

California Avenue Master Plan
Community Meeting #1: October 17, 2007

The purpose of the plan is to help the neighborhood create and refine a vision for physical improvements and development. The plan will assist the City of Fresno and landowners in charting a course for the future of the California Avenue neighborhood.

Summary of Community Meeting #1

On October 17, 2007 approximately fifty people attended the first of three community workshops for the California Avenue Master Plan sponsored by the Fresno Housing Authority and the Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development. The workshop began with the Keith Kelley of Fresno West welcoming everyone to the workshop and explaining that this planning effort is a continuation of a previous community planning effort the West Fresno Community Vision Plan. Keith then introduced Lowell Ens, Fresno Housing Authority's Housing Resource Services Manager for the neighborhood, who thanked everyone for participating and briefly spoke



about the goals of the project. He then introduced the other team members including Strategic Energy Innovations who will help bring energy efficiency to the master plan and the planning consultants Design, Community and Environment. Lowell also introduced city staff that were present including members of the Fresno Redevelopment Agency and Councilmember Cynthia Sterling's office. Lowell then introduced Tom Ford of DC&E who spoke about DC&E and their role in the planning process and the schedule for the project. Tom then introduced Bruce Brubaker of DC&E who presented a look at the existing conditions of the neighborhood. After the presentation community participants shared their thoughts about their goals and vision for the future of the neighborhood. Their thoughts are listed below:

Large Group Discussion: Goals and Community Vision

1. We need to have more homeowners associations in the area. The participant thinks there should be homeowners associations as part of any new development. People should be helped to own their homes rather than rent.
2. We need a large grocery store (Albertsons) and a Starbucks. The closest grocery is FoodMaxx, which is located at Kearney and Palm.
3. When one of the participants moved from San Francisco ten years ago she noticed that the area is not well lit. Her observation is that lights are dimmer beyond Shaw Avenue, and that people in this neighborhood deserve a well-lit nicely manicured neighborhood. She agreed

with Bruce's summarization that there is "not the same level of investment in this area as in the northern parts of the city." Bruce asked people to raise their hands if they agree with this statement, and approximately 15 did.

4. People need help with loans for maintenance/investment in their homes. The problem is that they make too much money to get assistance, but they don't make enough themselves to have the extra income to invest in their homes.
5. The City is trying to get people to go downtown to shop, but there aren't good stores to shop in. There is a need for a more vital downtown to draw people there.
6. People want some of what they have in downtown (amenities) Fresno to also occur in this neighborhood.
7. We need to address education problems. This neighborhood needs to have a vocational training center. There is also a need for access to healthcare in the neighborhood and community. The nearest doctor's office is at the 300 block of Fresno Street.
8. It is important to think about retail in areas that are un-developed, and need to have zoning changes to allow retail.
9. Why is the insurance so high for businesses in this neighborhood? The high cost of insurance limits the minority-owned businesses.
10. Trees need to be maintained, especially because they are overgrown and it makes it so you cannot see the street signs and blocks the streetlights.

Small Group Exercise

After the large group discussion, Jim West of Kimley-Horn Associates, the transportation consultants, gave a presentation on neighborhood connectivity, mobility and circulation ending with examples of good street design the participants could consider when visioning the future of the neighborhood. Bruce of DC&E followed his lead and presented examples of housing and development types that the participants could also consider. The community participants then divided up into smaller groups to participate in an exercise to discuss and map ideas for potential change in the neighborhood. Participants were asked to think of locations of opportunity sites for future improvement and development and locations which should not be changed. They were also asked to think of what kind of new development they would like to see in the neighborhood and where and what types of connections could be made to improve the neighborhood. After the small groups had time to discuss and draw their ideas on the neighborhood map everyone came together as a large group so the small groups could share their ideas with everyone present. A summary of each of the groups' ideas is listed below:



Table #1 - Oscar

- Development should be coordinated with Edison High School
- There needs to be places for kids to go at lunch and after school for fun and jobs
- There needs to be more commercial development rather than residential development
- There is a need to focus on California Avenue for new development
- They don't see the need for the Walnut Avenue Re-alignment
- There needs to be some way and place to educate residents about available government services (education, marriage, finances, kids, etc.)
- Services should be developed first followed by housing
- Kearney-Palms is a good prototype, it brought people to that area
- The plan should include Starbucks and a Movie Theatre

Table #2

- Development should contain mixed land uses on California Avenue and along Walnut Avenue realignment
- "River Park West" idea = shopping mall including a movie theatre, arcade, Starbucks
- There is a need for a vocational school, maybe on the Suburban Steel property or the vacant lot across the street on California Avenue
- The bicycle route needs to connect existing bicycle path to the regional park
- A branch library should be included in the plan. It would ideally be close to Edison High school and incorporated with other mixed use
- There is a need for a wellness center for young and old to focus on preventative health
- The ponding basin could become a park
- Hyde park needs upgrades
- Single family homes could go below the Villages Hope VI development
- The neighborhood could use a police sub station
- The plan should include senior housing

Table # 3

- The lighting is bad on California Avenue; need new street lights along entire California Avenue
- There is a need for a department store/Wal-Mart (or something similar) in the vacant area across the street from Edison High School
- There should be more business/retail/office along Fresno Street
- There should be a Starbucks/dry cleaners/retail on the vacant lot across the street from suburban steel
- The California/Church vacant area is a good location for neighborhood retail
- There is a need for more security in the neighborhood



- Code should be enforced for all vacancies
- It is important that nothing else is knocked down without it being replaced, because that is what happened before and now there is all this vacant space

Table #4 - Kyla

- California Avenue is important, it should be thought of for new office and retail uses
- There needs to be better connectivity between shops and retail with the high school
- It is important to connect the Hope VI neighborhood to the older neighborhood
- The neighborhood street grid is good and it should be used for connections
- There is a need to improve Hyde Park and add new services
- If Walnut Avenue is to be realigned; it needs offices and retail on both sides with a major park connected to it
- Need mixed use (office/retail/housing) on the vacant lot across from Suburban Steel

Table # 5

- There should be a Wal-Mart on the vacant site across from Suburban Steel
- The neighborhood should include a Starbucks and Winchell's
- It is important to bring retail to the neighborhood to produce jobs for people in the neighborhood
- There should be a skate park, arcade
- Affordable housing is important
- There could be a solar generation plant on the vacant land between the substation and the ponding basin
- There is the opportunity for a job training facility along Walnut Avenue realignment
- There needs to be more focus on elementary school and education; need signage to communicate school zones
- There should be a fast food court on vacant lot across the street from suburban steel
- There is no need for any new parks, we need to make the existing parks better, maybe flatten Hyde Park

Table #7 - Debbie

- It is important to coordinate any new social or retail activities along California Avenue and Walnut Avenue with Edison High School
- There needs to be more retail/commercial along California Avenue
- There is a concern about pedestrian safety (lights and sidewalks) along California Avenue
- There should be retail on the site below Hope VI village – maybe shopping center with a Wal-Mart
- It is important to make sure that with the new Walnut Avenue realignment we are not losing any street connections (i.e. keep connectivity)
- There should be something for the kids, like a hamburger joint or drive-in on the vacant triangle site north of the Hope VI housing along California
- There should be retail along California Avenue west of Edison High School
- Hyde Park needs new bathroom services, and other improvements

- There should be family-oriented activities, like a skate park, roller rink or movie theater near Hyde Park

Small Group Workshop Summary

After each group had the chance to share their ideas for the future of the neighborhood Tom Ford of DC&E took the opportunity to summarize the key points that arose from the exercise. These are the ideas and key points which the DC&E team will consider when working on the master plan alternatives:



- There is a desire to have activity and retail along California Avenue
- Any new development needs to be coordinated with Edison High School
- There is a need for improvements to existing parks, especially Hyde Park
- There is a desire for greater connectivity (bicycle/vehicle and streets) within the neighborhood
- There is the desire for more retail because this can lead to more jobs. It is important to understand that with more jobs there is also an increased need for more homes.
- There is a great desire for both neighborhood and destination retail. Places frequently mentioned included Wal-Mart and Starbucks and other food options