hours invested: 1,348

**Visioning Home Page**

- Number of hits since August 2000: 2,461
- See the Vision (3D model) Home Page – number of hits since August 2000: 1,657
- Of the 500 pages on the City of San Carlos web site, the “Visioning” page has been in the “Top 20” most popular pages for the past 6 months

*Urban Design Guidelines*

One of the major goals of the Urban Design Guidelines is to preserve and further village character through good design. The individual guidelines have been crafted to generate quality architecture and materials that support the community’s vision.

After reviewing the goals and objectives of the

Guidelines, Tom presented a summary of some of the main General and all of the Site-Specific guidelines. A complete copy of the Draft Guidelines was distributed to workshop participants, and posted on the web site.

Of all the guidelines, building height has been the most controversial throughout this process. Tom spent time explaining and illustrating this guideline. In summary, the draft Guidelines recommend maintaining or reducing the City's existing 50-foot height limit:

On San Carlos Avenue and El Camino: 50 feet max. height (4 stories).

On Laurel and all other streets within the study area: 45 feet max. height (3 stories) or 50 feet max. height with 4<sup>th</sup> flr. residential (within building envelope in which 4<sup>th</sup> floor is either stepped back ten feet or incorporates window dormers in the roof design)

The general Guidelines recommend building cornices and offer guidelines for projecting elements and courtyards that reflect the community's desire to avoid monolithic buildings and provide more open space.

Site-specific Guidelines are written in the document for three projects:

- Corner of Walnut and San Carlos (Wheeler Plaza)
- Railroad Property right-of-way study
- Salvatore's Restaurant

Following presentation of the Guidelines, Tom asked for comments from workshop participants. There was general agreement on the overall Design Guidelines.

There was, however, a group of people who were especially concerned about the height of the Railroad Property project. This group demanded a 35-foot height limit along the Railroad corridor. About 40 residents from the Laureola neighborhood, east of the tracks, were present, most for the first time, and they expressed concern about the project's potential impact on their neighborhood, especially reflected noise and blocking their view of the western hills. These concerns will receive more study if and when this project moves through its individual approval process.

#### *Project Approval Process*

##### Downtown Visioning Project

Liz Cullinan, Director of Planning, explained that the Visioning workshops are the beginning of the process to hear community sentiment towards growth issues. Tom Richman & Associates will present the recommended Urban Design Guidelines to the City Staff and the Staff will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission. Staff's recommendation will be based on a combination of professional consultation and public comment. The Guidelines must gain approval from both the Commission and the City Council before they can be adopted, and City Staff hopes that the public will continue to stay involved during the formal public hearing process.

##### Individual Projects

The Guidelines recommend the following approval process for individual projects, which is similar to the existing process:

- City Staff determines a project's conformance with the Guidelines.
- Projects in conformance with Guidelines re-

quire approval of Staff only.

- All new buildings and projects that deviate substantially from the Guidelines require approval of the Planning Commission.

Note: the presentation of projects presented at the Visioning workshops was in addition to the standard submittal and City review process that a project must go through to gain approval in the City. The proponents of projects in the conceptual or study phase were able to get an early indication of community opinion towards the project in the hopes of crafting a better project overall.

#### *How to Stay Informed and Involved*

Steve Watry, Community Development Director, reported a number of ways that people can stay informed about and involved with projects as they move through the development process. He reminded people that some of the conceptual projects discussed in the Visioning workshops had received input from citizen groups and task forces. Steve assured people that the City makes a big effort to gain citizen input on projects under consideration, which is why some of the conceptual projects were brought forth again, in addition to the typical approval process.

#### *Thank You Celebration*

The workshop ended with thanking all of the citizens who have participated in the process. Vice Mayor Eaton and Councilman Davids presented City pins to Six citizens who had attended all seven Visioning workshops.

## Workshop Participants:

The following individuals signed in for at least one workshop:

Chris Alevizos · Sandra Althouse · Jeannette Angelides · Peter Angelides · Diane Anvick · Keith Anvick · Steve Arbogast · Jessica Arellano · Alta Aronson · Nadine Ascani · Richard Averett · Mikel B. · Bryan Baarts · Carol Baarts · John Baer · Eloise Bailey · Donn Baker · Vic Balushian · Helen Barg · Nancy Barker · Connie Barton-Barba · Mark Bauhaus · Brenda Bayzini · Corvin Bazgan · Gregory Beck · Ed Berljafa · David Biggs · Rene Biggs · Bob Black · Debbie Blehm · Kathryn Blink · Michele Braithwaite · Neil Braithwaite · Carole Brauff · Cliff Brauff · Fernando Bravo · Fernando Bravo · Alma Brennan · Thomas Brennan · Deberah Bringelson · Duncan Browne · Katherine Buck · Walter Burt · Steve Buxton · Rick Callison · Edythe Cameron · Suzy Cameron · Lee Cameron · Bob Carlson · Judy Carlson · Vanda Caturegli · Frank Cauterucci · Pat Cauterucci · Guy Celestre · Sylvia Chandler · Carol Lynn Chang · Richard Chang · Henry Chen · Anna Cheng · June Chichizola · Neil Chichizola · Mike Cocco · A.B. Cohen · Maggie Cohen · May Coon · Cheryl Cormia · David Crabbe · William Curry · Harriett de Hertil · Warren de Hertil · Bob Dehnar · Lynie DelBono · Ron DeLora · Sue DeLora · Nancy DeSantis-Vannice · Patricia Dixon · Bob Donnelly · Jerry Ernst · Bruce Factor · James Fahnstock · Cheryl Falcone · Rich Falcone · Dee Fastenau · Fred Fastenau · Susan Feledy · Tom Feledy · R.D. Fields · Marge Fleisher · Brian Fletcher · Bill Forrest · Cheryl Frank-Dutton · Tony Gabb · Mike Galvin · Bob Gebhardt · Sheila Gill · Howard Girdlestone · David Giroux · Wendy Goeking · Kathy Goforth · Carole Goldberg · Howard Goode · Muriel Gorton · Virginia Gottula · Myra Greenberg · John Gress · Matt Grocott · Coral Gutaff · Bob Gutseg · Nancy Gutsell · R.G. Haars · Mark Haesloop · LaVonne A. Hall · Cecily Harris · Phil Haslip · Ed Hayes · Yuka Hazelton · George Hebcork · Joseph L. Heim · Robert Hendrickson · Scott Herfer · Amy Hertzberg · Jason Hertzberg · Cheryl Hochstatter · Bill Hogan · Nancy Hohl · Paul Hohl · Mark Hopkins · Clarke Howland · Ron Hubsh · Karen Hunt · Ken Hutton · Joyce Irby · Tom Jackman · Rodney Jackson · Bryan Jacobs · David Jacoby · Beth Jaffe · Vivienne Joaffe · Edith Johnson · Tom Josa · Horst Jung · Claire Kelly · Tim Kelly · Sarah Kelsey · Chris King · Forbes King · Kevin Kirkpatrick · Bruce Knoth · Andy Krackov · Cliff Kramer · Debby Kramer · Marilyn Kronk · Lorene Lederer · Jane Lesser · Karen Lin · John Litzinger · Dale Lloyd · Karoline Lloyd · Harald Loeffler · Greg Long · Romaine LoPrete · Jerry MacKay · Linda MacKay · Joe Macrina · Lisa Macrina · Angela Mallett · Carol Mangis · Emily Marcroft · Amy Marietta · Patty Marsters · Scot Marsters · Tony Martin · Bonnie McClure · Dan McClure · John McCoy · Kathleen McCoy · Duane McDowell · Marion McDowell · Starlet McGill · Charlie McKenzie · Su McMurtry · Lynn Meadow · Max Meadow · Joel Meredith · Monette Meredith · Steve Mergotti · Jodean Mergotti · Florence Mervis · Nyat Meyer · Helen Mickiewicz · Frank Miga · Nina Miller · Clint Miller · Len Miller · Teresa Mills-Farando · Camille Mojica Rey · Denise Monroe · Brian Morearty · Joan Morgan · Jerry Moulin · Kay Moulin · Mark Moulton · Marianne Mueller · Pat Muller · Richard Muller · E. C. Murdoch · LaVonne Murdoch · Lorraine Murphy · Nancy Nagel · Pete Nannarone · John Nemeth · Jean Nielsen · Kjeld Nielsen · Craig A. Norris · Mary Noviscky · Mike Noviscky · Paul Oeschger · Nancy Oliver · Camille Oliveri · Tony Oliveri · Suzanne Olson · Jean Orr · Jayne Owens · Brian Paland · Bruce Paris · Eileen Parsons · Arlene Patton · Boyd Paulson · Emily Paz · Renata Pearson · Gary Petersen · Harriet Peterson · Michael Peterson · Fay Petzoldt-Milne · Alex Phillips · Jane Phillips · Sheryl Pomerenk · Pat Potter · Suzanne Powell · Steve Prehm · Pat Pulvirenti · Alan Pye · Margaret Pye · Anita Raabe · Lois R. Race · Harrison Race · Margery Ranch · Bob Ravana · John Ravella · Lynn G. Recknagel · Siegfried Recknagel · Bonnie Regalia · Mario Rendon · Larry Rice · Bertha Rivas · Willard Roberts · Sigrid Roemer · Minpie Romanowsky · Radulescu Romy · Frank Ross · Eric Routman · Oren Rubin · Gabi Rullamas · Mika Rullamas · Sandi Rullamas · Steve Salazan · Lori Samchi · Raquel Sastre · Al Savay · Nury Savay · Paul Scardina · Nadine Schendel · Jewell Schrang · Steve Schrang · Jim Schuyler · Valerie Schwarz · Kristina Scott · Carrick-Sears · Carol Shroba · Dorothy Skanderuf · Chuck Sloan · Grindle Sloan · Kathy Smallman · Tim Smallman · Jim Smith · Rosemary Smith · Betsy Sperry · Mike Sperry · Peter Spira · John Spottiswood · Fran Stafford · Ray Stafford · Edqard Stancil · Regine Staufenberg · Geoffrey Stern · David Sternber · Fran Stewart · John Stewart · Stewart Straub · Brian Sutton · Jeanne Teav · Christina Tempone · Ann Tepoorten Berljafa · Mike Tiernan · Sara Timby · Carol Tognoli · Betty Torrez · Emil Torrez · Dimitri Vandellos · Gina Vandellos · Paul Vaughn · Karen Vega · Wilma Velez · Jim Vick · Susie Vick · Darlena Vitangeli · Joe Vitangeli · Maurice Voce · J. Cara Vouk · Fran Wagstaff · Josh Wallace · Jan Warren · Jim Warren · Jim Weishaar · Frank Welte · Jeff Welte · Don Whitley · Lee Wieder · Horst Will · Robart Will · Phil Williams · Marge Wilson · Virgil Wilson · Mex Winata · Paul Woody · Chris Wuthmann · Simon Wynn · Theresa Wynn · Alex Yon · R.D. Zieles · Norma Zimmer

## Appendix B

### Building Height and Massing

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTE:

*Building Height and Massing was a key issue throughout the Visioning process and was discussed in many of the workshops. The following section was presented as a draft at the final workshop in February 2001. Some participants supported a lower height limit than recommended in the draft.*

*The draft section that follows was developed using recommendations from prior economic and traffic studies undertaken by the City, comments from workshop participants over the entire process, a survey of downtown San Carlos' specific circumstances, and generally accepted urban design principles.*

*The following section requires further study of the areas listed below, and potential revision, before it can be recommended for adoption. It is not offered for adoption at the time of submittal of the rest of the Design Guidelines.*

*Recommended areas of further study include:*

- **Economic impacts:** *Are three-story buildings feasible given land costs and the costs of construction? If a three-story building is feasible, can it support the quality architectural detailing desired by the community? Or are four stories necessary to provide the required return-on-investment? If a three-story limit is adopted, what would be the likely impact on the pace of redevelopment?*
- **Social impacts:** *Taller buildings mean higher densities. If a three-story limit were applied, how would this affect the critical mass needed for economic vitality? How would it affect land uses, the mix of residential and office units? If office use generally yields a higher return on investment than residential use, what would be the impact of a three story limit on the creation of new housing downtown?*
- **Traffic impacts:** *Four stories means more people, and that generally means more traffic. What are the traffic impacts of a four-story limit? Of a three-story limit? Does the traffic impact change if the uses are office or residential?*
- **Visual impacts:** *What height and massing limits are advisable to protect important views and solar access? Views from the neighborhood east of the railroad property are especially sensitive, given the proposed mixed use project there. What height is appropriate to protect views of Skyline Ridge from there?*

## 2.0 Building Height and Massing-DRAFT (08 Feb 01)

### *Discussion*

The current zoning applies a uniform 50 foot height limit throughout the study area, with no mention of number of stories. Controlling building mass solely through a uniform, numerical height limit has significant impacts on overall urban design, the ability of projects to express the design preferences documented at the Workshops, and the potential of new buildings to embody a village character.

**Building Appearance.** In the Downtown Image Survey, some buildings that exceed fifty feet in height ranked highly, and others less than fifty feet high ranked poorly. From the subsequent discussion, it was clear that design mattered more than absolute height. Flat roofed buildings with little detail, inexpensive materials and glass curtain walls, which are more modern and urban, were consistently disliked, no matter the height. Flat roofed buildings were more acceptable if they included quality materials, especially at the ground floor, punched window openings, and strong cornice detailing where the building face meets the sky. Buildings with peaked and varied roofs were strongly preferred. The reason given for the preference was that they are “village-like.”

The fifty foot height limit, with no control of number of floors, as currently measured by the City at the ridge of the roof or top of the cornice, will tend to promote flat-roofed four story buildings and thus frustrate the community’s desire to have a village-like architecture.

**Outdoor room.** A fundamental characteristic of urban design is how buildings relate to the street. The study area presents a variety of environments, primarily determined by street width. For example, the width of El Camino Real from face-of-building to face-of-building is much wider than that on Laurel Street, and for this reason, El Camino feels expansive and auto-dominated while Laurel Street feels intimate and walkable.

The relationship of street width to the height of the building face creates an “outdoor room.” Generally speaking, a ratio of in the range of approximately 4:1 to 1:1 (distance between buildings : building height) yields a comfortable pedestrian environment. Within this range, the closer to 4:1 the more suburban the feeling, the closer to 1:1, the more urban. A “village scale” lies somewhere in the middle of this range.

If buildings are very short relative to the distance between them (ratio >4:1), the pedestrian feels exposed in an auto-dominated expanse of pavement. If buildings are very tall (ratio <1:1), a more intensely urban environment is created.

San Carlos Avenue is approximately 100 feet wide between building faces. A building at the current fifty foot height limit will produce a ratio of 2:1, well within the “village scale.” In comparison, Laurel Street is 70 feet wide from face-of-building to face-of-building, typical of streets in the study area running perpendicular to San Carlos Avenue (except El Camino Real). Laurel Street today is lined with one- and two-story buildings, a ratio of approximately 3.5:1—a fairly suburban feeling. On these

## Building Height and Massing, cont'd-DRAFT (08 Feb 01)

streets, a 50 foot tall building face will produce a ratio of 1.4:1, a more urban feeling than a 50 foot tall building on San Carlos or El Camino Real. If the buildings are shorter, the scale will be less urban and more village-like.

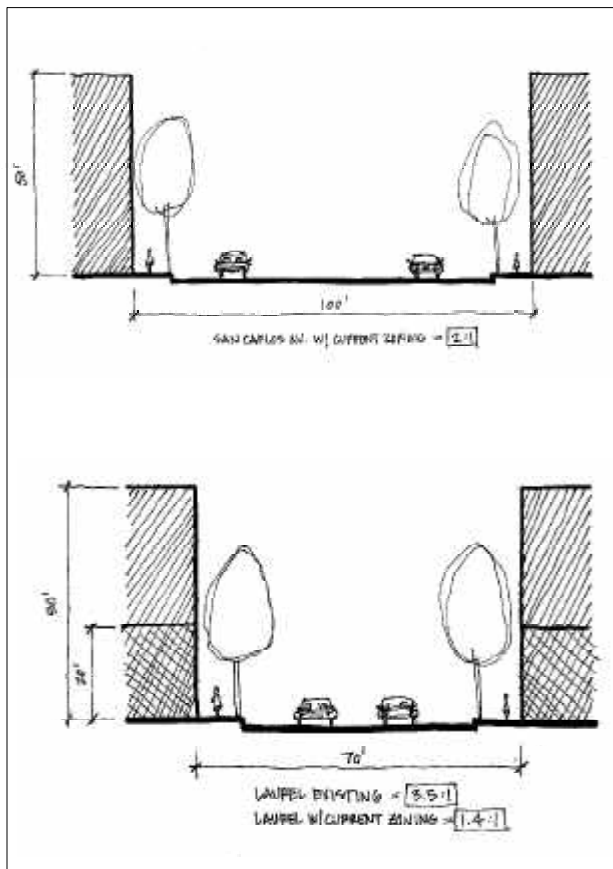
height of the vertical building face adjacent to the street. If the building includes a sloping roof or an additional floor stepped-back above the building face, it is not perceived from the street as additional height in the enclosure of the “outdoor room.” In this way, additional height can be accommodated on buildings while maintaining a less urban, more village-like scale.

This comparison suggests that a uniform fifty

foot height limit is not an effective way to realize the community’s vision for a varied, diverse, village-like environment. To preserve the village feeling on Laurel and similar small streets, a lower height limit is recommended, while on the wider streets (San Carlos and El Camino Real) the full 50 foot height limit can be accommodated within the “village scale.”

**Floor-to-Floor heights.** In the 1950’s, fifty feet was adequate height for a four story building, with some room for a pitched roof or detailed cornice, because floor-to-floor heights were lower. Today’s building’s demand taller floor plates. This demand is created both by the market desire for taller ceilings, and by the space needs of modern building system technologies that increase floor-plate depths (e.g. HVAC, fire sprinkler, computer cabling).

A typical residential building today will have a ceiling height of 9 feet, with 1-1/2’ to 2’ between floors for ducting and other utilities. A four story residential building thus becomes 42 feet tall. A fifty foot height limit leaves eight feet for a roof peak. If the ground floor is raised a half-level, as is recommended to create front stoops and to accommodate underground parking, the pitch of the roof becomes very shallow. Retail on the ground floor (which demands a 14 to 16 foot floor-to-floor height) pushes a four-story building (retail below plus three residential floors above) towards the fifty foot limit, thus frustrating the ability to create a peaked roof or expanded cornice.



**Building Height and Massing, cont'd-DRAFT (08 Feb 01)**

Office buildings have a greater floor-to-floor requirement. The commercial market place expects 9 to 10 foot ceilings for office and commercial use (as is the case in the new City Library). Because these buildings are usually climate controlled (fixed windows) and computer intensive, they need more space between floors for HVAC ducting and other utilities, between 2 and 3 feet. If retail is provided on the ground floor, with its need for high-bay space (14 to 16 foot floor-to-floor height), a four-story office building can easily reach 55 feet tall not including the roof.

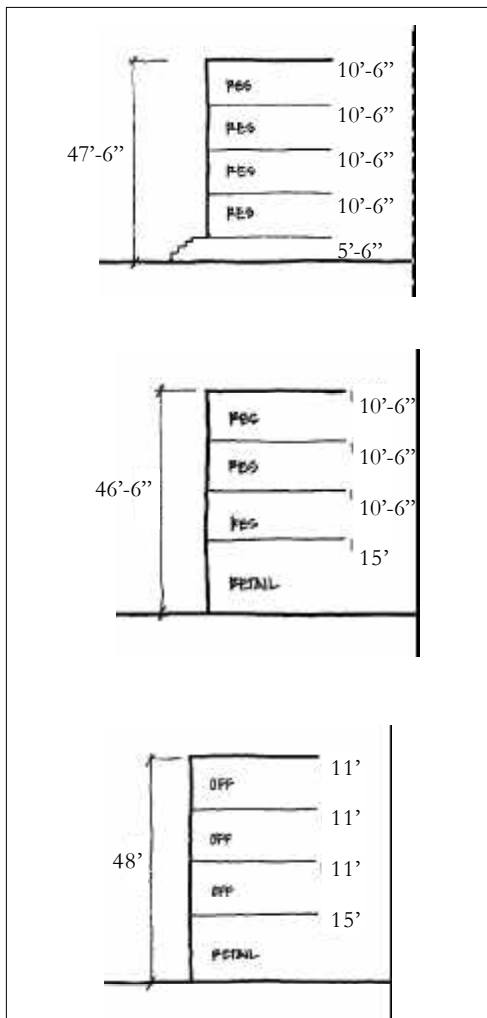
Thus it can be seen that a fifty foot height limit, measured at the ridge of the roof or top of the cornice, will have two negative results:

- a. it will prohibit high-quality four story commercial buildings throughout the study area, negatively impacting the community's economic viability
- b. it will serve to promote flat or shallow roofs with no cornice detailing.

For these reasons, the Guidelines recommend defining the number of floors permitted per street, with a three story, lower height limit on Laurel and other side streets, with a four story, taller height limit on San Carlos Avenue and El Camino Real. The Guidelines allow for a fourth floor on Laurel and the other side streets within a stepped-back building envelope, provided the fourth floor is for residential use. To promote sloping roofs and strong cornices, the Guidelines allow for an additional 4 feet of height for a cornice, roof element, or parapet wall. To promote high-bay retail space (such as the existing San Remo's or Sal's Restaurant on San Carlos Avenue), the overall height limit may be extended by up to an additional 4 feet provided the extension is added to the ground floor retail space. To further the community's desire for open space, large projects are required to dedicate 10 percent of their site area to outdoor courtyards, pocket parks, and plazas.

These guidelines will yield:

- a. a diversity of "outdoor rooms," with Laurel and the other smaller streets at lower, more intimate densities, while the taller streets (El Camino and San Carlos) absorb higher densities. Because the



## **Building Height and Massing, cont'd-DRAFT (08 Feb 01)**

higher densities are on the streets with wider distances between buildings, the downtown as a whole will retain a village scale.

b. accentuation at the corners, because the “taller streets” wrap around to the “smaller streets”

c. a viable mix of retail, office, and residential space to maintain a healthy, ongoing social and economic environment.

d. an allowance to encourage sloping roofs and strong cornice detailing

e. quality outdoor open space associated with large new buildings

f. an incentive for residential units in the downtown.

### **BUILDING HEIGHT and MASSING GUIDELINES**

#### **Required:**

#### 2.1 El Camino Real & San Carlos Avenue:

- 50 foot max. height to bottom of cornice/parapet wall
- 4 stories maximum

#### 2.2 All other streets within the Study Area:

- 45 feet max. height to bottom of cornice/parapet wall (3 story)
- 50 feet max. height within building envelope to bottom of cornice/parapet wall (4 story for residential use only)

Dormers permitted if:

- not more than 10' wide each,
- aggregate of all dormers is not more than 1/3 of the total face of building
- do not project beyond building face or height limit

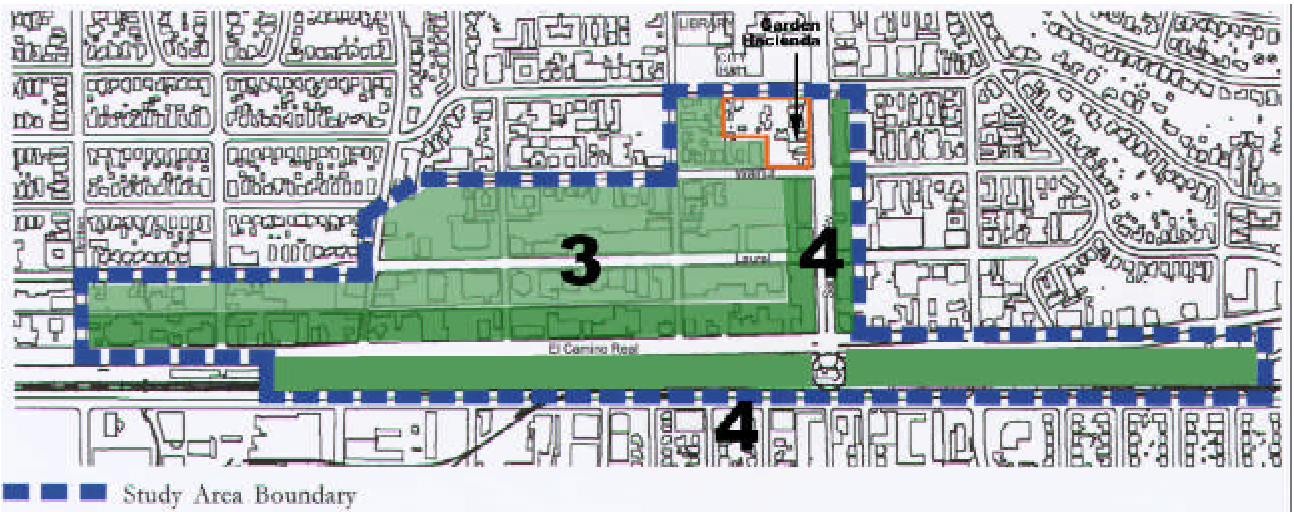
2.3 In addition to the building height maximum, a parapet wall, cornice or sloping roof up to 4 feet tall is permitted.

2.4 If a building is on a corner of two streets with different floor limits, the taller limit may extend up to fifty feet in length along the frontage of the street with the lower limit (e.g. a building at the corner of San Carlos and Laurel may be four stories along its entire San Carlos frontage but only for fifty feet along the Laurel frontage).

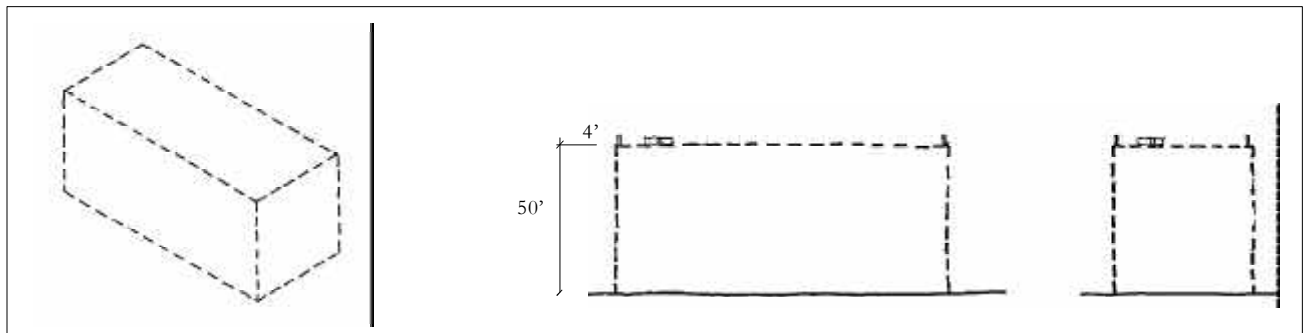
2.5 If the project site is greater than 15,000 square feet, tower or other projecting architectural elements totaling may extend up to fifteen feet above the top of the roof provided the square footage of the element(s) do not total more than 10% of the building foot print. The area above the uppermost permitted floor of the element(s) may not be habitable space.

2.6 If the project site is greater than 15,000 square feet, then 10% of the site must be courtyard or plaza open to sky, adjacent to and accessible from a public sidewalk.

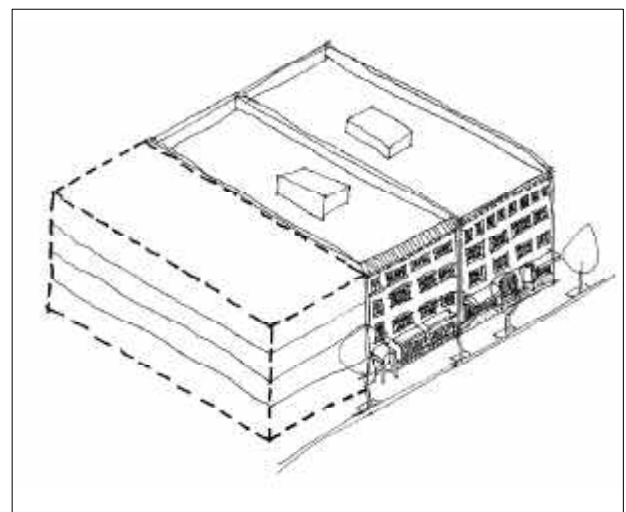
# Building Height and Massing, cont'd-DRAFT (08 Feb 01)



Number of maximum floors permitted varies by street (note: fourth-story residential permitted in three-story areas)

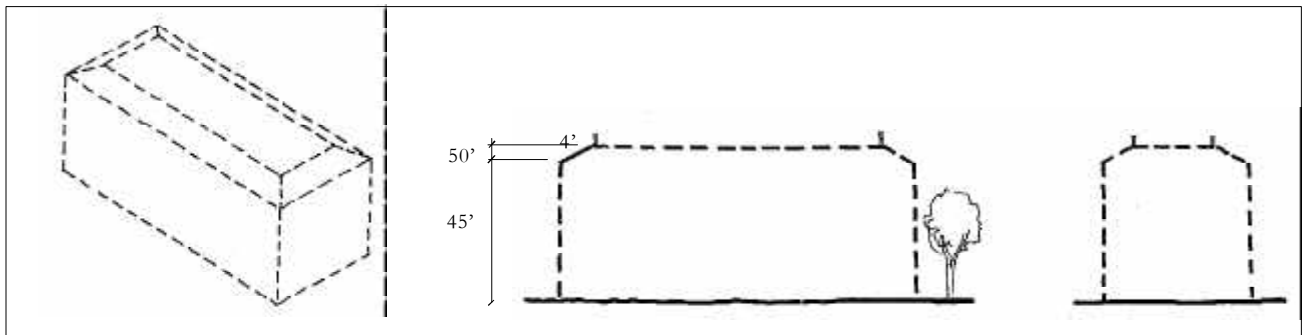


Building envelope for El Camino and San Carlos (2.1)

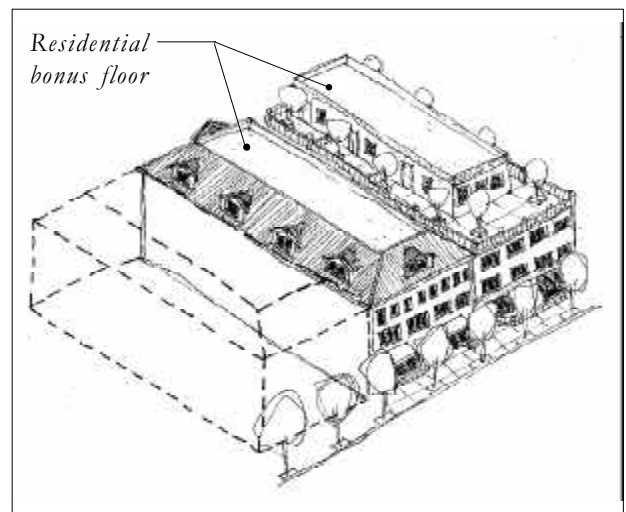


Example of 50' building within building envelope (2.1)

## Building Height and Massing, cont'd-DRAFT (08 Feb 01)



*Building envelope for Laurel and other side streets (2.2)*



*Example of residential bonus within building envelope (2.2)*

**Appendix C**  
**Community Comments Summary**

## Visioning Downtown San Carlos

### Questions and Answers

*(provided by the City of San Carlos)*

#### **Background and Purpose of this Question & Answer (Q&A)**

The City of San Carlos recently concluded a seven-month community visioning process designed to receive input from San Carlos residents, property owners, and businesses. The process was designed to seek general agreement on new design guidelines for the downtown.

Due to the high number of people who were interested in participating in the process, a total of seven workshops were held, an increase from the number of workshops originally planned. Each workshop had a unique focus, which is detailed in Appendix A.

During this process, a large number of important questions were raised regarding potential changes in the City. Below, City Staff has tried to compile a complete list of all questions and issues related to the scope of the design guidelines project and respond to each one.

There were many common themes expressed in both the verbal and written comments received during the process. The questions and answers are grouped around these areas of interest which are:

Character of the City of San Carlos

Height

Housing

Parking

Process

Railroad Land

Retail Issues

Traffic

Miscellaneous

Please take a few minutes to read this information. We believe you will find it very informative. This information is posted on the City's web page (<http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision/visionhome.html>) and will be mailed to each person who attended one or more of the community workshops.

Feel free to contact the Planning Department at City Hall with additional questions and comments. The phone number is 650-802-4263 and the fax is 650-802-4386.

## Questions and Answers

### CHARACTER OF THE CITY OF SAN CARLOS

#### **C1. How does increasing the population by redeveloping the downtown corridor into mixed uses on multiple-floor buildings maintain the village atmosphere?**

Adding upper levels to buildings, including residential units in the downtown area, brings more people downtown. This can create a more vibrant downtown and a safer downtown with “more eyes on the street”. Increased pedestrian traffic may encourage storeowners to stay open later, which often, in turn, encourages more people to dine and stroll downtown.

Economic studies have shown that San Carlos experiences a sizeable amount of “leakage,” a term that means residents choose to spend their expendable dollars outside of the City. Bringing more people into an area may spur an expanded mix of retail offerings that will encourage more residents to shop in town thus providing more opportunity to interact with their neighbors and more revenue to the City to spend on community amenities. Lastly, it has been stated in various studies that additional housing in the downtown area reduces traffic. *Please also refer to the section on housing to understand what additional housing means to the City’s economy.*

#### **C2. A few neighboring communities such as Menlo Park and Burlingame seem to have busy downtowns that have not added new structures. Why can’t San Carlos follow this model?**

One of the qualities that many people appreciate about the Peninsula is that each community has its own flavor. San Carlos is unique and issues must be considered in terms of what works best for San Carlos. That being said, it may be interesting to note that while entirely new structures may not have been built yet in the communities you mentioned, the remodels, refurbishing, and rate of turnover in businesses has been numerous and extensive and the overall look and feel has changed somewhat. Additionally, other communities such as Belmont, Redwood City, and San Mateo have built entirely new structures and/or have adopted policies of *strongly* encouraging downtown housing and have even been involved in the production of this housing. *Please also refer to the section on housing.*

#### **C3. Why are you trying to make the train corridor part of the Downtown? Can the “Village feel” be accomplished along The King’s Highway?**

The zoning along El Camino is different than that along Laurel Street. City policies do not reflect a desire to make the eastside of the El Camino corridor a direct part of or to compete with the Downtown retail businesses, but creating pedestrian-friendly areas and linkages between different parts of the City is encouraged. Additionally, a separate specific land use plan for the railroad corridor is proposed to acknowledge the differentiation of this area.

#### **C4. How do we ensure that we don’t divide the City even more now that the train berm has been built?**

The City Council and Staff are very conscious of creating plans and policies that benefit the entire community, not just one part of it. Awareness has been raised about a feeling of “separateness” between different parts of the City. Ideas of new ways to bring the City together are always welcome. The goal is to work together to achieve a plan that successfully addresses the sensitive issues that development may bring.

The Urban Design Guidelines specifically mention avoiding a “wall” type of development along the railroad. Many informal and formal meetings will continue to be held to solicit public input for this area.

### **C5. Will we continue to have community events that help maintain our small town atmosphere?**

The City and Chamber intend to continue the events that were mentioned such as Hometown Days, parades, free concerts in the park, the Art and Wine Festival, and street fairs including “A Taste of Italy.”

## **HEIGHT**

### **HT1. How tall will new buildings be?**

Heights are currently limited by the zoning of the specific parcel. The maximum height currently permitted by zoning ordinance is 50 feet. Height was one of the most significant issues discussed during the Visioning process and will continue to be at the forefront of citizen, City Staff, Planning Commission, and City Council discussions.

### **HT2. Based on our meetings, what heights will you recommend to the Council?**

The consultant has completed a draft of the Urban Design Guidelines. This is available on the web site (<http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision/visionhome.html>) and in the Planning Department. Staff believes that the issue of height was one of the most controversial issues and does not believe that general agreement was reached.

Staff is recommending to Council that as consensus on height was not reached during the visioning meetings, height not be part of the Urban Design Guidelines. Staff is recommending there be additional studies and community discussions on the height issue. This will allow additional and more specific opportunities for both formal and informal comments and input from the community before making a final determination on height. The height along the railroad will be reviewed separately from height in other areas of town.

### **HT3. Would it be possible for you to present additional options for the areas you now have designated for three- and four-story buildings?**

The buildings that the workshop participants viewed were presented as concepts only, and were

intended to provide a starting point for discussion on building massing. It is possible for developers to present models of different buildings as they propose projects. The economic studies the City has planned will look at the financial feasibility of shorter versus taller buildings as well as other uses.

The concept of a “dynamic brochure” is one of the many tools that came out of the Visioning process. This is an on-line tool that allows 3-D and side-by-side comparisons of project alternatives. This was used during the workshops and can be done for specific projects in the future.

#### **HT4. Why can't all taller buildings be placed opposite businesses, not across from residential areas?**

San Carlos zoning and policies do require neighborhood compatibility for new projects. Additionally, City Planners work with developers to create buffer zones between residences and commercial areas where necessary. These may include open space, lower building heights, setbacks, landscaping, design sensitivity, and so on.

#### **HT5. Is the issue really height, or is it overall density? Isn't design more important than height? If we included open/green space very close to these taller buildings, would it be fine to build higher?**

In this question, architectural treatments contribute significantly to the character of a downtown. This issue will be addressed in the Urban Design Guidelines, the final outcome of this process, so that the preferred look and feel of downtown is maintained as much as possible. It is the goal of the City that the Urban Design Guidelines help to create even more character and charm throughout the community.

It is important to differentiate between height, density and bulk. The bulk, or mass, of a building generally has a more significant visual impact than height or density. It is often difficult to imagine what a building will look like until it is completed. Good architecture can reduce the height or massive impacts of structures. The workshops demonstrated that a well-designed tall building can be more aesthetically pleasing than a poorly designed shorter building. Many design features are available to mitigate bulk, which is one of the primary reasons why the City elected to prepare the design guidelines.

The draft of the Urban Design Guidelines specifically speaks to maintaining a “village atmosphere” and gives specific recommendations of how to achieve this. These recommendations include using set backs, corner details, quality building materials, courtyards, plazas, public art, and building articulation to reduce the visual mass of a building by creating smaller visual elements along the facade.

The City's goal is that with the approval of the Urban Design Guidelines, any new development will be of high quality and aesthetically pleasing to the community. Please continue to participate in these important discussions and attend Planning Commission and City Council meetings to help preserve and create a desirable downtown and community.

## HOUSING

### HG1. What is “workforce” or “affordable” housing?

Workforce housing is a unit (either rental or ownership) that houses those earning 50-120% of San Mateo County’s median income. The dollar amount varies by household size, but currently these amounts are \$67,250 for a single person, up to well over \$100,000 for more than four people in a household. Our local teachers, firefighters, and nurses are all earning less than these amounts and have a difficult time finding housing they can afford.

### HG2. Who will live in workforce housing?

Some of your neighbors may already be living in workforce housing, the people who live there are indistinguishable from the rest of the community. It is hoped that as more units become available, commutes may be reduced for people who work in San Carlos. This would reduce traffic congestion and benefit the environment. If new units become available, preference could be given to those individuals or families who already live or work in San Carlos. It may be your children or grandchildren in their first jobs or the counter staff who serves you your morning coffee who lives in workforce housing.

Here is a representative sample of the incomes and occupations that qualify people for affordable housing. All information is based on a family of three, living in a 2-bedroom unit, according to mean salaries for the San Francisco/San Mateo County Area.

	<u>Extremely Low</u>	<u>Very Low</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Moderate</u>
<b>Annual Income Limit</b>	Up to \$22,950	\$22,951 to \$38,250	\$38,250 to \$61,200	\$61,201 to \$72,100	\$72,101 to \$86,500
<b>Monthly Housing Payment</b>	\$574	\$956	\$1,530	\$1,802	\$2,163
<b>Representative Jobs</b>	Hotel Attendant Manicurist Host/Hostess Mover Bank Teller Security Guard Electronic Assembler Dry Cleaner Operator Recreation worker Food Service Worker Watchmaker Tire Changer Precision Assembler Childcare Worker Parking Lot Attendant	Barber Restaurant Cook Real Estate Agent Paramedic Home Health Aide Auto Mechanic Hair Dresser Surgical Tech Dental Assistant Travel Agent Physical Therapist Customer Service Rep Auto Body Repairer Emergency Dispatcher	Accountant Dental Hygienist Optical Tech Firefighter Teacher Psychologist Registered Nurse Electrician Veterinary Tech Legal Secretary Librarian Interior Designer	Civil Engineer Pharmacist Police Officer Computer Engineer Optometrist Commercial Pilot Electrical Engineer	Dentist Chemical Engineer Podiatrist Technical Writer Art Director College Administrator Physicist Marketing Manager Information Systems Manager Personal Financial Advisor

Source: State of California, Department of Labor; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Salary.com

### **HG3. Why do we need to worry about workforce housing? What are the benefits of building apartments?**

San Carlos, and other nearby communities, are realizing that unless housing is provided for those who fall into the “affordable housing” guidelines, there will be an adverse affect upon the community. This will (and has) meant a loss of teachers, nurses, public safety employees, bank clerks, restaurant workers, and others who provide valuable services within the community. It also has the result of over crowding when too many people live together in a house or an apartment because they could not otherwise afford housing.

Economics Research Associates completed a Market Analysis and Economic Development Strategy Study for the City of San Carlos in 2000. In this study, economist Bill Lee addresses the economics and social impacts of housing. During the visioning workshops, Lee spoke to the general issue of what happens if a City does not provide affordable housing and stated that as the economy and housing demand continue to grow, the lack of affordable housing on the San Francisco Peninsula will have the following negative impacts:

#### **Economic Impacts**

- Younger people in moderate paying jobs - teachers, fire fighters, sales clerks, waiters or waitresses, gardeners, etc. - will be priced out of the market and forced to relocate out of the area or endure long commutes.
- In order to fill these positions, public and private employers will bid up wages.
- To offset the higher cost of labor, prices and taxes will need to increase.
- Selected businesses that are not able to raise prices will be forced to move off the Peninsula, resulting in less convenient services for local residents.
- As a consequence, Peninsula households will pay more for a wide range of goods and services.
- The real purchasing power of Peninsula households will decrease.

#### **Social Impacts**

- The children and grandchildren of Peninsula families are often not able to afford to reside locally.
- Employees of Peninsula firms must commute from greater distances.
- The additional time spent in commuting places more stress on the family life of those employees.
- The longer commutes also generate more regional air pollution.

Additionally, the State of California requires all local jurisdictions including the City of San Carlos to plan for housing for all income levels. If the City does not meet the state mandates, it may mean the loss of funding sources or even the invalidation of our General Plan, which may open the possibility for court actions against the City of San Carlos.

**HG4. As big as the project is along the railroad for north and south of Holly Street, aren't there only going to be about 30 affordable housing units? How are we going to meet our lower-income housing quota of 300 units (assuming we want to and ABAG doesn't raise our "mandate") with such large proposals that deliver so little?**

Ten-percent (10%) of new units is the minimum number of affordable units that the City requires for new development that is ten units or larger. A developer may elect to build more than the required minimum. For example, the Pacific Hacienda project will include 15% affordable housing units. Other developments will also include an affordable housing mix, perhaps much higher than the required minimums. Such details remain to be studied and determined.

The total number of new units that San Carlos is mandated by the State of California to plan for over the next 5 years is 368. These are divided into income categories as follows:

Very Low	65
Low	32
Moderate	89
Above Moderate	182

Every unit of workforce housing helps the City of San Carlos and the State of California meet its housing needs, cumulatively helping over time. The creation of 30 or 40 new units would be a substantial increase over what has been developed in San Carlos over the past few years. The City's policy is to disperse workforce-housing units throughout the community to ensure a full range of housing choices and location.

**HG5. Why do we need downtown housing?**

ERA's study concludes that a better balance between housing, retail and office uses within the downtown will satisfy several community objectives:

- It will increase the critically needed supply of worker housing.
- It will soften the peak hour traffic congestion created by an area dominated by office use.
- It will move downtown San Carlos closer to the desired "urban village" by increasing support for retail and restaurant uses during evenings and on weekends.
- It will strengthen the sense of community because more downtown patrons will be local residents rather than commuter employees.

**HG6. Isn't the City just pushing through more housing to get more federal dollars?**

The City is mandated by the State of California to plan for a certain amount of housing units. In this community it is very difficult to create new affordable units due to the scarcity of land, high land

costs, etc. Pooling and leveraging our available housing funds is the only way to build some of these projects. Local, State, and Federal grants, tax credits, and low-interest loans as well as the San Carlos Redevelopment Agency housing funds help encourage the developer to build a project. These are funds that are only granted for housing projects, and can not be spent in any other way. If San Carlos is able to leverage these funds and successfully plan for our State-mandated allotment of housing units, San Carlos will not be at risk for a lawsuit or reduced State funding from sources such as State Gas Tax funds which are used for projects such as street pot hole repair or sewer improvements.

The City's efforts increase the housing supply to meet these state required housing goals. However, it is important that adequate "affordable" housing is increased to provide housing for the community's workforce: teachers, public safety personnel, store clerks, etc.

In an effort to encourage a small percentage of the units be deemed "affordable," the State of California is now offering some funding to help create new units. The City of San Carlos is obligated to plan for workforce housing regardless of whether or not the City takes advantage of available outside funding sources. By utilizing all possible outside funding sources for housing, the City's General Fund money is made available to spend on other community priorities such as parks, public safety, senior programs, and so on.

#### **HG7. How is the number of new affordable units determined?**

San Carlos is required by State law to plan for additional housing units, a portion of which must be deemed affordable. The State of California, through the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), sets these numbers for us. (*Please see HG4.*)

In an effort to meet our State mandates, the City of San Carlos requires that new housing units, including single-family homes, must include a certain percentage of these new units as affordable or the developer is required to pay a "housing in-lieu fee." Although the City can plan for an estimated number of units through zoning ordinances and so on, the City can not predict the number of new affordable units that will be built in any given year as the number of new units is determined by market demand and the number of proposals received from developers. The City's Redevelopment Agency, as required by law, does actively participate to assist with increasing the number of housing units within the community.

#### **HG8. What happened to Mayor Buckmaster's idea of building low-income condos or townhouses on school land?**

The City has been informed that the School District has had and continues to hold internal discussions with its teachers and others as part of their research to determine the viability and feasibility of such a project. There are no definite or short-term plans to build teacher housing at this time.

#### **HG9. I don't deny there is a great need for more housing, especially more affordable housing.**

**However the 10-20% proposed in the train corridor project seems paltry. If you're serious about this crisis then why not 30-40%, or better yet half of it?**

Given the land values in San Carlos, developing a project with such a requirement may be overly burdensome and too costly for a developer. The actual percentage of any new units that may be proposed along the rail corridor will be discussed in detail. There are many issues that affect the outcome: Financial feasibility, building height and density, traffic, parking, and so on. The developer of the southern portion of the available land (south of the Train Depot to Arroyo Street) is interested in developing a project that is targeted to be well over 50% affordable, and possibly 100% affordable depending on their financing arrangement.

Additionally, the Below Market Rate (BMR) ordinance will be reviewed for possible amendments that may include a greater percentage of affordable units required in new projects. The San Carlos Project Area Committee's Housing Committee is currently studying this option. Additionally, through funding mechanisms noted above, greater amounts could be proposed.

**HG10. If we add additional housing, how will our schools handle additional children?**

The number of children expected to live in new units varies by the type and size of development. The school district may review new proposed housing developments. Established criteria can reasonably predict the number of children in any given new development. Schools can then assess if the facilities and resources are sufficient to educate the additional students. This is also one of the areas that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) law requires the City to review.

Most recently, the number of children predicted to reside in the Laurel Theater apartment development was *over* estimated. Therefore, the district had more than enough capacity to take care of the additional children who do live there.

**HG11. What do we gain and lose by building apartments?**

Providing additional housing is important for the community, particularly housing that is affordable for individuals who either currently work or live in San Carlos. Apartments are one way that such housing can be offered. Affordable housing is an important economic and social issue facing not only San Carlos but also the entire Peninsula region. The City's goal (and a State Law requirement for its Redevelopment Agency) is to increase the supply of housing in the community.

**HG12. Why can't you build all workforce housing to the east of El Camino, keeping the extra traffic where there is more space?**

Traffic is an issue throughout the City. In fact, some of the more congested intersections are in the eastern portion of the City. The City Council believes that a variety of housing options and opportunities should be provided throughout the City, not just in one area. Additionally, it is generally agreed that it is better to distribute workforce housing throughout the City and each neighborhood and not to concentrate it in one place, which is often referred to as saturation or impaction.

**HG13. Why wasn't housing constructed on the Circle Star Theater site?**

The site of the former Circle Star Theater was not designated for housing.

The East Side Specific Land Use Plan was adopted by the City Council 10 years ago following a two-year planning process. A citizen's advisory committee recommended the Land Use Plan that designated the Circle Star property for office/hotel development. Alternative land uses were considered, including housing development.

It was determined that office and hotel development was preferred to housing and other development for many reasons: proximity to US 101, noise generated from the freeway, vehicle access, etc. Both the Planning Commission and City Council adopted the land use plan following public hearings. However, the City Council has recently appointed a citizens committee to revisit the East Side Specific Plan, and creating sites for additional housing through zoning ordinances will be one of the topics for discussion.

**HG14. If more workforce housing is created, will our home prices be affected?**

There are a number of developments in San Carlos that are either wholly or partially available for workforce housing. These units are will integrated into the neighborhood and there is no known decrease in any of the surrounding property values.

The architectural style and design quality are important, which is one of the purposes of and reasons for creating the Urban Design Guidelines. Examples of attractive design are apparent throughout San Mateo County and the Bay Area.

Although no one can predict what will happen to real estate prices, historical information suggests that it is unlikely that any type of new development will decrease property values. In 2000, the average price of a San Carlos home was \$778,131 and this has already increased in the first quarter of 2001 by over \$35,000. The average condominium purchase price is over \$500,000, a half a million dollars.

An expanded view of this issue is expressed in an editorial that appeared in *The Independent* newspaper in April. It stated, "many homeowners who purchased homes 15 years ago in cities like San Mateo, Burlingame, San Carlos, and Belmont are now living in residences with a value of \$1 million or more. These homeowners have become millionaires almost overnight because of the desirability of the area." The editorial continues by submitting that if we "enact zoning laws that drive businesses out of the county ... then watch the price of housing drop like a lead balloon."

*Please also refer to several of the previous answers including the chart on the income levels and professions that are eligible for workforce housing.*

**HG15. Will anybody want to live near the train tracks with the noise, vibrations and other disturbances caused by trains?**

One of the current primary planning considerations of every city along the Peninsula is to consider housing development near transportation corridors. Experts have suggested that this may be one way to reduce traffic and increase housing affordability through increased density. In San Carlos this means in the area near the Train Depot. For example, the preliminary Railroad Land Use Plan recommends increased housing densities in the land between El Camino Real and the train tracks. The plan also proposes office buildings. By locating housing near transportation, residents have the opportunity to take the train to work. Conversely, office development near the train depot will enable workers who live outside of San Carlos to use the train to commute to their San Carlos office locations. The desired result is to reduce the vehicle traffic generated from those not currently using the train for their daily transportation.

Noise and building vibrations can be greatly reduced with modern building technology. Noise insulation code requirements and the respective current construction techniques are very effective at minimizing noise and vibration impacts. Many people already choose to live near public transportation, and live near the train up and down the entire Peninsula into San Jose. Other cities such as Palo Alto and Mountain View have built showcase housing directly next to the train station. These were some of the fastest selling and rented units in the cities.

Lastly, any proposed new development will study noise impacts as part of the environmental review process.

## PARKING

### **PG1. How do we ensure adequate parking for new development?**

The City maintains certain development standards for the number of parking spaces that are required for each new development, whether it is commercial or residential. As often as necessary, the City reviews these standards to ensure they are adequate. The City consults with traffic and parking experts to determine existing and future needs. Prior to any significant development of a site, a detailed traffic and parking analysis is completed.

### **PG2. Why don't we have enough parking downtown?**

The Redevelopment Agency engaged Hexagon Transportation Consultants two years ago to study downtown parking: the number of private and public parking spaces; their location; the frequency of their use; and recommendations on how to meet both current and projected downtown parking demands. This study showed that although the City currently has adequate parking, it concluded there would be additional needs in the future.

The consultants conducted a community survey and met with both City Staff and a twelve-member citizen's advisory committee for over a year. Three primary recommendations were presented to Council after this process.

- 1) The Downtown Employee Permit Parking Program (as administered by the Chamber of Commerce) be modified;
- 2) The Parking In-Lieu Fee for each required space that can not be provided on the business property be increased from \$6,500 to \$13,000/space plus an annual CPI increase; and
- 3) The City should develop a mixed-use parking structure with housing above. The recommended location is at Wheeler Plaza (the public parking plaza located behind Wells Fargo Bank and Foodville).

The City Council approved all three recommendations. City Staff will request proposals for the parking structure/housing development following adoption of the Urban Design Guidelines. This will provide prospective developers a better understanding of the type of development the City is requesting: i.e. architectural style, mass, type of material, set back, open space, etc. There will be a thorough review and environmental assessment before the proposed project is considered by the Planning Commission and the City Council.

### **PG3. Won't additional housing create a parking problem?**

Housing, or any new development, must meet the City's parking requirements. Current standards are believed to be sufficient to provide adequate parking, but each new proposal will be evaluated on an individual bases and Staff will continue to review the requirements and recommend changes as necessary. Additionally, if new housing is created downtown, there may be less need for parking as people can walk to public transportation, markets, restaurants, and shopping. Housing generates less of a parking and traffic need than other uses.

Additionally, the Council has contracted with a consultant who can recommend "non-traditional" or "non-capital" mitigation measures to alleviate the parking and traffic impacts of new development of any type. Some of the measures the consultant may recommend might include shuttles or locating amenities such as childcare facilities on-site.

### **PG4. Will there be enough parking for the new apartments at South Plaza behind Bell Market?**

Both the City and the owners of Bell Market have completed numerous traffic and parking studies. All of these studies conclude that there is sufficient parking to accommodate the market, surrounding uses, and proposed housing development.

### **PG5. Is it legal to charge an apartment renter an additional amount per month for a parking place assignment? Can the building owner rent out our spaces to the general public?**

Yes if it is approved by the Planning Commission as a Shared Parking Agreement and does not reduce the spaces available to the on-site user.

**PG6. Will downtown parking change from angle to parallel?**

The City Engineer initially considered parallel parking but determined that too many parking spaces would be lost. When the roadway on Laurel Street is rebuilt, the plans are to re-stripe for diagonal parking.

**PG7. What are the costs involved with parking lots?**

The cost of parking lots varies widely by the type of parking provided. In general, surface parking is the least expensive, garage structures are more expensive, and underground parking is the most expensive. Additional factors such as the type of soil, the lot configuration, the angle of the parking, regional variations in construction costs, and whether or not a structure (such as housing or offices) will be built on top can all influence the cost.

Costs are usually figured per parking space and may range from approximately \$2,000 per space (typically for surface parking) to several tens of thousands of dollars per space (usually for underground parking).

**PG8. How do we keep train riders from parking in our neighborhood?**

According to the Joint Powers Board, an additional 200 parking spaces are planned for the Caltrain San Carlos Station. The parking situation will be monitored to determine if further actions are necessary. Additionally, the City's traffic consultant may consider other measures such as neighborhood permit parking.

**PG9. If a downtown parking garage is built, will there be public restrooms? What about security and trash issues?**

These are important design and use issues that will be considered as the parking garage plan is developed.

**PROCESS****PS1. What is the goal of this process and development? To make San Carlos prettier, more economically viable, what?**

The goal of this process is to develop a community vision for the future of downtown San Carlos with consideration to economic, land use, and traffic parameters. As part of this process, Tom Richman & Associates was hired by the City to facilitate the downtown visualization process including the discussion with residents about their sentiments toward land use and urban design issues. It is the intent of this process to ensure that the design and land uses reflect the community's desire in balance with the issues noted above. Tom Richman & Associates has used citizen input to create a set of Urban Design Guidelines to recommend to the Planning Commission and City Council. These guidelines will shape future development in the downtown area. The Council hopes to encourage an attractive, inviting, and economically viable downtown, both now and 20 years from now.

Specifically, the Urban Design Guidelines will provide current and future property owners with recommendations for what remodeled and/or new development should look like. This includes building set backs, mass, type of construction material, open space, etc.

**PS2. How/where is rezoning permissible (using the old theatre property as an example)?**

Developers may apply for Planned Community (PC) Zoning if there are significant features associated with the project that are outside the scope of zoning and if there are unique circumstances associated with the property. It provides an opportunity for a developer or property owner to propose a new project that may be more appropriate for a specific site but which current zoning does not allow for. This process allows additional time for review and discussion by the citizens, Planning Commission and the City Council. (*Please see Question RLA.*)

**PS3. How will the City Council hear about our comments? Will they see a videotape? Can we put the video in the library?**

The members of the Planning Commission and the City Council have continually received updates on our progress. Many of them attended one or more of the visioning meetings. All written comments will be forwarded to the Council and are available for public review. Due to the cost, the sessions were not videotaped. The information, including this Question & Answer, is posted on the City's web site at <http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision/visionhome.html>. Please continue to remain active in the process and speak at the Planning Commission and/or the City Council to ensure your views have been accurately captured.

**PS4. What is the standard design review process for specific projects? Who gets to review proposals?**

The City of San Carlos has a number of different processes for development, and design review is only one component in a lengthy public process. A brief overview of the steps involved during the development process is provided below. Please note that each component does not necessarily happen in this exact order, not every step always occurs, and steps do not have to occur in a lineal fashion as several processes may happen simultaneously. The order of the events is dependent upon the type of application that is submitted.

Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce distributes a document called *Doing Business with the City of San Carlos* that outlines the process in more detail and provides flow charts for many of the stages. This document is produced in conjunction with the City Redevelopment Agency and it is recommended reading for anyone who needs more information.

Planning Process

Development Review Committee (DRC) — City Department heads, including the City Manager and City Attorney, review a project and begin working with the developer to identify potential significant impacts or project requirements. This is a pre-applicant process that assists a developer in determining the City's comments on a project.

**Formal application** — A developer must submit a formal application to the Planning Department. Staff conducts an initial review and determines compatibility with existing codes and policies.

**Routing through Departments** — Preliminary plans are routed to various departments including Building, Public Works, Police, and Fire to determine what requirements will be necessary.

**Environmental Review** – Staff determines what impacts the project may potentially have and conducts the appropriate environmental review for the project.

**Architectural Review (ARC)** – This committee reviews the architectural qualities of a project in a public meeting.

**Planning Commission** – the Planning Commission holds formal public hearings on the land use aspects of projects and recommends approval or denial or certain changes. Businesses must also apply for a Conditional Use Permit as this time and the Planning Commission can incorporate conditions that must be met before the project can move further. One recent example of this is that the Pacific Hacienda developer had to salvage historical items and have them reviewed before building permits could be issued.

**Appeal process** – If all concerns of any party were not resolved to the party's satisfaction, an appeal may be made to the Planning Commission or City Council. The Planning Commission or City Council hears the issue and make a decision during a public meeting.

Additionally, if both the Planning Commission and the City Council approve the Urban Design Guidelines, they will be incorporated into the ARC approval process for individual projects.

### Building Process

After the planning process is complete, the developer must go through a second process in order to obtain building permits. When plans are submitted to the Building Department, they are routed through the appropriate departments including Planning, Fire, Public Works, and Police for review and approval.

### Business Registration Process

One of the last steps that needs to be completed is to obtain a business registration from the Finance Department.

### Public Outreach Process

In addition to the formal application process, the City facilitates as much public outreach as possible. Again, there are many different ways this is accomplished.

Appointed City citizen advisory committees are informed of large projects and their input is requested. (*See Question #PS8*). These committees include: Economic Development Advisory Council (EDAC), Project Area Committee (PAC), New Projects Committee, Housing Committee, and specific project committees.

There are several committees with the Chamber of Commerce that are informed about projects. These include the Downtown Retail Council, the Economic Development Council, the Industrial Council, and the Board of Directors. City Staff encourages comments from these members.

The City or the Chamber of Commerce or both often hold informational public meetings, and City staff presents information on a project and answers questions. City staff is available to speak at any community meetings such as homeowner association meetings, church meetings, Realtor meetings, or service club meetings such as Rotary, the Lions, or the Kiwanis.

On significant projects, the City encourages the developer to host neighborhood meetings (sometimes several) and may assist with noticing these meetings.

**PS5. What if someone isn't comfortable using the Internet? How can they get the 3-D models?**

All City reports are always available during business hours at the City Clerk's office on the second floor of City Hall located at 600 Elm Street and copies may be made at a per-page rate.

Free Internet access is available at the San Carlos Library if you wish to view the information online. The web address is <http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision/visionhome.html>. The Library has Internet terminals that can be reserved for 30 min. - 1-hour periods by calling the Reference Desk at (650) 591-0341 ext. 222. The Library staff is available to provide limited assistance to patrons using the terminals.

Additionally, the San Carlos Library and the City's Parks & Recreation Department offer Internet classes that teach the basics of how to use the Internet and web browsers. Interested persons can call the Library Reference Desk at (650) 591-0341 or walk into the Parks and Recreation Department Registration Office Monday through Thursday 8:30 AM – 8:00 PM or on Friday from 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM.

**PS6. How do we move the Urban Design Guidelines forward to concrete results?**

The Planning Commission and the City Council will consider the proposed Urban Design Guidelines during public hearings. If approved, Staff will incorporate the guidelines into the development review process.

**PS7. Did the attendance at the Visioning meetings accurately represent the residents of San Carlos?**

Through various advertising methods, including a citywide mailing of approximately 14,000 households, every attempt was made to gather input from a variety of people. The meetings were open to anyone who would attend and were held in the evenings to encourage residents from all geographic areas of this city as well as business owners to attend. Approximately 350 people

attended at least one workshop and at the meetings attendees were asked to plot their address on a map of the City. This map shows that there were attendees from throughout the City. The upcoming public hearings provide an expanded public participation opportunity.

**PS8. It was mentioned that some 10-12 citizen advisory committees sat in planning meetings and provided ideas. How were these committee members selected and who were they? What qualities did they offer and were they paid? Were the same people re-appointed to subsequent committees?**

Citizens Advisory Committees are appointed by the City Council. The Citizens who serve are volunteers who serve many hours, often for many months and always without any compensation.

To select committee members, the Council advertises the openings through several mediums including in the newspaper and on the City's web site. Citizens must submit a completed application and the City Council then interviews all those wishing to be considered for appointment. The Council appoints members with consideration given to forming a diverse committee that represents a cross-section of the community. Examples of attributes that the Council might take into consideration include geographic location, business, land ownership/tenancy, interest to serve, etc. The interviews are conducted and appointments are made during announced, public meetings.

Each time an advisory committee is convened there is a separate selection process and a unique committee is formed.

Some committees are standing committees. These include the Economic Development Advisory Committee and Project Area Committee along with their associated sub-committees such as the Traffic Committee, the New Projects Committee, and the Housing Committee.

Some committees are formed to consider a specific issue. Example of recent, specific-issue committees include the Downtown Parking Citizens Advisory Committee and the West Side Specific Plan Update Citizens Advisory Committee. Currently, the East Side Specific Plan Update Citizens Advisory Committee is meeting for approximately the next seven months. The lists of current and past citizen advisory committee members are available at the City Clerks office in City Hall.

Additionally, information is always shared with a number of Chamber of Commerce Committees and their input is also solicited.

**PS9. What are the next steps?**

A copy of the Urban Design Guidelines and a Staff recommendation will be reported to and considered by the Planning Commission in June, followed by a second public hearing at the City Council. The Guidelines must gain approval from both the Planning Commission and the City Council before they can be adopted. City Staff anticipates that the public will continue to stay involved during the formal public hearing process.

**PS10. How can I stay involved?**

There are a number of ways to stay both informed and involved. For information, please continue to check the web site for updates (<http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision/visionhome.html>), watch your mailbox for information such as this Question & Answer, and check the paper for announcements of public hearings. To stay involved, please share written comments with City Staff and/or your Council members and attend the public hearings.

**RAILROAD LAND****RL1. What will happen to the vacant land near Caltrain?**

This is one of the few remaining pieces of unimproved land in San Carlos. The preliminary land use plan designates the area for housing and/or office uses. The property owner has indicated an interest to develop both workforce and market-rate housing and offices with underground parking near the train depot and a landscaped parkway along the southern portion of the site. Given the site constraints, the feasibility of this type of development is still being explored.

**RL2. Who owns the RR right of way property?**

The Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board administers commuter rail service (Caltrain) from San Francisco to Gilroy.

The San Mateo County Transit District owns the property in San Carlos immediately adjacent to the train right-of-way. It is the Transit District land that is available for possible development.

**RL3. How much land is available along the railroad for development?**

There are over 16 acres of property along the railroad within the San Carlos City limits. However, some of this land is dedicated to the train depot and parking and some of it is too narrow for development. There are two primary areas that are suitable for development. One is north of Holly Street and is approximately four acres. The second area is south of the train depot to Arroyo Street and is approximately three acres. A possible third development is further south near the San Carlos City limits.

**RL4. Is that property exempt from San Carlos City Building Codes?**

No. The property is not exempt from San Carlos Planning and Building Codes and Transit District plans are not exempt from local review and approval. According to Government Code Sec. 53091 every local agency shall comply with all applicable building and zoning ordinances of the city in which they are located.

**RL5. Does Planned Community (PC) zoning exempt the property from height and density limits?**

It could. Developing a Planned Community (or applying for PC zoning) is one possibility that the Transit District may consider. A Planned Community establishes site-specific zoning standards and allows for flexibility in building design and placement. The Planning Commission and City Council are required to review any Planned Community zone designations.

A unified site design, a mix of land uses, and common open spaces usually characterize this form of development. It permits the planning of a project over the entire development, rather than on an individual lot-by-lot basis, and offers public officials considerable involvement in determining the nature of the development. PC zoning can have a number of advantages over conventional lot-by-lot development including:

- Mixing building types and uses to create more “alive” communities;
- Combining often unusable yard space on individual lots into larger common open spaces;
- Offering greater opportunities for incentives to building less expensive housing;
- Lower street and utility costs resulting from reduced frontage;
- Offering the potential for more desirable and attractive development;
- Addressing site constraints of properties with unique features; and
- The possibility of increasing density while keeping desired amenities.

#### **RL6. Will the buildings step back from El Camino?**

This will depend on the design guideline provisions as well as review and approval of a specific development proposal at the site.

#### **RL7. How close would the buildings be built next to the tracks?**

Due to the fact that any development is still in the conceptual stages, it is unknown how close any buildings would be to the rail tracks. Setbacks will be reviewed and available for public comment as a specific proposal moves through the development process.

#### **RL8. Will my view of the hills be blocked if development occurs along the rail corridor?**

No specific development has been submitted or approved yet. The draft Urban Design Guidelines requires that along the railroad “buildings (be) designed and located to mitigate impact on the view of the hills for the residents on the eastside of the tracks.” The guidelines further require that the buildings be separated “with space between to maintain light and view corridors and to avoid ‘solid wall’ effect for either side of the tracks.”

Furthermore, when development proposals are considered, it will be possible during the review process to understand how views may or may not be affected. It is architecturally possible to situate buildings so that as many and as much of the view corridor might be protected. Design alternatives will be considered. One example of a design alternative would be to build fewer but taller buildings in order to preserve more open space, or to build more, shorter buildings to preserve the broadest

view. As part of the review process, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be conducted and views will be one of the elements studied.

**RL9. What about open space and landscaping?**

These two important elements will be included and evaluated as part of any proposed development plan for the site(s).

**RL10. Why can't we make some attractive landscaping and parking along this strip, the way Belmont did, and eliminate the need for a parking structure?**

Any development will require open space, landscaping, and adequate parking. State and regional planners have adopted many of the components favored by Smart Growth and this includes encouraging development such as housing or office closer to transportation corridors like Caltrain. While additional parking at the Caltrain station is planned, it is appropriate to take advantage of the available land near the train and bus stop. The preliminary Railroad Land Use Plan that was recommended to the Planning Commission and the City Council by the Railroad Citizen's Advisory Committee included housing development in this area.

Additionally, the Citizen's Parking Committee explored the idea of creating parking along this strip of land to support downtown. It was the group's conclusion that employees and customers would not park there and walk across El Camino to the downtown. Downtown patrons tend to desire closer parking.

**RL11. When will the 3-D visions of the railway corridor projects be available on-line?**

The 3-D models are currently available on the City's web site (<http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/vision/visionhome.html>). Please keep in mind these are massing studies, not architectural renderings or actual proposals. The model reflects a combination of three- and four-story buildings with a view from Old County Road at Sylvan Drive. It should be noted that this design and the development at this location are very conceptual and were prepared as a massing study for the workshop. SamTrans representatives are reviewing comments from the visioning process as they formulate parameters for development along this property. An environmental review (noise, traffic, visual, etc.) will be required prior to formal City review of any development at the railroad site.

**RL12. Can you provide more graphics regarding what a scenario would look like if only five-story buildings were constructed in the areas directly along the railroad tracks?**

The City will require the project applicant to provide planning staff, elected officials, and citizens with as much information as possible, including additional design scenarios and computer modeling to show the proposal's specific design features. Architectural renderings will be required before the project goes to the Planning Commission. The City would prefer that a tiered approach (set back the upper floors) with sensitivity to the train depot and surrounding residential neighborhood be explored.

**RL13. Will buildings deflect noise into the surrounding neighborhoods? Given the size and proximity of the buildings, is there a practical way of estimating how much railroad engine/horn noise would be projected onto the homes on the Eastside of the tracks? Would the decibel level go up 2X, 10X, etc. above the norm?**

The potential development along the railroad property is still in the early conceptual stages and therefore, it is unknown at this time what new buildings may be built or at what heights. Therefore, it is not possible at this time to determine if sound patterns will be altered. However, an environmental analysis will be conducted before the approval of any project and a noise consultant will evaluate possible noise impacts.

Please note that a recent noise study compared the noise levels before and after the construction of the railroad berm and does not show any noise increase.

**RL14. During rainstorms and high tide, water often backs up through the drainage and sewer system. Where will the runoff from development along the railway go? Who will pay to upgrade the system?**

There are two separate systems in San Mateo County to remove unwanted or excess water from an area.

The Sanitary Sewer System carries wastewater from toilets, showers, sinks and so on from inside your home or business to a treatment plant. Developers are charged fees for new connections to the system. The sewer system in San Carlos has available capacity to handle additional development.

The Stormwater Drainage System collects and carries excess runoff from rainwater through the drains you see in your streets directly to the creeks and ultimately the San Francisco Bay without any treatment. Over the past year the City of San Carlos has been upgrading the system and more work is currently planned over the next year. Stormwater work is paid for from several sources including the NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) tax on property, the General Fund, and State Gas Tax funds. If the railroad land were to be developed, the Project Engineer would evaluate the potential effects on the system and would require the necessary modifications/improvements. *(For additional information, please visit the San Mateo Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program web site at [www.stopp.net](http://www.stopp.net))*

**RL15. What about the high water table and flooding created by excavating? Will a pumping station be necessary for any of the buildings or parking garages? Where will it be located?**

If new buildings or underground parking garages are built near the railroad, the developer will have to determine if water-pumping equipment will be necessary to conform to all Federal, State, and City development standards and codes. Any new parking structure will be designed to ensure there will be no flooding either in the parking structure or in the surrounding area.

It is unknown at this time where, if at all, a pumping station may be located but locating the station would be subject to review and approval by the Planning Department and Public Works. The City

Engineer and the City Geologist will work to determine if any development proposals adequately meet current laws and codes. In brief, underground structures generally require a pump contained within the area below grade.

**RL16. Could we move the Post Office to the Railway and replace it with a mixed-use complex?**

The Post Office serves as a social center and a magnet to draw people into the downtown retail area. Most planning and economic development professionals encourage post offices in the downtown area as a catalyst for retail shopping, restaurant patronage, and other activities that are part of a vibrant, successful downtown. City Staff does not recommend relocating the Post Office.

**RL17. Do any of the plans for the proposed residences provide enough parking or will it spill into our neighborhood?**

Development plans will all meet City Parking Code provisions, which include varying methods of compliance. Staff believes that sufficient parking will be available and will recommend code changes to the Planning Commission and the City Council should any parking study demonstrate an unmet need.

The Joint Powers Board, the agency that operates Caltrain, has reported that they plan to increase the capacity of the depot parking lot for commuters as well as provide sufficient parking for any future development. Additionally, a detailed parking and traffic analysis will be required before any project is approved.

**RL18. If housing is constructed on this land, will the units be for renters or owners and will they be at below-market rate? If they are below-market units, what are the criteria used to selecting residents?**

No formal proposal has been offered, but City Staff foresees that a mix of uses including both rental and ownership housing may be available. One group that has expressed interest in a portion of the land is The Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition. They are currently evaluating a plan that would include rental housing for those earning 50-80% of the County's Area Median Income. Preference should be given to those who already live or work in San Carlos. *Please refer to the Housing section for additional information on this topic.*

**RL19. If housing is built near existing transportation right-of-ways such as train tracks, will there be land-use conflicts between residential living and train activity?**

Future housing development at the railroad site will be designed to be compatible with the existing and future rail operations. It is the City's expectation that new residents would move to this area with the specific desire of being near transit, understand the environment, and often take advantage of public transportation.

**RL20. Why aren't less obvious applications such as a line-of-sight, wireless, Ethernet backbone for high-speed data transmission being considered for the railway right-of-way?**

With the potential development of the railroad property, Caltrain is planning to leave room for an additional third set of tracks for future railway expansion and reportedly continue to explore various options. The City has no additional information about plans for other non-transit uses. Please contact the County Transit District at their administrative offices by calling 650-508-6200 with your ideas and questions.

**RETAIL ISSUES****RI1. How can we attract more boutique/unique stores and encourage local shops and fewer chains?**

The City, working with the local Chamber of Commerce and downtown business community, has been improving the downtown area to help attract new, viable retail businesses. These efforts include: Matching Grant program; Retail Zoning; Laurel Street Park; sidewalk clean up; downtown events such as the Art and Wine Festival; and the proposed Laurel Street/San Carlos Avenue Improvement Project. The free market system will ultimately determine the type and ownership of the downtown retail mix.

**RI2. How can we keep San Carlos from becoming yet another Palo Alto or Burlingame with their fancy and predictable chain stores taking over downtown?**

Retail uses are allowed in the downtown area. The City does not have the legal authority to differentiate between a "mom and pop" retail and a chain-store retail when reviewing the proposed use for compliance with the zoning requirements. The City can not directly prohibit chain stores from locating in the Downtown.

**RI3. What do you suggest as a way to continue the discussion about retail mix (chain v. local/mom and pop) assuming we don't exhaust the topic and reach consensus at the next meeting?**

The City is unable to regulate these differently as long as the use is compatible with the zoning designation. An appropriate arena to continue the discussion would be through the Chambers' Retail Trade Council.

**RI4. How can we allow stores to have longer hours?**

The City does not have any restrictions on the hours that retail stores are open. The State of California regulates the operational hours of some businesses, such as bars. We recommend that you, as a customer, discuss this issue directly with the storeowners. We have noticed many are open later with the influx of restaurants. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce assists with business outreach efforts.

**RI5. What are the plans to add a decent grocery store?**

The free enterprise system determines which businesses succeed and where they are located. Please note that there is also a space limitation – not many buildings in the downtown area are large enough to accommodate a new grocery store.

**RI6. How can we stop commercial rent increases? Won't redevelopment make the rents unaffordable to small businesses? How will your plan keep the existing businesses from being forced out?**

The free market system determines the amount a property owner will charge and the amount of rent business can/will pay. The City is unable to regulate market rents and can not isolate existing businesses from market demands that may result in increased rents. The City also does not subsidize commercial rents with taxpayer dollars.

Redevelopment by itself does not create higher rents but the economic success of a retail or office area generally results in higher rents. Most cities experience increased retail rents as the retail trade area becomes more successful. The 1988 Economic Research Associates' study predicted this possibly might occur.

**RI7. How do we keep the sidewalk tables and chairs from being dangerous?**

The City has a regulation that restaurants must keep a minimum 6-foot wide clearance at sidewalks. The business must also apply for an encroachment permit for any furniture to be allowed to be placed in the public right-of-way. Although this is a seasonal issue, the City code enforcement officer continues to work on compliance.

**RI8. How can we keep our downtown from looking shabby?**

The Redevelopment Agency (RDA) has a Matching Grant program that will pay up to \$2,500 on a dollar-to-dollar basis for downtown merchants/property owners to improve their storefronts. Stores along Laurel Street and El Camino Avenue from Holly Street to Eaton Avenue and stores in the 1100 and 1200 Blocks of San Carlos Avenue are eligible. Such improvements include: painting, new awnings, signs, windows, doors, garbage and recycling screening, landscaping (where there is sufficient room), etc. just about anything that helps to improve the store's front appearance. The program also provides matching grant funds for the back of the building if it is adjacent to one of the four downtown parking plazas. Over the past ten years approximately 200 businesses have taken advantage of this program. *Please also refer to the Sidewalk Clean-Up Program mentioned in the next question.*

**RI9. How do we keep the sidewalks cleaner?**

Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the property owners and store operators. This past year the City's Redevelopment Agency (RDA) co-sponsored a downtown Sidewalk Clean Up

effort. A professional cleaning company was hired to power wash the downtown sidewalk area and to remove oil and other stains from the gutter area as much as possible. The project is funded half by storeowners and half by the City's RDA.

The RDA has funds to repeat the cleaning effort if storeowners again co-sponsor the project. The Community Development Department will be contacting the downtown merchants to enlist their financial participation to repeat the program in June.

**RI10. I am concerned about the City's policy on crosswalks. Why can't we use them to favor pedestrians and slow traffic down?**

Many studies have indicated that there are more accidents in painted crosswalks than there are in unpainted crosswalks where there are no stop signs or traffic signals. The studies conclude that painted crosswalks do not have any effect on the drivers but they give the pedestrians a false sense of security and they enter the traffic lane before it is safe. Therefore, the City of San Carlos has adopted the policy of not painting the crosswalks if there is no traffic control.

In the downtown retail area, the City is proposing to improve the existing crosswalks with decorative paving and improved visibility at each intersection and create new mid-block crossings in the 600-800 blocks of Laurel Street. This improvement project is subject to formation of an assessment district, which will be voted upon by the affected property owners in June 2001.

## TRAFFIC

**T1. Won't additional buildings and housing just bring more traffic?**

Traffic is a problem the entire county and region is wrestling with. The Peninsula, in particular, is having difficulty and traffic studies and computer models show that additional traffic will continue to increase due to projects within the surrounding communities. It is important to manage the change as effectively as possible and take advantage of the market. As part of this process, the City has hired two traffic consultants including one to recommend non-capital improvements, such as shuttles, that can help mitigate traffic.

**T2. If there is too much traffic, won't this delay the response time of the Fire Department and other emergency personnel? What are the safety issues?**

Emergency vehicles have the highest priority. Traffic routes, road access, traffic signalization, and property access are considered with each new road improvement and development.

**T3. The traffic seems particularly bad on Holly Street. What will be done?**

Recent traffic studies show that the intersection at Holly and Industrial is one of the intersections with the lowest levels of service in the City. The City has completed almost all of the physical, capital improvements that can be made to improve traffic flow. Traffic studies show that this intersection will continue to have more traffic pass through it as more development occurs in neighboring cities and as freeway congestion forces drivers to find alternative travel routes. In a continuing effort to look for new solutions, the City has hired a non-traditional consultant who will help identify new ways to ease traffic congestion. Some of the initial ideas for study include shuttles, commute incentives, and alternative parking options.

The City is highly attuned to the impact new development may cumulatively have on this and other intersections and has elected to take a pro-active approach to address the problem. The City will only support development that is able to appropriately address these concerns.

#### **T4. Is widening Holly Street in the plans?**

Although the City owns sufficient public right-of-way, there are no plans to widen Holly Street.

#### **T5. Will the proposed Laurel Street/San Carlos Avenue improvements ease traffic congestion?**

The improvements are intended to reduce flooding and beautify the area to attract additional shoppers. If the property owners vote to approve an assessment district, the improvements in the 600-800 blocks of Laurel Street will include new curbs, gutters and sidewalks with a decorative brick band; new street trees with grates; decorative street lights; decorative mid-block crosswalks; landscaping at the corners; and a landscaped traffic median in the 1200 block of San Carlos Avenue. Many urban planners believe that more attractive streetscapes with sufficient landscaping help calm traffic. Laurel Street's diagonal parking will be altered to help accommodate longer vehicles (including trucks) which in turn impede traffic.

#### **T6. Where does the City stand on traffic?**

The City is highly attuned to the impact new development may cumulatively have on various intersections and has elected to take a pro-active approach to address the problem. The City will only support development that is able to appropriately address these concerns.

The City has commissioned a citywide traffic study to assess traffic flow. The City contracted with Hexagon Transportation and a traffic engineer analyzed traffic patterns and traffic counts at 32 key intersections including several along Holly and Brittan. This study will provide base data upon which to evaluate any potential development. A copy of the report will be available for viewing at City Hall as soon as it is complete.

The City Council has contracted with a traffic consultant to identify and recommend mitigation measures to alleviate the possible traffic impacts of new development. This consultant is charged with finding quantifiable, "non-traditional," and non-capital mitigation measures. The type of

alternatives that the consultant may recommend for consideration may include shuttles or on-site amenities such as childcare.

Additionally, the City is currently studying the traffic circulation in three areas: 1) the impact due to the recently installed traffic median on El Camino Real, 2) alley traffic patterns; and 3) circulation related to the proposed parking structure at Wheeler Plaza, located behind Foodville.

**T7. Has the City considered it been considered for traffic going north on Laurel to NOT be allowed to turn left into the 3 parking lots, Foodville, Bank of America and Bell Market?**

The City Engineer does not recommend this type of prohibition at this time. Traffic patterns including turning movements are part of traffic studies and if it is recommended, the City will carefully consider it.

MISCELLANEOUS

**M1. Why isn't the San Carlos Planning Department doing something to improve the area east of railroad tracks to allow both denser residential and hi-tech/dot-com companies?**

The City Council has recently appointed an eleven member East Side Specific Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee to further discuss the future of this area. This committee will discuss long-range land uses for the eastside, including housing, and their recommendations will go to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration.

**M2. Why can't the 50-foot building limit remain and use the architectural review guidelines to keep developers from building "the box"?**

The draft of the Urban Design Guidelines does specifically address architectural design and does not allow a "box" building within the height limit. The City is not proposing a height increase in association with the initial consideration of the design guidelines.

**M3. Why are we concerned about economic diversity?**

The City funds the services the community wants and needs such as police, fire, library, and parks. The funding of these services come from a variety of sources including sales tax, property tax, Transit Occupancy Tax ("hotel tax") and so on. Economic diversity plays a key role in stabilizing a variety of income sources so that the City and the services it provides are not significantly negatively impacted by disruption in any one revenue stream. One component of maintaining economic diversity is providing a variety of housing options that are affordable to those in varying income categories. Lastly, San Carlos is part of a larger economic region. This has been an area of continuing change for at least the past 50 years and will continue to be so. San Carlos will be affected by changes in the surrounding area, even if no change ever occurs within the city limits. The City Council believes we should try to manage and take advantage of appropriate changes.

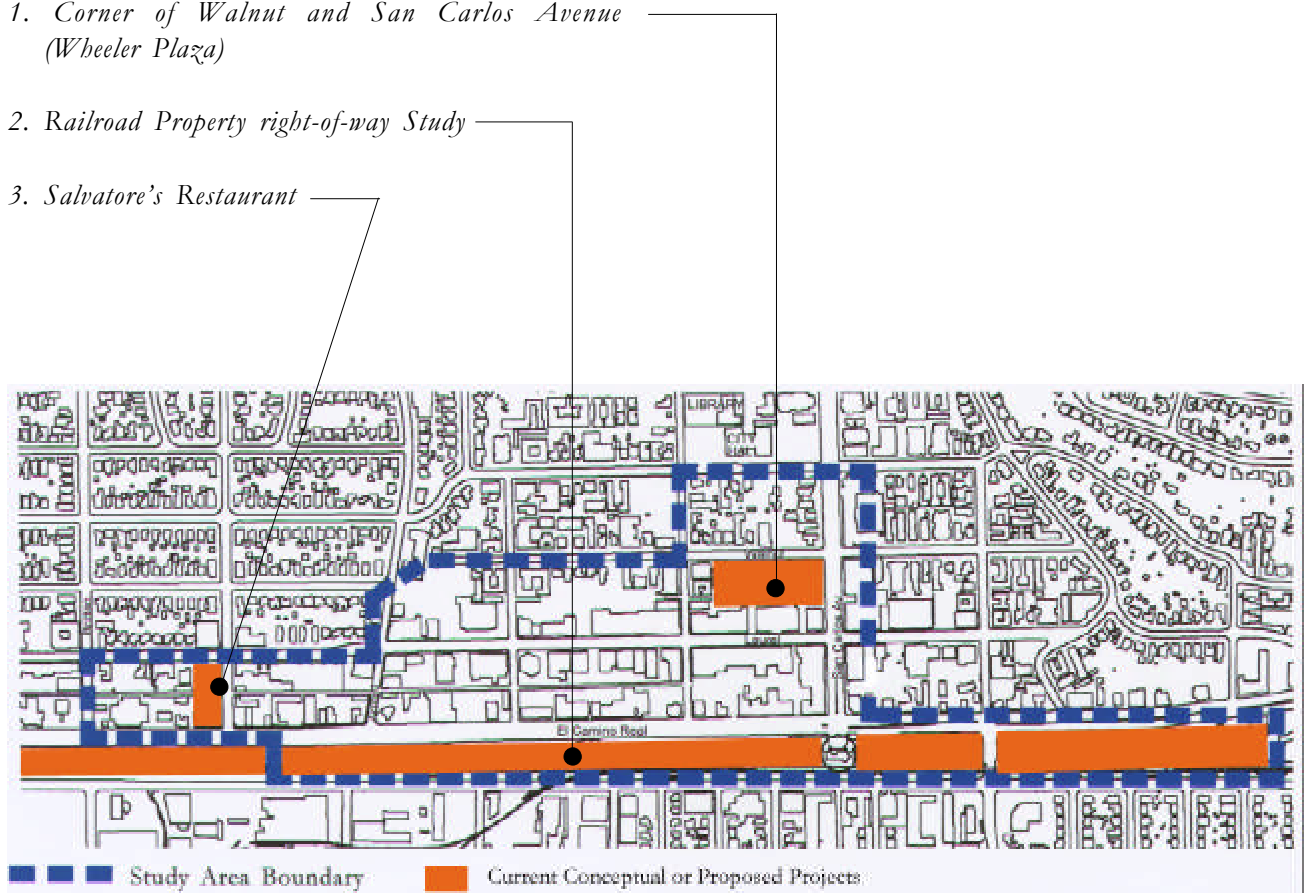
**Appendix D**  
**Site-Specific Guidelines**

# SITE-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

## B. Site specific guidelines

All projects are subject to standard City review process, including Environmental Review. The projects listed below and presented during the community workshop process are in various stages of consideration and/or development, and may or maynot come to fruition.

1. *Corner of Walnut and San Carlos Avenue (Wheeler Plaza)*
2. *Railroad Property right-of-way Study*
3. *Salvatore's Restaurant*



## Corner of Walnut and San Carlos Ave (Wheeler Plaza)

### 1. Corner of Walnut and San Carlos Avenue (Wheeler Plaza)

An illustrative example of this project was shown at several of the Community Workshops. The example reflected a conceptual design developed solely for the purposes of planning and discussion. Final design will be developed through an on-going process, and may be substantially different in character, materials, massing, and style.

The design was based on the following program:  
Wheeler Plaza Parking Structure with Housing  
 Approx. 60-75 dwelling units (25-75% affordable)  
 Approx. 350 public structured parking stalls

Office Building "A" (corner of Walnut/San Carlos)  
 8,360 square feet per floor, four stories, approx. 32,000 total sq. ft.  
 50 feet tall, with underground parking  
 Ground floor retail on San Carlos Avenue

Office Building "B" (Imagine Foods, 1245 San Carlos Avenue)  
 7,360 square feet per floor, four stories, approx. 28,000 total sq. ft.  
 50 feet tall, underground parking  
 Ground floor retail

### SITE-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES:

#### Required:

#### Office Building "A" (Corner of Walnut & San Carlos)

- architectural style relates to Pacific Hacienda.
- (along San Carlos Avenue) ground floor retail, build-to-back of sidewalk with allowed recesses for outdoor eating, entries and display.
- along Walnut Street, ground floor office permitted, build-to-back of sidewalk with allowed recesses for outdoor eating, entries and display.
- fourth floor stepped back along Walnut Street.

#### Office Building "B" (Imagine Foods)

- plaza at the ground floor to expand Sister City Lane.
- landscaping.
- ground floor retail, build-to front setback (except Sister City Lane).
- upper floor stepped back along Sister City Lane.
- pedestrian access to Wheeler Plaza from rear of building.

#### Wheeler Plaza

- three stories tall (with four story residential bonus), two stories parking below.
- residential units on Walnut Street frontage, no parking structure visible from Walnut Street.
- ground floor residential units on Walnut Street raised a half-level with front porches or stoops.
- at least one pocket park or courtyard that aligns with the alley between San Carlos and Cherry (adjacent to Wells Fargo) and allows for pedestrian connection between Walnut and Laurel Streets and the parking structure.
- minimum set back 15 feet along Walnut Street.

## **Corner of Walnut and San Carlos Ave, cont'd.**

- at-grade parking in back to serve retail on Laurel Street.
- tree-lined pedestrian paseo between Wheeler and Buildings “A” and “B” with connection from Hacienda Gardens to Laurel.
- courtyard entries with variation of building setback on Walnut.
- variation in height/roof design.

## Railroad Property right-of-way

### 2. Railroad Property right of way

An illustrative example of this project was shown at several of the Community Workshops. The example reflected a conceptual design developed solely for the purposes of planning and discussion, and was based on the following program:

#### North End – Residential (North of Holly)

160 Single-Family Residential units with underground parking

#### SamTrans Administration Building

125,000 SF office space

Four stories, with underground parking

#### Depot – South (Holly to South of Cherry), Arroyo - North (South of Cherry to Brittan)

115 units Apartment Housing with underground parking

26,000 SF office space

#### Arroyo/Park Area

Landscaped linear park with pedestrian path and site amenities

The project proponents presented a conceptual design, which is subject to change.

### SITE-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES:

#### Required:

- Continuous pedestrian walkway system from northernmost to southernmost end of project.
- Continuous landscaping along El Camino corridor.
- Development around the Train Depot shall apply architectural, building height and site planning sensitivity to the historic Depot and adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- Buildings designed and located to mitigate impact on the view of the hills for residents on the east side of tracks.
- Buildings designed and located to minimize noise reflection from trains.
- Buildings separated with space between to maintain light and view corridors and to avoid “solid wall” effect for either side of the tracks.
- Building development at intersections shall step back from the corner and incorporate a landscape feature.
- Apply architectural techniques (such as stepped building stories and varying heights) to break up massing and bulk of building.
- Architectural detailing to provide visual interest both at a pedestrian scale and at a distance.
- Architectural materials of high quality (such as tile, natural stone, and ornamental iron).
- Cherry Street terminus to contain a Plaza.
- Parking area around Train Depot shall serve both residents and commuters, and shall include parking, loading & unloading areas, for bus, train, and alternative transportation passengers.

#### Recommended:

- Residential buildings sited perpendicular to El Camino so that units front internal courtyards.

## ***Railroad Property right-of-way, cont'd.***

- Shared use of parking with Sam Trans Administrative building.

### Depot Area

- One story maximum for any buildings or structures around Depot.
- Pedestrian plaza to reflect historical character of Depot.

### Arroyo/Park Area

- Continuous landscape along right of way, to include trees with canopies to screen railroad berm at 10 to 20 year height.
- Benches located appropriately for pedestrian use.
- Overhead pedestrian connection across Brittan and across drainage channel at Arroyo.

## Salvatore's Restaurant

### 2. Salvatore's Restaurant

A fairly well-developed illustration of this project was provided by the project proponent and shown at one Community Workshop. It was based on the following proposed program:

The site at 1000 El Camino consists of 1 acre of land bounded on three sides by El Camino Real, Morse Boulevard and Laurel Street in the Mid-Town section of San Carlos. The site is divided into two parcels by a City-owned alley.

- Laurel Street frontage 3 stories commercial with setback/plaza
- Morse Boulevard and El Camino frontages 4 stories set back
- 4th floor approx. 20 residential units on El Camino half of the floor plate. Remaining 4<sup>th</sup> floor area open space rooftop decking.
- Alley redirected at a right angle with traffic feeding onto Laurel Street, allowing for a continuous building footprint at the ground floor.
- Two-level subterranean parking structure.
- Modest amount of surface parking along Laurel Street.
- Lobby entrance at Laurel Street and Morse Boulevard corner set back 50 feet front the Laurel Street frontage. This 50-foot setback includes a public courtyard, landscaping, public art, public seating, and parking.

The project proponents presented a detailed design, which is subject to change.

### SITE-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

#### Required:

- Architectural materials of high quality (such as tile, natural stone, and ornamental iron).
- Architectural detailing to provide visual interest.
- Massing to include tower features or other corner articulation.
- Stepping back fourth floor residential from Laurel Street frontage.

#### Recommended:

- Provide landscape buffer between parking and sidewalk.