

COMMUNITY GOALS

During the workshops and meetings held between January and July 2000, the 94803 Task Force and its subcommittees defined vision statements, goals and initial strategies for the revitalization of Downtown El Sobrante. These goals focused on three subject areas:

- Transportation and Traffic
- Landscape and Community Design
- Business Environment

Generally, the vision statements and goals can be summarized in a desire to create a pedestrian friendly, mixed-use neighborhood commercial district with a range of goods and services to serve local needs. The following is a summary of the key elements of the goals and vision statements prepared by each of the three subcommittees.

Transportation and Traffic Vision and Goals

Vision Statement of the 94803 Transportation & Traffic Committee:

“We envision the creation of a friendly, attractive, village-like downtown through improved circulation and parking in the downtown area, slower traffic, increased pedestrian/bicyclist safety, and alternative transportation from neighboring areas.”

Transportation-related goals included:

- Separate local shopping traffic from traffic that is just passing through on San Pablo Dam Road.
- Provide parking convenience for local shoppers.
- Improve the downtown pedestrian environment for local shoppers.
- Improve local traffic circulation downtown.
- Improve connections between downtown and adjacent residential areas.

Landscape and Design Vision and Goals

Vision Statement of the 94803 Landscape and Design Committee:

“To help restore the business district as the vital core of the community and a destination offering a diversity of activity, business, and points of interest, incorporating outdoor settings that invite people to linger.”

Design-related goals included:

- Install and maintain attractive litter receptacles at bus stops and major intersections.
- Honor businesses that are contributing to the beauty and vitality of the area with awards and publicity.
- Work with business owners and a certified arborist to replant trees which add beauty downtown without obstructing storefronts.
- Acquire park sites to beautify and enhance the downtown shopping experience.
- Work with business owners and code enforcement officials to facilitate a visually pleasing standard for signage that will attract customers.
- Commission public art to add to the charm and beauty of downtown.

Business Environment, Activities and Recruitment Goals

The vision statement of the Business Environment Committee is as follows:

“Downtown El Sobrante has a reasonable variety of businesses that are owner-operated and friendly and provide products and services customers want. The Chamber of Commerce facilitates cooperation among merchants and sponsors events, such as the El Sobrante Stroll, that bring people to downtown El Sobrante.”

Business-related goals included:

- Develop and expand programs for downtown customer sharing.
- Sponsor a “Paint up/Fix up” program to improve the appearance of downtown businesses and buildings.
- Determine what new businesses would help the business mix and develop a focused program of business recruitment.
- Expand the programs for community events that attract people downtown.

Additional Vision Statements

“...an attractive, inviting, lovely place to visit for a variety of community, civic, cultural, entertainment, recreational as well as commercial activities, a vital core that is the heart of El Sobrante Valley...Walkways, open space, visual and aesthetic vistas, biking, etc. will be a part of this oasis.”

“The configuration or reconfiguration of large monolithic buildings that stand out like islands in a sea of asphalt must be of concern to the consultant. Either they should be moved up to the street (sidewalk) or they must be changed so the parking lot has new stores, walkways, landscaping, open spaces, etc.”

“We want to be a full service downtown, with all the other amenities that result from streetscaping, landscaping, traffic calming, public open space (i.e. civic, cultural, entertainment, recreation, etc.)”

Suggested Strategies

The 94803 Task Force and its committees generated many ideas to help achieve the community's vision. Most of these ideas, which are listed below, have been incorporated into the Transportation and Land Use Plan. Not all of these strategies can be achieved, however, since some are in conflict with one another or are not feasible.

1. Pedestrian crosswalks (with traffic lights) to create a pedestrian-oriented downtown.
2. Bikeways, bike lanes and bike parking facilities.
3. A parallel street to San Pablo Dam Road (to improve circulation and parking, and provide a means to turn around for motorists along San Pablo Dam Road).
4. An intelligent parking plan.
5. Turn-a-bouts (rotaries) at intersections to improve circulation
6. Bulb-outs at pedestrian crosswalks.
7. Mini-parks, rest areas with benches, waste receptacles, flowers, etc.
8. Massive streetscaping, trees, plants, flowers.
9. Incorporate the creek visually and as a walkway/bicycle path, with due sensitivity to the residents across the creek.
10. Public spaces.
11. Appropriate housing in mixed-use form.
12. Wider sidewalks.
13. Improved lighting, with additional and more interesting lights.
14. Improved transit, with covered bus stops at convenient places. This will require that San Pablo Dam Road be reduced to two lanes, diagonal parking, and extensive landscaping which will make the parallel street an imperative to the livable downtown.
15. Complete reconfiguration of many buildings, parking spaces, lateral streets connecting the two parallel streets, and even pedestrian malls (a la Santa Barbara).
16. Create a pallet of color that relates the buildings, landscaping and the creek in a kaleidoscope of beauty and charm.
17. Try to find a theme for the buildings and landscaping that is not sterile.
18. A place for public art and murals.
19. Well-placed and attractive garbage receptacles.
20. A community center with space for seniors, day-care, meetings (large and small), town hall meetings, seminars, performing arts, concerts, exhibits, classic films, and classes.
21. Clean and attractive signage.
22. A monument, signature tree or other center of attraction.
23. The design must "flow" to take people from one end of the district to the other and back again.
24. A pedestrian bridge across San Pablo Creek.
25. Design guidelines to be used in future development in the downtown area.

Concerns Expressed on the Strategies

The strategies shown above were discussed at various stages of the public participation process. Strong concerns were expressed by downtown residents and property owners over two of the strategies in particular – strategy #3, the proposed parallel street to San Pablo Dam Road, and strategy #9, a proposed walkway along San Pablo Creek. Due to their concerns, both of these strategies were revised to be less extensive and less intrusive on neighboring properties than originally proposed. The revised concepts are shown later in this document.