Call to Order

Rachael Tanner called the Working Group meeting to order today, October 29, 2019.

Ms. Tanner noted Terry Holzmer didn’t think he would be here; otherwise, everyone who said they would be here tonight was present. She said Chitra from the Staff side would be taking notes. She then welcomed everyone to the October 29 meeting of the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan Working Group. She noted everyone should have packets and materials available at the table on her left. The meeting would begin with the call to order and oral communications. In the main part of the meeting the group would hear from WRA, who is the consultant working on the creek study. There were would talk about plan alternatives and an update from the October 21, 2019 City Council hearing. The meeting would wrap up with oral communications, future meetings and workshops. She asked if there was anything else anyone would like to say at the beginning of the meeting.

Roll Call:


Absent: Terry Holzmer. Waldemar Kaczmarski

Welcome and Housekeeping:

Ms. Dellaporta stated she was pleased to see everybody here. She encouraged anyone who had any questions or concerns they would like her or Ms. Price to pass on to the City to feel free to contact them by email or phone. She said she was dismayed when she heard that Sobrato was thinking of not doing anything with the Fry’s site. She almost started thinking, what’s the point
of the Group meeting any more. Why should they do anything if nothing is going to happen. She later realized that regardless in a way of what Sobrato decides to do right now, the Group has a chance to say what they think would be the best kind of development for the neighborhood and the City. She thought the Group should take that chance and use it and not feel discouraged or worried or feel they have to learn all the ins and outs of financing developments in the Silicon Valley these days. The Group’s job is to come up with a reasonable, thoughtful, creative proposal for the area. She hoped people didn’t start feeling discouraged. Even if things don’t happen right away, they should take the chance to say what they think would be best for the community.

Ms. Tanner remarked one item that can be gone back to later is the meeting schedule. She realized that the November meeting was scheduled the week of Thanksgiving, so some calendar checking may be needed and looking to December for some dates that may work better for the Group. Everyone can think about that and it can be addressed at the end of the meeting.

Oral Communication:

Ms. Tanner noted each speaker would have 3 minutes.

David Meyer, works for Silicon Valley Home, an affordable housing advocacy organization. He thanked Group members for volunteering their time. He wanted to share two opportunities he sees related to the visioning process from a personal and organizational level. On the personal level, his wife works at Stanford Hospital. He frequently bikes through the North Ventura area. It is striking to see in a nice Ventura neighborhood, nice residential streets, then come out to sort of a no-man’s land. There are a lot of office parks. Then back to the great downtown at Cal Ave. The two opportunities he sees are related to the Caltrain station in terms of looking at, as part of this visioning process, think of how to create affordable homes that will be accessible to the Caltrain station. There was a letter to the Group about how the Caltrain is going to be very likely increasing regular service to this station. There will be a lot more trains. There will be much more capacity for people to take those trains and use that as a way to get out of their cars, get to work and be able to access other things around the Valley. Some other cities are working on their transit stations that will also see an increase in traffic with these changes to Caltrain. He noted the Lawrence Station in Sunnyvale right now has basically empty lots around it, but because there will be an increase in service, the Cities of Sunnyvale and Santa Clara are both planning complete neighborhoods, housing, shops, retail, walkable, bikeable around those areas. Sunnyvale is considering up to 6,000 homes around that area. Santa Clara is looking at 3500 in their area. That is an idea of being bold and thinking about using the opportunity of the Caltrain Station and what that will mean both for giving people of different incomes accessibility to the station, and also cutting down on people driving there. The second thing is just pointing out that it was really clear to him there is this great opportunity to really connect the existing Ventura neighborhood, the people who already live in this area with resources that

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are on Cal Ave and also with new resources that would be part of this development. He thought as the Group looks at this plan and vision, they don’t have to think small. They could think bold and accomplish a lot of the things that are wanted, whether it’s community resources, parks, housing, shops. He thought all those things were possible in this area when looking at the potential opportunities in the future. That is what he recommended to everyone when thinking about this. The opportunities for affordable housing are great for these reasons, making these connections and taking advantage of the opportunities with this station.

Discussion Items:

1. Update on the October 21, 2019 City Council hearing.

Ms. Tanner noted that was the hearing where Staff took to the City Council the contract with Perkins & Will, the consultant who has been working with Staff and will continue to work with them. That was an item to request expanded timeline and increased contribution financially from the City for the project. That was heard on consent. It was passed with four yes votes and two no votes and Council Member Kniss was absent. That will be moved forward. It will go back for a budget adjustment to the Council on November 18. That will be the mechanism to move the money to the accounts to pay for the project.

Ms. Dellaporta asked if there was a way of looking at the new contract. Is it different in any way?

Ms. Tanner replied that the contract was attached to the Council’s Staff report. She can make sure Ms. Dellaporta will have it.

2. Creek Study consultant (WRA) introduction and scope discussion.

Ms. Tanner introduced Ben Snyder from WRA. He will be presenting about the Creek Study. Mr. Snyder is a versatile engineer and project manager with over 15 years of rich and varied experience in the fields of hydrology, hydraulics, sediment transport, CAD-based design and project implementation. His leadership and creativity have helped deliver successful projects ranging in size from localized bank stabilization efforts to reach scale process-based river restoration. She didn’t know what that was, but it sounded very interesting. He has extensive experience in the application of advanced analytical techniques, design of holistic flood risk management and habitat restoration projects in both river and coastal environments. He is working also with George Salvaggio at WRA, who is the principal landscape architect there with over 20 years of experience. George is the project manager. She is excited to have Ben here and also to be working with George, a wealth of knowledge and resource experiences through WRA.

Mr. Snyder indicated he appreciated the opportunity to speak with the Group about what is possible for Matadero Creek and to begin the process of investigating how to make the most
out of this resource, which is the creek as it passes through the Study Area that is being considered, the NVCAP area. He had the opportunity to visit the site with Chitra last week. That was helpful to start to get an idea of what some of the constraints are at the site. Today he will go over what their process is, and he will introduce his team. He thanked Rachael and Chitra for bringing them on board. He felt this was a great opportunity so they will do the best they can to see what is possible at this site. He explained that George Salvaggio has been overloaded with other projects and will probably not be able to continue to serve as Project Manager. Ben will not be the PM for the project and Brian Bartell, who is a very experienced landscape architect, will be the Project Director. Under Ben will be Andrew Smith, who Ben has a long history of working with at the U. S. Army Corp of Engineers. He will be doing civil design and hydraulic modeling. Another very talented landscape architect, Junice Uy, will also be doing planting plans and will help develop the drawings that help to tell the story of what the different design alternatives will be at this site. He went over the six different aspects of the project approach. To start, they want to get a clear picture of what the design plans can be. He sees that unfolding to include a clear definition of what the problems are at the site, what the opportunities are, what the objectives are and the constraints. Working with the Group and other members of the community to get a clear definition of those four very important things, the problems, opportunities, objectives and constraints. They are starting to do that in the process of hearing the Group, his attendance at this meeting and his discussions with Rachael and Chitra and other comments from the community. That is helpful for the planning process because that will help to drive what types of designs will fit into this very constrained space. They have begun the site assessment portion of the project by reviewing the documents and other project assets that have been provided by Palo Alto and by Valley Water. They had a constructive meeting with them last week. They expressed some of their ideas about the project and agreed to provide some useful project assets, including as-built plans for the creek and the hydraulic model that they used to evaluate flood risk for the creek. After moving through those first phases, defining what the plan is, what they are seeing what is possible, and looking at what there is to work with in terms of drawings and modeling, then then can start to sketch out what some of these different alternatives can be. From the preliminary discussions with the City, they have kind of established what a range of these alternatives could be, ranging from essentially a no action alternative where Matadero Creek stays basically as it is now to something that is a complete renaturalization of the creek that makes it look like what natural creeks are pictured to be, with vegetation and cobbles and gravel and essentially habitat for fish and aquatic species and riparian vegetation. There will most likely be at least one or two alternatives that fall somewhere within that spectrum, that create a compromise between habitat and aesthetic value and recreational opportunities and cost. One they start to define what some of those alternatives are, then they will use hydraulic modeling iteratively with that design development process to evaluate whether those design alternatives are feasible based on the constraints of the system. Basically, the engineers who do the modeling work closely with the landscape architects to see what’s possible and what isn’t, based on the constraints that are identified in the planning process. Then continuing with the process is to develop conceptual drawings that show what these alternatives look like in plain view, basically an aerial view, in cross-section.
and in profile, and describe how the new project fits into the constraints of the system. Finally, ongoing coordination between his team and the City and the community at large. From the initial site assessment and speaking with Valley Water, there are a few things that clearly will be challenges that are arising out of the beginning of the planning process. Flood control is of critical importance. As it is now, Matadero Creek is a flood damage reduction project. It is designed to safely convey the 100-year flow event, or 1 percent annual chance event. It is clear that that level of flood control is going to need to be maintained going forward. The site also must be easily maintained and accesses for maintenance by Valley Water. There are several ramps that go down from the public rights of way down into the Valley Water right of way within Matadero Creek that Valley Water uses to access to remove sediment and debris and maintain this smooth, rectangular concrete channel, because as sediment builds up and debris accumulates in the channel, the flood conveyance goes down. Then the system will not meet its flood control objectives and that is not acceptable to Valley Water and also to the community who prefers to stay dry during flood events. Public safety is also a concern which ties back into flood control in some ways. Also, they want to look at what is possible as far as habitat goes. Is there a potential for this creek to be valuable for steelhead trout, which are definitely of interest to many Bay Area creeks and were once plentiful throughout the Bay Area? Looking at aesthetics, it’s possible there is room for improvement compared to the existing channel.

Ms. Flynn asked if an objective is to recharge underground aquifers?

Mr. Snyder remarked that was a good question. That is not an objective that he had considered yet, but he thought it should be included in their planning, because groundwater over drafting has historically been a major problem in the South Bay. They definitely want to include that. He continued that once they get to the stage where they are evaluating different design alternatives, some of the things he thought of early in the process that they will want to consider based on the conversations are flood conveyance. They will use hydraulic modeling to evaluate that. Sediment transport is something that could be of concern as a maintenance issue. If the hydraulics of the creek are changed, sediment transport continuity through the system will also be changed. That is something they want to be conscious of as they are evaluating different designs, because they don’t want to create a long-term maintenance issue with the new project. That ties into channel stability, but he is thinking more in terms of not what’s happening with the bed aggradation or raising it from sediment deposition, but with the banks being stable and not falling into the channel. One of the beneficial things, but not so aesthetically pleasing of a concrete channel is that it is pretty stable. Corridor width is possibly a metric to use for some habitat value. Also, very important to the City and the community and probably the developer would be the cost of each one of these alternatives.

Unidentified male asked what the pipe was on the left-hand side of the picture.

Unintelligible reply

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Ms. Tanner asked for the sediment transport do they want it to transport sediment, or don’t want it to? Take that into the model calculations of how much sediment gets transported away each year or something like that?

Mr. Snyder replied they would like the sediment transport capacity to be roughly the same as it is now.

Mr. Steele asked from where to where of the creek are they studying?

Mr. Snyder answered just downstream of Park, where it makes a 90-degree bend. The 90-degree bend is where the boundary of the NVCAP study area polygon area is, upstream to Lambert. So, Lambert would be the upstream end. In discussions with Chitra, there are some opportunities to potentially tie in additional stream naturalization upstream of Lambert, so the exact definition of the limits of where they will be presenting and developing design alternatives is still undetermined. He would like to see as much of this section of Matadero Creek be renaturalized as possible. It seems there are some opportunities at Boulware Park upstream and the recently acquired parcel just upstream of Lambert, 3350 Birch. The next slide was an example of some model output. This slide was a view of Matadero Creek from the side, a longitudinal profile of the model output. It showed the predicted water surface elevation relative to a few bridge decks of interest. The most downstream one, the flow going from right to left, from high to low, the most downstream one is the Park Bridge, then Lambert. He pointed to Alma, Park and Lambert. What is seen is the water surface elevation as it kind of backs up against those bridges based on the modeling they have. He showed another model he received from an earlier study by Schauenweiler (phonetic) for Sobrato based on modeling for the FEMA flood insurance study. They can use this model to test some changes in the geometry of the channel to show how this water surface elevation goes up or down, based on the things they propose to do to change the geometry of the channel. Some things they would change are the shape, the size of the cross section.

Inaudible female

Mr. Snyder replied that was a good question. The red line is critical depth. That’s what the depth of the flow would be if it was super critical.

Inaudible female

Mr. Snyder remarked it does. The green shows that’s the energy grade line. That includes the velocity head of the flow. Basically, if you were to slow all the water down against some kind of obstruction and take all the kinetic energy out of the flow, it would go up to that green line. The blue line is the water surface, the hydraulic grade line.

Inaudible female

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Mr. Snyder replied the term critical depth, it may be getting into the weeds a bit to try to define it during this meeting. There are two energy states for any certain type of flow, subcritical and super critical. Super critical is very low and fast and subcritical is slow and deep. He probably didn’t need to include the red line because it’s probably not of interest to the general public. It doesn’t mean critical meaning of critical importance to the community.

Ms. Tanner asked if there was a line on the page which, if it went above it, would be too deep, or is that not really how to read these lines?

Mr. Snyder answered not on this particular output, but it can plot the top of the bank, and then that can clearly show that the water surface is higher than the ground surface and that means it’s going to start pouring out the side. The next slide was a quick adjustment he made in the hydraulic model from the existing condition and asked what would happen if they just laid this bank back. This is a cross section view of the mode, looking downstream, in between Lambert and Park standing down in the channel. So, instead of having the vertical bank on the left, now it’s laid back at a 2:1 slope, but you still have the vertical slope on the right bank. Another change made to the model is the roughness, not having a nice smooth concrete channel they took account for that by changing the roughness value. Basically, they doubled the roughness. That increases the water surface elevation by changing the geometry and by changing the roughness. That will be one of the constraints and factors to consider as they are evaluating what is possible at this site. Going back to the previous slide, there is one section where that change in geometry was applied, which was between Lambert and Park in this one model run. There is a higher blue line to show the scenario where the cross-section area is increased and the roughness is increased for that section, so it’s going up by about a foot.

Ms. Flynn noted her question was, when first viewing this she thought it was getting wider, then therefore it has more volume capacity, and the only explanation for what he said about the water going up means, no, the top edge is where it used to be and now it’s going in this way at the bottom.

Mr. Snyder replied the critical factor here is the roughness in the channel. Since they were essentially doubling the roughness to account for larger rocks and vegetation and a more natural, that’s what’s causing that increase in water surface. Several other things that will increase the depth of flow is expansion and contraction of the flow that takes some energy out of the flow. When the water has to converge to go back underneath the park, then that’s going to cause some backup. The next slide showed, based on what was found, a summary of some of the things they are looking at. Matadero Creek right now is a very basic rectangular concrete channel designed pretty much for one thing, and that’s to convey flood water through the neighborhood. It does that pretty efficiently. There is not really any riparian or aquatic habitat at all, because of the material forming the channel. There is one small low-flow channel that goes through the center and allows for a few inches of flow during the summer months. This is
a somewhat subjective evaluation, but he found it to be somewhat aesthetically uninteresting. He believed there may be some safety concerns related to the height of the walls. It could be an attractive nuisance to people potentially making murals and such. There may be room for improvement in terms of safety. From the modeling he is seeing that it looks like there are hydraulic controls at the bridges. What he is hoping to see in his modeling is that some adjustment can be made in the cross-section geometry in between the bridges in that those bridges will be causing so much backwater themselves that they will allow some things to be done upstream.

**Unidentified female** asked him to restate that sentence and explain some of the words used.

Mr. Snyder responded that when he says hydraulic control of bridges, the bridges themselves may be acting to limit the amount of flow that can pass under them, because they act kind of like a big valve for the creek. If the water surface is already under existing conditions, higher than the bottom of the bridge, then that bridge may be backwatering the flow to the point where the things they propose to do in the creek will have less of an effect than what that bridge is already having. He stated there are a lot of access ramps that are in the channel and in the Valley Water right of way, which will probably have to stay there in order to be able to have Valley Water on board with whatever is proposed. Those are fairly significant constraints. Low flow habitat is clearly of interest. It was of interest enough even in the 70’s for there to be a low flow channel through the larger concrete channel. They would want to be able to maintain that low flow habitat. He indicated a pretty large constraint was the private property owners along the corridor. Just downstream and to the left of Lambert is a section of private property owners. Downstream to the right side between Lambert and Park there are a number of parcels where, in the ultimate renaturalization scenario, they would work with those property owners to renaturalize that entire corridor, but those are significant constraints that would have to be negotiated as the process goes forward.

Mr. Holzmer asked where the flow goes down, it makes a 90-degree turn, are they studying what the impacts were for naturalization in terms of, does that put more pressure on that 90-degree turn, when that creek turns then flows down underneath the railroad tracks? Is that part of the study they are doing?

Mr. Snyder answered that they do take into account the momentum loss in the flow as it hits that 90-degree bend and turns. Because of the constraints of where they are looking as far as the property boundary goes, he didn’t know if they would have much of an option to straighten out the creek through there. He would love to discover that is not the case as they move forward in the planning process. What he has been able to tell so far, that 90-degree bend is here to stay, unless they could acquire a number of other properties that are well beyond the edges of the NVCAP polygon.
Ms. Turner inquired if that turn posed a barrier in terms of naturalization, the water has to go a certain speed in order to go around the curve and, therefore, the things done upstream need to maintain a certain momentum or something?

Mr. Snyder replied no.

Mr. Reckdahl asked how the slope of this portion, if the concrete is gotten rid of and there is just dirt on the bottom will there be erosion, or is the slope flat enough that it won’t cause erosion?

Mr. Snyder responded that they will be working to evaluate that as part of their sediment transport analysis. They would like to have a situation where there is not erosion or significant deposition where it’s a maintenance issue through there.

Ms. Dellaporta asked if they have to take into account climate change when they are considering flood control? Do they have to change the amount of flood control that is planned ahead for?

Mr. Snyder replied that climate change, as far as their prediction of future precipitation intensity is beyond the scope of their analysis. As they have more studies that are well supported in order to change what the future estimates of the design precipitation intensity are, they will incorporate that into their analysis. They don’t foresee that being a part of this particular project.

Ms. Turner explained they would continue questions for Ben, and then maybe he can wrap up to cover the next steps. He will come back again to this group in the future.

Ms. Price stated that considering it is early in the process, is it conceivable that whatever the alternatives are chosen to be, that this phase of the subject properties, this particular area, could be implemented prior to implementation of other phases of the broader subject NVCAP properties? So, absent the question of funding, could the recommendations that you may be making be implemented as phased and brought in earlier than other opportunities in the subject site.

Mr. Snyder didn’t see why not.

Ms. Price asked to clarify, is he maintaining the cement or concrete lining concept in all alternatives?

Mr. Snyder replied no.
Ms. Price then asked if there are plumes in the vicinity based on earlier manufacturing toxicity, would that be a consideration as it impacts the habitat.

Mr. Snyder believed it would be. In his scope of work, that is actually laid out as one of the things they will need to consider, a vapor intrusion zone. So, one of the things he is looking for in the early planning and site assessment process is information related to a vapor intrusion zone. He understood there may be some sort of a delineated polygon already that shows there is some plume data that would be helpful to have.

Mr. Lait questioned Ms. Price about her first question about whether the improvements could be implemented now in advance of other items. He still believed that they will have a constraint of land ownership and any private property owner constraints might also impede being able to move forward with not just funding but with land.

Ms. Price stated she would remain hopeful but understood what he was saying.

Mr. Reckdahl asked if there was excess through put at this portion, water through put.

Mr. Snyder inquired if he meant excess flood conveyance.

Mr. Reckdahl replied yes.

Mr. Snyder answered it doesn’t really appear so, based on the modeling he has seen. He anticipates getting the official up-to-date model from Valley Water this week and that should show if there is any excess capacity.

Mr. Reckdahl asked if the goal is to maintain the current conveyance or improve it?

Mr. Snyder replied it is to maintain the existing conveyance.

Ms. Tanner asked if there were any further questions from the Working Group.

Inaudible

Ms. Tanner suggested if there is some public comment on this item from members of the public, some questions they can voice during that and those can be gathered and if the Working Group would like to entertain those questions, that can be done. For public comment, they can get a speaker card and the questions can be asked at the microphone.

Public Comment:
David Adams stated he has said previously but he will say it again. In the ’98 flood the creek did not hold the amount of water that was flying through it. What happened was the pipes going into the creek from the drains, the flaps closed up on those, so the water backed out the drains and the area flooded to a substantial depth. To say that the creek’s current capacity is adequate, he didn’t think that was correct. In the City documentation, that ’98 flood is described as an 80-year event, not 100-year and that was in ’98. He thought it was quite disturbing that there is no consideration of climate change. Look at what’s going on around us. Maybe that 80-year flood in ’98 will be a 50-year flood now.

Cedric de la Beaujardiere encouraged the Group to not feel constrained to stay within the current creek channel width. The original creek wasn’t in that original channel and then humans without manners essentially stole from the creek and its inhabitants to create more parking and property space. The NVCA project will surely have open space and park requirements, so some of that could potentially be met within a wider creek channel, so it wouldn’t really be a loss to property owners to have some of that park land be part of the creek channel. As noted, the City is purchasing that empty lot at the corner of Lambert, Ash and Chestnut and the adjacent Boulware Park, so that is a great opportunity to have people engage with that creek and really get to experience the natural treasures in the community and get them more engaged with the ecology of the space. He went to a water-themed workshop and one of the things they were trying to do was increase summer flows to support fish habitat when the flow gets really low and farmers were taking out water at a difficult time for the ecology. Maybe we could be harvesting rain water from the site and that could potentially be stored and some released into the creek in the dryer months to support the habitat.

Ms. Turner asked Mr. Snyder if he could address the flood waters and the 80-year and 100-year floods and how the City can prepare for such events and how hydrology plays into understanding that.

Mr. Snyder thanked the speakers. Regarding the 1998 event, he knows very few of the details about that particular event. One of the things the speaker mentioned was that the gates were closed that drain into the creek. That is typically the case. The flap gates stay closed until the flood water recedes and then those interior areas can drain. There can be some interior flooding in parking lots where the storm drain system is overwhelmed until the flood waters can pass through the creek. That is one of the unfortunate ways that the plumbing in the system has to be. That may actually have been functioning the way it was supposed to, but it does bring up a greater concern of just all of the parts being maintained and upgraded correctly. Sometimes those flap gates just get jammed and they don’t open when they are supposed to. Sometimes debris collects on ridges or in those pipes and gates. That is something that is in Valley Water’s jurisdiction to maintain the drainage and the conveyance of the system. He wants to work closely with them to make sure they can do their job to maintain all of the flood conveyance of the system, including the drains that go to the creek. That is something they don’t want to overlook, how the new beautiful, renaturalized creek would then tie into
these other infrastructure features, the drains from the parking lots and other neighboring communities. Speaking to the other point about how precipitation intensity is changing, essentially all engineers can go by right now are the most up-to-date hydrology studies, which are based on rainfall records, which are updated with some regularity. He thought the most recent precipitation intensity official values for what they say is the 1 percent chance precipitation event was updated within the past five years. So, that would be utilizing pretty much all of the available data to define what magnitude these rare events are, but that does not take into account future variability, and that’s just not something they are prepared to be able to defend from an engineering perspective yet. He shared the concern that what’s happening with climate change is increasing variability and intensity of these weather events.

**Additional Group Questions:**

Ms. Flynn asked if there was a place Mr. Snyder could point the Group to get up to speed to be intelligent consumers of his reports and presentations, such as educational resources on the Web, a primer on hydrology and creek design? He could convey something to the City and the City could convey it to the Group.

Mr. Snyder thanked Ms. Flynn for her question and asked that it be included in the minutes as an action item for him and he will be happy to follow up. There is a lot of great information out there.

Mr. Reckdahl inquired if the design vision would encourage people to go down into the stream or discourage it?

Mr. Snyder replied it would be to encourage people to interact with the creek.

Mr. Reckdahl responded such as in the park area to have kids be able to access and play in the stream?

Mr. Snyder responded that he would definitely like to see that in at least one of the alternatives, recreation access. He didn’t know if he would list it out as one of the planning items, but thought that definitely would count as an opportunity as increased recreation, increased public interaction, community interaction and enjoyment of the creek. In river restoration they speak a lot about habitat for steelhead, habitat for red-legged frog, but he is very interested in building habitat for the dominant species in Palo Alto.

Ms. Turner noted Mr. Snyder’s group has some plans to come back to the Working Group at a certain point and asked the Group what might be expected to hear about the next time he comes back.
Mr. Snyder explained the next steps will be continuing to digest the existing information being gathered, incorporating the vapor intrusion information they hope to receive soon and the latest hydraulic models from Valley Water, then beginning to lay out what some of these designs can look like. He encouraged the Group to voice what some of their ideas are as far as what he should be considering in the planning process, the four things they see, problems, opportunities, objectives and constraints. This way when he is moving forward with trying to scope what will go into these different alternatives, he takes into account what the community sees as being the most prominent of those four items. He didn’t want to over promise but he believed by next month he will have some drawings to show off some of the different features of the designs could look like.

Ms. Turner indicated with a little more information about the idea of the problems, opportunities, objectives and constraints, and with a little more education for the Group to think about, if there are any questions or notes she can pass on to Ben, they can be emailed to her. If there are specific things on anyone’s mind about the problems, opportunities, objectives or constraints she will make sure the WRA team has those and they will be shared with the other members of the Working Group.

Mr. Lait thanked Mr. Snyder for sharing his initial information with the Group. It is very helpful.


Ms. Turner thanked Ms. Price and Ms. Dellaporta for meeting and working with her over the last few weeks to think about the agenda and to think really carefully about how there might be an engaging and interactive evening. There will be some things tried this evening and hope to get good feedback and willful participation to work together. A lot of time and energy will be focused on ideas around housing, the urban form, the density of the housing and population, as well as some of the mobility considerations. The materials everyone will be looking at come from some of the previous meetings this year, but hoping what might be different is providing more time for discussion, for feedback, for hearing from everyone and making sure everyone’s voice is heard. In addition, sometimes when you sit with things for a while, you have different ideas than you had when first seeing the materials. There may be fresh opinions. What she hoped to get this evening was to offer the Working Group members an opportunity to discuss aspects of the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan that will be addressed in the three plan alternatives. Think about the three plan alternatives having different amounts of housing, different amounts of open space, different types of ways to connect and encourage mobility to and through this site. Maybe there are some things they would really love to see in a plan alternative or things not cared about as much. Maybe divergence different Working Group members disagree on, or convergence that everyone would like to see. She hopes to see some of those to work with the Perkins & Will team to make sure those aspects are incorporated. The Plan Goals and Objectives will be reviewed first and then the two main items are the urban
form density, height and mobility. There may be more thoughts about the creek as the discussion progresses.

Goals adopted by the Palo Alto City Council on March 5, 2019. The seven goals were housing and land use, transit, pedestrian, bicycle connections, connected street grid, community facilities and infrastructure, balance of community interest, urban design, design guidelines and neighborhood fabric and sustainability and the environment.

Ms. Turner noted one of the ways she wanted to encourage the Group to evaluate and understand the plan alternatives as they are developed, was how well do they meet these goals. Different alternatives could meet different objectives to a greater or lesser degree because there could be a tradeoff between alternatives. She suggested the Group keep these in mind as a way to evaluate a plan, because plans have a lot in them, a lot of detail. Some of the project objectives were to have a data-driven approach, a comprehensive and user-friendly document, guide and strategy for Staff and decision makers. The project should have meaningful engagement, to be economically feasible and to support the environment and public health. As a refresher of some of the components of the Coordinated Area Plan, the different alternatives seen will have different distribution, location and extent of land uses. Think about if it is for parks or retail, housing, the different ways the zoning code breaks up the land uses. Next, distribution, location and extent of intensity of public infrastructure, talking about the creek, roads, public items and where they would be located and how they would function. Program of implementation measures, such as developing regulations, height of a building, how many units, what does it look like and how does it interact with the public street and with the community, the public works projects and financing for those. Design and development standards will be looked at, thinking about how things look. Determination of economic and fiscal feasibility are studies that will be done regarding economics, understanding how feasible the different plans and ideas are and what it would take to both make them work from a financial perspective and what they might yield economically that could benefit or steered into some of the public benefits. Lastly, there will be environmental reviews of the plan document.

Urban Form:

Ms. Turner indicated they sent out as part of the cover letter the cities that each Group Member sent in that were their inspiration, the cities they wanted to see. She had some questions, identify some of the images and the housing and building types, what members liked, where were the characteristics of the buildings that were attractive, what were the heights of some of the building that were attractive, what aspects of the urban form in these areas were most attractive. She asked everyone to jot down their responses to these questions and then the Group will be divided into group of three to discuss and share in the groups and then report out.
The Working Group broke into small discussion groups.

Ms. Turner called the discussion groups back to the table. She asked each group to take one to two minutes to present what they discussed, focusing on what they found attractive, what did they like to see in the plan alternatives.

Ms. Dellaporta asked how this would be recorded, each person’s preferences.

Ms. Turner explained this is being recorded and the notes are transcribed from the audio recording and they are extensive notes of what everyone says.

Ms. Dellaporta asked if Perkins & Will will get all of these comments.

Ms. Turner stated they will get the transcribed notes and also her own notes.

Mr. Lew spoke for his group. They liked a mix of historical and new buildings, so they looked at Edinburg and the Pearl District and the Yards in D.C. They discussed retaining existing buildings, that may require the housing to be taller if some of the existing buildings are preserved. They looked at four to six stories. They liked for the larger buildings to be near parks and open space, like on a boulevard. They liked a variety of building types and styles and having a lot of balconies on buildings.

Ms. Turner asked when he said a variety, in a certain place would there be a variety of types within the same place, or his group liked a lot of types of buildings and they all looked attractive.

Mr. Lew had one comment on the D.C. Yards, that it looked a little overly master planned. There was one building on one block and to him it gets monotonous. In the Pearl District there were a lot of different varieties of buildings together.

Ms. Turner asked if there were any questions from other groups to this group? There were none.

Ms. Dellaporta spoke for her group. They liked the height of about three to four stories. They liked a variety of heights and they wouldn’t mind having somewhat higher buildings in the middle of the site, where they aren’t looming over the sidewalk or over single-family homes. They don’t want terribly dense housing if it means there wouldn’t be enough amenities like parking, schools, shopping and those kinds of things. They would like to see rather dense housing because it will promote more affordable housing for middle-income families. They loved seeing sidewalks and bicycles prioritized. They loved walkways without cars. They loved seeing mixed-use and retail especially and lots of activities to do in the neighborhood, and specifically a communal area for gathering that has some kind of a draw, not just there without

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anything going on. They liked seeing roads designed to avoid cut-through car traffic and loved seeing the designs and colors on the crosswalks, the bright, interesting designs.

Ms. Turner noted they wanted to have more housing for middle-income families, that being a value of why they would want to have the housing be part of the neighborhood. She asked if the group had any other comments about that or if anyone from other groups had any questions or comments.

Ms. Summa spoke for her group. They had some similarities with the other groups. They liked the scale of Emeryville Greenway, Oak Park, Illinois, Russian River Brewery and The Barlow. They liked the way most of those places, Emeryville Greenway is new, but most of those places had examples of adaptive reuse of old buildings and new buildings that were mixed in, tried to echo the existing architectural forms. They sort of liked three to four stories, and when it was four stories, they liked retail on the bottom and apartments above. They liked varied rooflines and varied architectural style, so it doesn’t look like a subdivision. In all cases they appreciated seeing ample open space, parks, plazas, setbacks, outdoor usable space to see people in. Unlike Downtown Palo Alto they envision this area having more open space and setbacks than Downtown Palo Alto and a more residential character, even though a lot of mixed use.

Ms. Flynn pointed out one particular picture from Emeryville as one that she found extremely compelling. It is the one at the bottom. Because it has a concrete pathway for bicycles, a decomposed granite pathway for pedestrians and green space that would be functional with benches and little areas to gather.

Ms. Turner responded that it looked like they were looking at some of the pictures of Downtown Palo Alto and thinking about differences between this area and Downtown, noting more open space, setbacks, and residential.

Ms. Price spoke for her group. She remarked that a lot of her comments were similar to others. Her group had various examples of their favored images, Cambridge examples, the Pearl District of Portland, St. Anthony of Minneapolis, San Antonio Center, Oak Park. Her group didn’t have a consensus feeling necessarily about height because there were a variety of opinions from focusing on existing buildings and doing a kind of reuse approach and looking at architectural features of existing buildings in the subject area. They also talked about the importance of new design, new buildings, a variety of heights, designs, setbacks, building materials, the idea that design highlights the form and the function of the various properties. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of having open space and landscaping and the importance of separating the pedestrian and bikes and other non-auto mobility as much as possible. That is one of the reasons the Greenway concept was very important. There were a lot of examples where they have provisions for scooters, skateboards and others that can have their own safe path and not be causing any problems and risks and confrontation among the various modes of transportation. They didn’t talk about the size of the units. That informs
density so that is a question that the Working Group will have to look at. There was a strong emphasis on social areas, marketplace, market areas, town square kind of concept and plazas. They liked to have the human part of this so there is a sense of community. It relates to the broader Ventura community recognizing that people come and go because of the jobs that are in the region. The landscaping again that can soften the hard edges of the buildings. A variety of buildings, a variety of heights, they talked about one story or two story, and then about four, five, six, seven stories. Again, the design, setbacks all of those were important variables. There is a recognition that to create more housing there may have to be some buildings that have greater density. That was a summary of her group discussion, similar to what other people have said. She was sure there would be more time to discuss all these.

Ms. Turner noted it sounded like this group talked about everything from one to seven stories and that there are a variety of factors that might influence if they liked taller or shorter buildings. She asked if there were any questions or comments for that group. There were none. She indicated this helped her get in touch with everyone’s thoughts.

Discussion of Density:

Ms. Turner moved the discussion specifically around density in the area and specifically the housing density. Housing density in planning is talked about as dwelling units per acre, written as UD/Acre. How many dwelling units are on an acre of land? Ms. Price and Ms. Dellaporta sent out a great primer around density that helps to understand different scales. In a subdivision, how many dwelling units were in that acre of land. As the buildings take different shapes and different forms, there are more dwelling units, apartments, houses, whatever that unit if dwelling is in a given acre of land. That is one way of thinking about density. You can also think about population density. The document everyone has looked at all of those different neighborhoods, The Pearl, Downtown, etc. and said, how many people live in every square mile. That is a different way to think about density. Part of the reason dwelling units per acre is talked about is because when planning for how many units can fit in a place, it’s not necessarily known how many people will actually inhabit that. Once those units are built and people are living there, then the number of people dwelling within a square mile or the unit of measurement can be counted. Until the number of people living in an acre of land is known, what is known is how many units are allowed in that acre.

Mr. Reckdahl noted that his reaction is that it seems reasonable, but if you have a one, two- or three-bedroom unit, it varies. The dwelling itself would not be the best factor.

Mr. Turner clarified that the information can get more specific with number of bedrooms or studios. Something else to think about is there might be medians or averages regarding how many people typically dwell in a household. The average for Palo Alto is 2.4 persons per household and that information can be used to try to project what they think might happen. Those are different ways to think about density, population and the housing density.
Ms. Flynn wanted to make the point that it seemed like, from all the feedback, that the Group did not seem to be designing a project for the typical Palo Alto density of 2.4. It might be very different. There might be more single people, it seems like that is what is targeted. So, maybe that wouldn’t be the metric to be focused on.

Ms. Turner clarified when Ms. Flynn said it seems like the focus is on single people, had that been a conversation point in the group?

Ms. Flynn responded they had gotten a lot of public feedback that there is a great deal of pent-up demand for that kind of housing.

Ms. Steele added that a one-bedroom or studio will handle one person, whereas a two or three bedroom will handle more, but the volume of the space the unit takes up is smaller, so on an acre basis, if there are all one bedrooms, you get more units, but there might be the same amount of people than if doing just two bedroom units, because they take up more volume of space, but a lower density, but there are more bedrooms or the same amount of bedrooms at the end of the day. A better way to count, which then translates to the parking is how many bedrooms you have per project on an acre.

Ms. Turner responded bedrooms, units, people. As the Group is working together, they can hopefully as they are reading things to keep in mind how is that document talking about the density.

Mr. Lew remarked after reviewing a lot of the ARB projects that have come before the Board, and looking at the number of units in them, and it really varies wildly, and it’s partly due to the unit size where there is one very small unit project, but also a lot of penthouses downtown which are around 6,000 square feet or more. The other factor is that there is mixed-use zoning in many parts of Palo Alto, so that takes out half of the volume for commercial uses, so there are not that many uses in the buildings. He was looking at quite a number of buildings where there are six units or ten units in a big four-story building.

Ms. Turner asked if what Mr. Lew said made sense. It becomes more important in the planning process when refining how the density is measured so it’s not just mentioned as high density, low density. Those terms are not as meaningful as thinking about how many stories are comfortable from an urban form perspective and then who are these trying to serve which then goes to the point of bedroom mix, unit count. This is versus just saying it’s 100, is that a lot of units, a little bit. It depends on a number of factors that influence how a building looks and how it performs.

Ms. Price remarked that, as mentioned before, the whole issue of economic feasibility is critical. She is looking forward to understanding more completely what are the economics of these...
various options, designs, size, height, setback, etc. Unit size is really critical and the issue of parking ratios is sort of a moving target too. The field itself is in the process of transforming itself in terms of parking per various units of housing.

Mr. Steele added that in the packet, pointing out a specific case, 205 dwelling units per acre.

Ms. Turner indicated the pages were not numbered, but looking at the headings of the units per acre, he is looking at the 205 units per acre of the article that was shared.

Mr. Steele continued this was a good example of how these things play out because this is 205 dwelling units per acre, and even this is an extreme case in terms of density, it is still a four-story building, 41 studio apartments with 430 square feet. Even though the dwelling units per acre seems crazy high, if you actually look at the specifics, 41 studio apartments, 430 square feet, on four stories, it only provides eight parking spaces. So, the parking is important too. Is there underground parking, is there surface parking? That has an impact.

Ms. Turner noted the point of this article is to try to help provide some background as to how sometimes planners will be talking about units per acre and how that can look. It doesn’t mean there are 205 units in this building, it just means that if you put that building over an acre, how many units would be there. It can sound really high, but it is breaking it down to that specific plot and how that looks.

Ms. Flynn thought the other point this building brings up is that this is not a full acre worth of 205 units per acre, and if you have a few well designed, and the point she wanted to bring up is that she keeps saying good design solves problems, and if this is a nice, well designed intense density building in some areas then it will free up their ability to design other things in other areas.

Ms. Summa stated it is important to remember moving forward, since pricing is not anticipated to go down in Palo Alto, larger groups, larger families will be living in smaller and smaller buildings also.

Ms. Turner announced everyone was going to play a game, a quiz from one of the co-chairs.

Ms. Flynn in the meantime remarked that one thing that came up a lot when she was looking at density was that setbacks and stepping up were super important. Those were two concepts that they would have to spend more time. What kind of residential setbacks are the minimum required to get that residential character rather than an urban on the sidewalk character.

Ms. Turner continued with the quiz from Silicon Valley At Home. It showed 9 to 12 different buildings and the density of each would be guessed. She also wanted to use these images as a way to talk a little more about the types that are liked and the forms of the different buildings.
This would be units per acre. The first picture was guessed at 5, 6, 15, 8. It is the property on the project site, so they are able to put trees and gardens. The first one is 15.3. It is called the Classics at Nagly Park in San Jose. The next picture was guessed at 20, 25. The second was 15.6, just a little more. This specific development is 15.6 units per acre, but overall it is 145 units. Imagine it spreading out over some space, over 10.2 acres of land. The third picture was guessed at 20. It is difficult to tell because it is one front image. It is probably what are called garden apartments where there is green space and apartments arranged. There is no ground floor retail.

Ms. Price asked regarding the Eden Housing, historically they primarily provide affordable housing, so it's a nonprofit developer?

Mr. Snyder answered yes, this is a 100 percent affordable development. All the homes are deed restricted, meaning you have to make below a certain income to be able to qualify them. That is a great example of what affordable housing looks like in the community. It looks like all other housing.

Ms. Tanner continued with the next picture and was guessed at 16 and it is 16. This was a picture of the Gardens at North 9th Street in San Jose, 44 units over 2.8 acres. The next was Monte Vista. It looked like there may be some commercial, maybe just signage. Guesses were 32, 30, 44.

Mr. Lew remarked that was actually an old cannery, a Del Monte Cannery.

Ms. Turner responded it was Madison Place at Monte Vista, San Jose. The next was what looked like a three-story brick building in the background.

**Unidentified female** remarked no one could see how much green space there was involved in the whole thing.

(crosstalk)

Ms. Turner suggested the idea was that the similar typology would be repeated. For example, if this was a mansion it would be a one unit per acre, but you might say, well, how many housing units you think are in this portion and the total would be the sum of that. So, if that is spread out, what do you think the density of the units is. The density per unit, if it is repeated will be the same no matter how many acres it is spread out over.

**Male, off mic**

Ms. Turner noted that one was 23 per acre.
Ms. Price thought that one was near a light rail station.

Ms. Turner indicated the next one there were 41 units per acre, 35 units total on 0.85 acres. This is probably more in an urban area.

**Unidentified male** remarked that was also affordable.

**Unidentified female** asked about open space.

**Unidentified male** replied no, that is less than one acre.

*(off mic, crosstalk)*

Ms. Turner went through the rest of the pictures. The next one looked like roughly a three- or four-story building and it is 49 units to the acre, City Apartments in Santa Clara. The next is 40 units total on 0.818 acres. It is right up to sidewalk and inviting to the sidewalk without invading it.

**Unidentified male, off mic**

Ms. Turner explained the next one in the middle was a tower structure, 150 units per acre. It is called the Eighty-Eight and has 197 units total on 1.3 acres.

**Unidentified male, off mic**

Ms. Flynn asked about open space.

Ms. Price replied it had a large open space about half way up the building.

*(Crosstalk, off mic)*

Ms. Turner looked at the last few examples. The next was 189 units to the acre, so that is probably the highest density seen so far. It is 213 units on 1.1 acres. Probably more of an urban one, but they have broken the building up by having a lower part and then a tower.

Mr. Steele remarked that building was originally built as a condominium project. As it was being built the market fell apart, just like the Eighty-Eight. They were built about the same time. It is very under parked and it had real trouble selling because of the parking. They tried to secure parking off site to supplement it. It went into default and then an apartment buyer bought it and converted it to apartments.
Ms. Turner looked at the last three. There is a red and blue building which had 176 units to the acre.

**Crosstalk, off mic**

Ms. Turner indicated the last picture. There were guesses of 60, 80, 100. This had a total of 329 units on 1.24 acres.

**Crosstalk, off mic**

Ms. Turner noted the project area site is 60 acres overall. Obviously not one property owner or one parcel but that’s the total project area. This was to try to help to think about the interplay between the form they want the buildings to have, the amenities wanted and how that might look in the project area, depending on the densities and heights and different variables, inputs and constraints put onto the housing in the NVCAP area. She pulled up some of the densities of some of the projects that are in the area. The lower two are in the entitlement process. The first one is a constructed project. This is to try to round out the understanding of they have and what they might have. The building 185 Page Mill is constructed, the image at the bottom. It is built at 34.9 units per acre with a total of 85 units. The 3225 El Camino, she thought was the Foot Locker site was 5.52 units per acre and eight units total. Then 423-441 Page Mill would have ten units per acre and a total of 16 units.

Ms. Flynn believed some of those projects included other spaces, mixed use, so it’s a little bit challenging to think about these examples because they don’t include the square footage for the office or commercial space.

Ms. Turner replied they don’t include it in the dwelling unit count, but it is still trying to understand when thinking about the buildings that may have been seen or that are there now, to try to give a sense of what currently is there or what has been proposed in the process. Certainly, having retail space changes the building and how much space is available for dwelling units. If the ground floor is retail, you can’t have apartments there.

Ms. Flynn asked if 195 Page Mill had ground floor retail.

Ms. Turner answered that she was not sure.

Mr. Lew responded there was one café. The rest of the ground floor is R&D.

Ms. Flynn noted office people commuting in an out.

Mr. Lew advised there were two good projects to look at locally. One is University Terrace on California Avenue. It is the old Face Book office site. Stanford built two condominium buildings

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there. He calculated the density at about 34 units per acre. It is on California Avenue near the research park, up at the high point. Also, looking at South Forest, there are the two condo projects, Woodmark and the senior housing. They are at around 40 units per acre. They are typically about 1500 square foot units, two or three bedrooms, two parking spaces per unit. He will try to make a list for the Working Group.

Ms. Turner noted the second bullet point is one of the data points that the consultants gathered when they were speaking with stakeholders, including the affordable housing developers and what the developers were talking to them about was about 120 dwelling units per acre is what they are seeing as viable for constructing their 100 percent affordable projects. It is a data point that can be used. It doesn’t mean it is something they have to do to have housing, but something to take into consideration especially in light of seeing some of those 120 dwelling units per acre properties. There might be some designs that might be favorable and still be able to make sense for the affordable housing developers to create.

Unidentified male asked what the proposed density was for the project at the corner of El Camino and Page Mill.

Ms. Flynn asked if that was the park and ride.

Unidentified female answered it was about 60 units and it is half an acre. Almost exactly the same size (no mic).

Ms. Turner commented they can get information if people have questions about different properties.

Ms. Price had a list of existing Palo Alto housing projects, about 25 or 30, and it gives density per acre, number of units. She will send it to Ms. Turner and she can send it to the group.

Ms. Turns remarked that the other item Chitra put together that can be passed around is a catalogue of every parcel. She will also make it available on line.

Ms. Moitra explained it is a 270-page book she prepared. Basically, she divided the whole project area into blocks. Then by blocks she numbered the parcels then with pictures of zoning with the parcels on it. The first table is the cataloguing the owner, the zoning, the comp plan designation. All information parcel by parcel. That is block by block. After that there is a parking requirement table which shows by zoning what the parking requirements are. She has listed allowed users by the zoning. Next is the parcel catalogue which is by parcel, the parcel report map, the characteristics of the parcels, if they are in a flood zone, what is the maximum number of square footages that can be built. At the end of each block she prepared a potential development table based on the lot size and existing zoning, how much can be built. If it is a CS zoning, which is a service commercial, what uses it allows, residential, nonresidential or mixed.
use, the square footage that can be built, what the dwelling maximum potential of dwelling units that can fit in. She has two additional columns, if any projects are under construction for those parcels and if the parcels belong to the housing inventory site, if the site is on the City’s housing inventory list, then what is the realistic dwelling unit capacity that can go in there. This book would be up on the Web.

Ms. Turner indicated if folks prefer hard copies, let her know. If you don’t need a hard copy and prefer electronic, that is available. She thanked Ms. Moitra for all her work on this. It is great information.

Ms. Turner noted it was 7:40. She wanted to also go to mobility and not shortchange that conversation. She had prepared to discuss in small groups, something the Group had talked about previously, which was the different typologies that Perkins & Will had presented going back to April. It is kind of a townhome typology and this many dwellings per acre and this height and some images. Then it is a multi-family of this height and this many dwelling units per acre to try to round out this discussion, but if everyone preferred, she could move to mobility to have more time for that, or they could do the last housing discussion. The mobility items didn’t get talked about previously and she didn’t want that to happen again.

Ms. Flynn asked if the documents from Perkins & Will could be made available to the Group to look through on their own.

Ms. Dellaporta asked what question they should be thinking about or to answer.

Ms. Turner replied she can send the discussion questions that were for this part. They had laid out three to four different typologies and thinking about what the Group would like to see and if there were different locations they would like to see. For example, Olive and Pepper Streets, to be mindful of the single-family homes there. Maybe feeling more comfortable with a two-story building being across from a single-family home versus a seven story. Just thinking about what is preferred and also location influences what is preferred. Maybe on Page Mill a taller building seems more appropriate than by the single family. She can send this out and everyone can think about it.

Mr. Reckdahl asked when thinking about heights, if there were best practices for transitions from single family to higher buildings, or is it just whatever people want to do?

Ms. Turner replied different folks are of different minds about it. They have their own practices here and then there are designers who might think about it in a different way.

Mr. Lait indicated the code does set forth some transitional standards that are in the Felton Standards. When you are adjacent to lower density housing or one- or two-story dwellings. The idea is it is a transition. You don’t necessarily want to go from a low-profile structure to a stark...
five-story building. That is the concept. Beyond that, though the review process that can be refined further. The push here is thinking about way down the line in this project when developing standards, it should be clear and have objective standards more and more. He thought the State was pushing more towards objective standards and less from these findings that are more subjective.

Mr. Lew commented that the ARB gets a lot of comments that people don’t like big long walls on El Camino, so if you go to the next city down, Los Altos, they will actually push their buildings back and not make the transition to the ranch houses behind them. They just push the building back so that El Camino gets the greater frontage. Palo Alto is sort of pushing them closer to the street to get more transition to the houses in the back.

Mobility:

Ms. Turner moved on to some of the mobility improvements that were suggested on April 17 and thinking about several things. There are a series of slides to go through and then keeping these questions in mind, will introduce what the improvement is and have a quick minute to talk about the impacts and advantages of that improvement and disadvantages and then discuss this together. Some folks will be supportive of these improvements, some less supportive and a variety of thoughts. She referenced the document from April 17, page 11. She showed a zoom out of the project area. El Camino Real Oregon expressway improvements, Olive and Pepper traffic calming, Portage Avenue improvements, site parking considerations, Park Boulevard improvements and site access and internal connectivity. Each of the next slides goes through a little more detail of those areas and potential solutions and improvements. Starting with study bike/ped crossing at Ash Street, so safety, traffic and cost concerns would need to be studied as part of how to get people to cross at Ash. It’s been noted that’s a frequent place where people want to cross the street, but there is not a signalized crossing right now. At the El Camino and Oregon expressway, Page Mill intersections, improving bike and pedestrian crossings at Oregon and El Camino and study new right turn lane from El Camino onto Oregon. Improvements already planned are in the lighter blue. There is a new right turn lane at El Camino to Page Mill that is proposed as a safety improvement, and a new car pool lane on Page Mill west of El Camino. That is part of the Santa Clara County expressways plan. This slide will be left up, the group can talk about it amongst themselves then come back with comments. She advised the Group to talk about the items in the darker blue. Those are being proposed. There may be opinions about the items in lighter blue, but those are already planned so focus should be on the darker blue items, which are the crossing at Ash, a right turn at El Camino and Oregon and bike/ped improvements at Oregon and El Camino. If there are questions, she will try to answer them or get the answers.

The Group went into discussion among themselves for several minutes.
Ms. Turner called everyone back for discussion to share, advantages, disadvantages or questions regarding these proposed improvements.

Ms. Flynn had a strong reaction. Yes, the pedestrian crossing should be improved at Page Mill and El Camino and Oregon but she didn’t think there was any point in improving the bicycle crossing there because she thought bicycles should be directed to other ways to go north, south, east, west.

Ms. Dellaporta strongly agreed with that.

Unidentified female asked what exactly the improvements are supposed to look like?

Mr. Turner replied she thought this was suggesting the thrust of where they would want to go to refine the improvements. That bike or pedestrian access is wanted there. She didn’t know what the proposal would look like. They haven’t been drawn up yet. If that is where the Group wants to put its energy into focusing, they could define what would improve bike and pedestrian access. She is hearing from at least three people that they strongly support the pedestrian improvements, but don’t think bikes should be on El Camino and maybe Oregon expressway.

Unidentified female agreed with the comment about bikes shouldn’t be there. She was trying to imagine what an improved pedestrian crossing would look like there and she could not imagine it.

Off mic comments

Mr. Lait remarked there is more that can be done with marking on the roadway or how to allow for bikes to signal light changes. There are several improvements that could be done. Right now, it’s pretty generic.

Ms. Dellaporta noted her group talking about Page Mill at Ash, they agreed that probably having another stop light right there would slow down traffic on Page Mill or Oregon, so to improvement traffic flow and concern about extra cars coming in with new residents, a stop light there might make things worse. They were talking about the little bridge idea, which would, hopefully, not slow traffic down, a bridge or an underpass. She also thought it might be possible to make all of Ash into a bike, pedestrian boulevard all the way to California Avenue to direct cars away from Ash, semi restrict car access to Ash and make it a nice access road all the way to California Avenue.

Mr. Lew noted it seemed to him if they were doing the transportation demand management or the TMA, he has heard comments on the Council that they have been able to get the number of solo drivers to go down, but they have not been able to get the number of cyclists to go up to
the research park. It seems one of the weak points is that if you go on Caltrain and take the bicycle getting across El Camino is difficult. Even at California Avenue it is not ideal, fighting with buses and a lot of backed up cars. He thought that should be a consideration as well. There is a larger goal in the research park so that may mean having a bicycle improvement at that location, even though he understands why people are uncomfortable with it.

Ms. Flynn replied she has a hard time thinking about specific intersections because she tends to think more about the network, so she is not saying no to bicycles crossing El Camino, she is saying let’s design bicycles crossing El Camino somewhere and she found a later slide where there is a network of streets much more interesting. Saying let’s prioritize bikes on this section of the network. Not to say cars can’t go on it, but it might feel more difficult for cars to go on it because of narrowness or whatever, and other sections say okay, you are welcome here cars, by the way the streets are designed.

Ms. Turner responded that between the two comments is thinking about how to make sure the network, people can get where they want to go, whether it’s El Camino as the desired point where the bicyclists from the Caltrain want to cross. Is there another desired point to cross that may be safer or more advisable because vehicles can be limited, so that becomes a preference? Thinking about the network and thinking about the larger connectivity that people going not only to the NVCAP area but through that area to other adjacent places.

Ms. Flynn suggested a way to think about it is that in areas where there is high housing density there is more car/pedestrian/bicycle conflict and at areas such as Olive and Pepper there is actually an opportunity where there is lower density and might be an area that bicycles would be welcome and cars would not be, because it would help solve that sort of cut-through issue that Olive and Pepper hate so much.

Ms. Dellaporta asked what the street was right off of Hansen?

Ms. Turner answered Portage.

Ms. Dellaporta stated maybe from Portage or from Olive across El Camino, just to have a bike crossing there might be a useful thing, Crossing El Camino from Portage or Olive to Hansen or Acacia.

Ms. Turner commented basically getting people to places that might be a little safer for them to cross. She moved to the next slide which is a vision for El Camino, Oregon expressway from Grand Boulevard Palo Alto’s Safety Study. It is hard to see because it is taken from another plan for El Camino.

Sylvia Star-Lack, Transportation Programs Planning Manager for the City explained this slide is from a study that was done through a grant process. These plans were presented to the...
Planning Commission and they haven’t moved any further than that. There was some community outreach that was done to try to figure out how Palo Alto could potentially make bicycling and transit work better in the area around California Avenue and El Camino. This particular excerpt shows Page Mill Road and El Camino and red lanes are bus Q jump lanes and the green was cross bikes and bike facilities to help make it a little easier for bikes to get to some of the locations. She explained there are ways and people can imagine how to make these streets better for pedestrians and bicyclists and cars and buses. VTA would be interested in improving speeds along El Camino. Mountain View has recently adopted plans to improve bicycling along certain stretches of El Camino because bicycles want to go to businesses that exist.

Ms. Dellaporta asked where the bicycles go on El Camino, are they supposed to go on the sidewalk or is there a bike lane or are they riding next to the parked cars?

Ms. Star-Lack replied this was not a plan for continuous bike lanes. It is just to kind of help people who need to get to something at El Camino, get to where they’re going. There are some people who currently ride on the sidewalks on Oregon. This may be showing a protected bike lane, that was one of the concepts they came up with. This actually shows protected bike lanes separated, protected bike lanes just for certain areas.

Ms. Turner noted this was just giving some ways to think about how to solve that challenge.

Ms. Star-Lack stated this grant was given to Palo Alto and to Redwood City because of the high number of collisions that were happening in the vicinity of Cal Ave. Bicyclists are getting hit because bicyclists are riding there. Some people feel bicyclists shouldn’t ride there but some people have to ride there because that’s where they have to go, how they have to get to work.

Ms. Price asked if this was a recent amendment to the original Grand Boulevard or is it part of the original Grand Boulevard adopted plan?

Ms. Star-Lack was not sure who funded this, possibly Caltrain. There was no amendment made. This was just a plan that hasn’t been adopted, it hasn’t gone to Council. It is just an idea.

Female off mic

Ms. Star-Lack replied yes.

Ms. Turner showed the next slide which is around Park Boulevard. The dark blue are the considerations. At left signal phase, adding a signal at Park onto Oregon on ramp. Additional studies were required and there is limited right of way to do that. It was be adding a left turn signal there. Skipping over to the consolidate driveways with future development. Part of the challenge with Park Boulevard being a bike boulevard or one of the things that could make it

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more bike friendly would be to have fewer driveway aprons so there are fewer cars exiting onto Park Boulevard and having conflicts with cyclists and pedestrians. The north side of Park Boulevard is one suggestion of where that could possibly happen. Then Portage extension, one potential way to reconnect the grid in the connectivity in the NVCA area is to have Portage extend all the way through to Park Boulevard. There has been some discussion, should that be for cars, bikes, just pedestrians, what would it mean to reconnect that Portage extension, would there be a signal there at Park so people turning onto or off of Portage and Park Boulevard would have a signal to monitor those movements. She asked the Group to discuss among themselves the advantages and disadvantages then return to discuss that.

The group discussed this for several minutes.

Ms. Turner called the group back and asked for thoughts on these proposals, left turn signal, consolidated driveways and Portage extension.

Ms. DellaPorta remarked that Parker suggested a long time ago making that the Park, Oregon light a three-way light so when you’re on Park from the NVCA area towards California Avenue, you would be able to turn left as much as you wanted because you would have a green signal and the people going the opposite way would have a red signal. You wouldn’t have to wait forever for the people coming the opposite way on Park to turn left during busy times of the day. There is not enough room to put a left-turn lane there. So, a three-way signal would be great. Keeping Park a really good street for biking, especially if considering people coming from the train station, and it already is a bicycle boulevard and keeping it safe for bikes, making Portage a through street from El Camino would just encourage cut throughs and that needs to be avoided. Improving the ingress and egress, but from opposite sides, from Park and El Camino, but not all the way through.

Ms. Flynn noted there are a lot of streets going in and out of this neighborhood and there are two modalities of transportation that are challenging when they share. She thought one concept might be that all of the single-family home is bike prioritized, the next one might be car prioritize, the next one might be bike prioritized. Just past Portage which is a bike prioritized one, but might go all the way through to accommodate the Stanford Research Park traffic and also the schools in Barron Park. Then Lambert might be car prioritized and that is largely a commercial street so it might be a nice parallel because it brings commercial traffic to the commercial streets. It might be a way to accommodate getting the neighborhood to breath out onto El Camino and the bikes breath out onto Park Boulevard as they exit.

Ms. Turner understood it to be an alternating pattern, having some streets that would be more car centric and other more bikes.
Ms. Flynn thought with the street design you can allow a car to go down it, but it is not possible for a car to go very quickly down it. She lives on Matadero and Ventura and it’s very narrow and the cars have to wait for each other.

Ms. Turner asked Mr. Steel if he or the Sobrato Organization had thoughts about extending Portage through. She has heard some people thinking about how to make sure it is not a cut through but she didn’t know what they have thought about that or had opinions about it.

Mr. Steel Off mic… if the creek gets naturalized, that side of the property becomes very small or almost nonexistent, so that has a negative affect on their ability to make Portage through. If there is development on both sides of Portage, then they could look at a way to quiet this street and make it very uncomfortable for a car to go very fast and prioritize bicycles and pedestrians depending on what development is around. That question cannot be answered in and of itself. You have to look at the larger plan and how it fits within the plan.

Mr. Lew indicated looking at Ms. Flynn’s point, he thought Lambert was also wider than Portage, so that actually may make things easier, but then you would have to change the light at El Camino.

Mr. Steele replied that one of the reasons about Portage being pushed through at some point and connected is that there is a fair amount of City utilities that go through there and to relocate them would be extremely expensive and you can’t build on top of them, so the better long-term view is to utilize it for some kind of circulation.

Ms. Turner appreciated that information. She asked about any other comments on this page. Since there were still quite a few slides to go, she would make sure to send out the links to these presentations with these specific pages and the questions so the Group and think through it, particularly if there is something seen as a really great opportunity, or more of a challenge. There are improvements suggested again for Portage Avenue, improvements at Portage and Hansen intersections and the extension of Portage to Park. There was another slide from the Grand Boulevard, the Portage/Hansen intersection which was mentioned. There was all of the Pepper traffic calming, could be banning left turns from Ash and onto Ash from Pepper could be a way to calm traffic. Folks might not want to cut through there because they can’t turn left, and speed bumps.

Ms. Summa thought the Hansen/Portage intersection is being fixed, along with the Parmani Hotel project.

Mr. Lew stated just one side.

Ms. Summa agreed, just that side.
Ms. Turner remarked that was good to know, that is partly being realized. She continued, Ash connector, extend Ash from Olive to Acacia or Portage, bike/ped only. Another idea for Portage connectors. The orange likes were suggesting ways to do bike or ped connections that provide site access but for bikes and pedestrians primarily. Parking considerations, considering parking impacts created by new development that might happen in the Pepper/Olive area or the build out of the plan area, time limits and street parking, what other kinds of policies that more relate to how cars park and stay at the space, in terms of how much parking is required in new developments, but also how to use the street parking and the public space for parking of cars, length of time and under what conditions. She closed this part of the meeting.

Oral Communications:

Cedric de la Beaujardiere stated Park Boulevard is a really crucial bicycle route. It is really the only efficient through route west of the tracks. It is really important that it be maintained as a safe and efficient bike though way. He has been concerned for years that more and more development is being added on Park and neglecting to address how that impacts the safety of bikes. As was mentioned, there is a high rate of accidents of bikes being hit by cars on El Camino, so that is an important way to go. The safety there needs to be improved. One of the ideas that was floated early on was the idea of putting a right-turn-only lane from northbound El Camino onto eastbound Page Mill, so when you are going towards California Avenue from the south, there would be a right-turn-only lane because that’s the cause of a lot of cut-through traffic. Doing that would be important for the neighbors as well as for safety of bikes on Park. Another idea floated was to make Pepper and Olive one-way towards El Camino, again to prevent that cut-through traffic. That right-turn-only as well as that would be big. He is not a super fan of connecting car traffic from El Camino to Park because of that cut-through traffic seen already. Regarding forms of buildings, he was glad people said they liked balconies. He wanted to see a lot of roof-top gardens. He thought all roofs should have roof-top gardens and/or solar or wind or a highly reflective roof to radiate heat back out into space. Cool roof is an effective strategy for cooling the planet. He thought roof top gardens was really the best use for most of that space, for people as well as all of the animals that are in decline. It could really be a habitat boon to have roof top gardens with native plants. It is also great for residents to have access to private open space in the areas that could have a lot of density. People need to get outside and enjoy space and roof top gardens and stepped buildings is a good way to do that. He encouraged public space where people can gather without the need to spend money in order to participate. Cafes and bars require money be spent and not everybody has a lot of money but they are still part of the community. It is important to get the ratio of housing to commercial correct, specifically office. It is great to have shops, maybe some office but Palo Alto has a jobs/housing imbalance. A good ratio to maintain the balance is something like 100 square feet per worker, but you need something like 300 square feet to live in at a minimum, so 3 or 4:1 of housing to office will help to prevent the worsening imbalance. He encouraged green infrastructure throughout this site, water capture, water processing on site. It is large enough
site, you could do living machines types of things to process water in a beautiful way to be engaged with the water structure.

Karen Holman thanked Chitra for her valuable work. She noted everything Cedric said about circulation she agreed with. Something she just wanted to put out there was there is this thing that exists in Palo Alto and it seems like nobody wants to talk about it. When it comes up people just kind of go, oh, well. There is an existing undercrossing under El Camino at Page Mill. The farthest she has gotten with anybody after she discovered it was there was that it was not ADA accessible. It’s not in good condition. It never goes beyond that. Nobody wants to talk about it. Maybe tonight there will be an answer to that. It seems like if it is something that exists, what would it take to make it functional because getting across El Camino is a big challenge. She appreciated what Alex said that one big building on the block that was too big, boring and the same thing about the long facades on El Camino. They are not granular and this neighborhood expects, not the residents but the development that exists there now expects a more granular kind of development and when you start getting to longer block faces or denser, larger buildings as opposed to smaller buildings that would accomplish density, you are cutting out opportunities for plantings – trees, green space and all of those are environmental elements that help provide places for birds and people as well as environmental advantages.

Ms. Turner asked Ms. Star-Lack to talk about the tunnel.

Ms. Star-Lack remarked this came up this year at one of the budget Committee Meetings. Someone on the Council asked a question, and John Haas was the only one who had the answer because he used to be the one who would go down every time it rained to clean it out. She thought there were stairs to go down, an undercrossing and then stairs go up. It basically is not ADA accessible. It is a maintenance nightmare every time it rains. It has been closed.

Off mic

Ms. Star-Lack replied maybe it’s just an issue of money, but Public Works folks were not excited about the concept of reopening that because of the flooding problems.

Ms. Turner noted it was something to think about for the Group as they are envisioning what to do in the future, if it could become something.

Ms. Holman suggested she was not saying it’s the same thing, but there has been perennially, until the last 10 to 12 years, then recently there has been a little backsliding going on, but the undercrossing as you come down Alma then to get on, always floods until Joe Samidian (phonetic) said, can’t we fix this. Indeed, it got fixed so it doesn’t flood anymore, except there was a little backsliding with equipment failure, but that doesn’t flood anymore for the last handful of years. She didn’t have the answer but rather than just saying, oh it floods and it’s not ADA.
Ms. Turner asked what it would take for it to not do that.

Unidentified female commented that not too long ago, there was a developer that wanted to restore that as a public benefit for a project.

Staff Comments:

Ms. Turner noted it was 8:27. This is the first time she has facilitating this meeting without Elena and the first time with the co-chairs helping to plan the meeting. She asked quickly what worked well with the meeting and what could be improved for next time, starting with the things that went well.

Ms. Flynn thought the small group break-outs of very short duration with bite-sized feedbacks worked very well. A very clear build up but not overly long buildup and then time to think and talk and then give feedback.

Unidentified female, off mic

Unidentified male thought she kept everyone engaged and looking at examples and going through things was helpful.

Ms. Turner asked what could be improved for the next meeting?

Ms. Summa felt the Group was back on track. A lot of the material was reviewing stuff, but the Group had maybe lost track of how the process started. She appreciated all the information in one place. The Group is on the right track. There will need to be some really hard conversations about what they can actually achieve in this area, especially given the preferences of some of the large property owners. She mentioned Lakiba Pittman’s letter and what could be done with that area, because from her perspective if Pepper and Olive were up zoned, that would be the first thing to be redeveloped and maybe some people want that, but there has to be a pretty big discussion about that. She didn’t think the other larger commercial properties were going to turn over quickly to become residential. She has a preference about Olive and Pepper but it may not be what everybody wants. There needs to be a strong discussion about that and about the actual park incorporating the creek improvements into Boulware Park. Also, the bike improvements are very important, the whole exchange, the on and off to Page Mill from Park is very dangerous and off putting for pedestrian and bikes. She thought the Group should be realistic and try to get as much done as they can quickly, understanding that she didn’t see this area as a blank slate.

Ms. Turner responded that part of what she wants to have at the next meeting are those hard conversations about tradeoffs. No in a vacuum of just this or that or one thing or the other. It is

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much more of a complex system where as work is begun on one part, many other parts are affected and changed. She wants to work with the consultants to think about how to realize some of the options to tease out these tradeoffs. Think creatively about how to pursue park land and open space and what is the tradeoff for height or density that might give more open space, but a little taller building, or some of the other tradeoffs.

Mr. Reckdahl asked if there had been any outreach to the landowners on Olive and Pepper.

Ms. Turner responded that a lot of the properties were pretty consolidated on some of the streets with a couple of owners and there are several single-family owners who live there who have been out reached to. Part of that was under Ellena’s tenure. It is also a group that is not too big, so it’s manageable to do that.

Mr. Reckdahl thought it would be useful to have a comprehensive outreach to know what those property owners think and help guide the decision.

Unidentified female, off mic

Ms. Turner noted there was not a large group of people so they could still do outreach.

Adjournment:  8:32 PM

Note: Copies of meeting materials will be posted on the City’s project website: https://bit.ly/2OtGFJG.