NORTH VENTURA COORDINATED AREA PLAN
WORKING GROUP MEETING
DRAFT MINUTES
July 21, 2020
Virtual Meeting
5:30 PM

For technical reasons, regrettably the first eight minutes of the Palo Alto North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan Meeting are missing.

Call to Order:

Roll Call:

Present: Waldek Kaczmarski, Keith Reckdahl, Doria Summa, Tim Steele, Angela Dellaporta, Gail Price

Absent: Siyi Zhang

Welcome:

Recording of meeting started here.

Angela Dellaporta reported that Ms. Tanner planned for the NVCAP group to be finished with a set of recommendations that could be sent to the consultants by the end of July. This will take a lot of work and being disciplined about time. She had a request from some Working Group Members to have a discussion, maybe another meeting at the beginning of August just to talk about methods of affordable housing and the goals for traffic and how that might be achieved.

Rachael Tanner, Project Director responded that might be a possibility, depending on what the expectations of that meeting were.
Ms. Dellaporta thought it might be just to talk about goals and make sure everyone is on the same page and try to come up with some agreement about goals. There could be some discussion about different methods that might be used. The City should be involved with that but the Working Group Members should have a chance to share their goals.

Ms. Tanner replied that might work.

Ms. Dellaporta assumed the goal for the meeting today and next week was to try to finish talking about and agree as much as possible on goals for the development overall about parkland, Olive and the key questions the consultants will need to understand in order for them to develop proposals the Group feels good about.

There seemed to be some agreement at the last meetings about office location. Most felt okay with El Camino Real and Page Mill Road for office locations with some members being okay with Park Boulevard as long as cars are not using Park Boulevard to reach Oregon. A few members were okay with a mixture of neighborhood and regional-serving offices. There was some agreement that the tallest buildings should be along El Camino Real and Page Mill Road and a few on Park Boulevard with the caveat of car access. There was concern about the affect of tall buildings on single-family homes. It seemed most members were comfortable with a maximum height of four, five or six stories and stretching the maximum height for affordable housing. Several felt fifty feet should be the absolute maximum and a few thought eight stories should be the maximum. Most members felt the average height should be quite a bit lower than the maximum height with a variety of different heights throughout the area. There was support for twenty to forty dwelling units per acre for density. There was no agreement about office square footage and building typologies.

Ms. Tanner explained the format that will be used for the discussion at this meeting. She commented on the tentative NVCAP Project Timeline which is in the packet. There is a timeline with the consultant team and adopting the plan with the grant funding. The timeline for the work this group is doing has lengthened and there are some members of the Working Group who feel they are at the end of their ability to dedicate time to this project.

Public Comment:

Rebecca Sanders questioned what she heard about possibly adding another meeting to push out more conversation and she agreed that would be beneficial. She agreed with having higher
buildings on El Camino and along Page Mill and possibly a few on the California side of Park Boulevard and stepping down as they get closer to the neighborhood.

**Discussion Items:**

Discussion of topics in the NVCAP Handbook – Staff and Co-Chairs

**Question 16. What configuration of parkland (and public plaza) do you support?**

Ms. Tanner reiterated the financial feasibility or funding options for parkland creation. She described greenspace and parks as grassy with plantings versus a plaza would could be more patio-like, hardscape.

Waldek Kaczmaraki remarked he didn't see the reason for choosing between the large recreational area and have greenery throughout along the bike and pedestrian paths. He thought public funds could be used to appropriate the space for public recreational area proportionally to the number of citizens. Then one park could be concentrated in a nice area. He would like to have a plaza that is somewhat close to Park Boulevard to reinforce the idea of Park Boulevard being a public destination space.

Ms. Tanner indicated Mr. Kaczmaraki preferred essentially B, D and E as well as pocket parks throughout and greenery on the bike paths.

Mr. Kaczmaraki felt the public funded parks should be concentrated for one large park. The small parks throughout the area should be part of the private developments which should have obligatory landscaped areas open to the public.

Keith Reckdahl commented that the biggest reason people move to Palo Alto is schools and number two is parks. His choice was A and B because large parks have much more flexibility.

Doria Summa preferred “other”. It is important to be consistent with the standards required in the rest of the City regarding parkland per person. She would like a large park that is a continuation of the existing park in Ventura, Bol Park. It is not a park if it's a setback or courtyard on private land.

Tim Steele agreed with trying to meet the appropriate number of park acres per person. The likelihood of a large site being redeveloped and providing the opportunity to assemble parcels
to address A and B will be difficult. The larger opportunities and potential likelihood will be C, D and E. There is a fairly large park across Lambert that could serve the residents of this neighborhood.

Angela Dellaporta supported A, a large park that could be complimented by a plaza which could provide a gathering place for the community. She agreed that pocket parks and setbacks do not give the same opportunities as a large park does. Boulware Park is quite small and the Ventura neighborhood already does not have enough park space or its residents.

Gail Price expressed support for almost all of the options, F, and a combination of A, B, D and E, but not at the exclusion of a large park. She prefers large green space and plaza. A combination provides flexibility, providing and supporting a variety of concepts that can be achieved and funded and serves a variety of uses, densities and community needs. A more compact development will enable a variety of park sizes and locations to be considered.

Ms. Tanner related she heard, for the most part, support for a large park. The other things would be good but not at the expense of the large park.

Question 17. If we have a large, contiguous green space with bike and pedestrian paths, where would it best be placed?

Mr. Kaczmariski clarified he would like a plaza at Park Boulevard and a large park stretching from Park Boulevard to the existing park along the creek.

Mr. Reckdahl remarked this will not be done all at once, so it will evolve. He felt all were pretty good locations. He would like it close to the current park, but that is quite far away from Page Mill, so maybe something near the Cloudera area.

Ms. Summa thought the most potential is to have a contiguous park, including some design along the creek with Boulware Park. A railroad spur is on the Fry’s site and has the parking but that should not be included because there is no way to design it as a part before you know what’s happening with the Fry’s site.

Mr. Steele asked if the responses could be framed in a different way. With the exception of the Fry’s site which no one wants to redevelop, there is the Cloudera site with the potential redevelopment of a parking lot. The idea of having any larger opportunities to combine things is
hard to picture. He would like to have the City’s requirement of acres per resident and the assembly of as much land as possible with the understanding that there aren’t a lot of opportunities for redevelopment. He did not feel there would be an opportunity for a large park in the near future, but there might be some opportunities in the future.

Ms. Dellaporta was hopeful there would be some way of creating a large park and in that case, she chose F. She liked the idea of a plaza on Park Boulevard and running it through the old Fry’s parking lot down to Boulware Park.

Ms. Price supported option H. She felt flexibility was important in terms of opportunity. This list should not be considered as mutually exclusive. It depends on the final land uses and the densities and relationships among parcels. She liked a large contiguous space that is connected with a variety of paths that serve various parts of the site and should not be located near the periphery boundaries, but it depends on what the final uses of these parcels become. Connectivity is important. She would like to make sure that any site or combination of sites chosen will be accessible to the residents and users of the site.

Ms. Dellaporta remarked that connecting a park to Boulware Park and through the current parking lot to Park Boulevard is great connectivity. She agreed that everybody in the site should be able to reach the park easily. Option F connected the Ventura neighborhood with Park Boulevard with the train station.

Mr. Kaczmarski hoped that what the Group is doing is not writing actual zoning that will be executed forever. He thought the exercise was more about creating a vision and implementation will be in phases with consultants, the City who will try to make it realistic.

Ms. Tanner replied ultimately there will be zoning, development standards and things that can be implemented. Some would be aspirational things on the City to find money for and implement. Similarly, the goal could be to have parkland on the Fry’s site and working with the owners. The reality is that there will be some constraints on what the Group envisions.

Ms. Price felt option F is too restrictive. There needs to be a much broader vision about opportunity and flexibility.

Question 15. What types of park space should count towards the four acres per 1000 residents?
Ms. Summa noted open space as defined in the code is conservation land. It is not City parks. She thought the term open space was very misleading. She also did not feel any setbacks or courtyards or rooftops could be counted as parkland and should not be called open space. There is no way to ensure they will remain open to the public. There are planned community buildings that were supposed to have open park space that had never really been open to the public or had fallen to other uses. Her opinion was that nothing but true parkland should be counted as parkland.

Mr. Reckdahl agreed with Ms. Summa. Many apartment complexes have courtyards that residents can use. They are good design aspects but they are not parks. Parks are expensive but they are important. This is long-term planning. There is a lot of housing going up in the Stanford Industrial Park and that needs to be accounted for. The City should do some planning, look at how much housing will be added there, where will they gets parks? This will need some planning.

Ms. Summa added if mostly multi-family housing is built, people need open space and that needs to be kept in mind for the future.

Mr. Kaczmarski would like as much publicly owned park space as allowed and it should be combined together. The privately owned, publicly accessible space should be complimentary to the park space.

Ms. Dellaporta chose B. It is important to have as much publicly owned parkland as possible. She liked the idea of pocket parks and setbacks that could be publicly accessible but privately owned, but not be counted towards the four acres.

Ms. Price supported C and D, but primarily emphasizing publicly owned parkland. Parcel owners may have issues related to liability for the privately owned land. She suggested doing a review of alternatives that have been done well elsewhere, such as land dedication, transfer of development rights, land swaps. Parkland is critical for public health and environmental benefit. The funding for any alternative will be tempered by economic volatility.

Ms. Tanner questioned if the items in the literature review would be mechanisms to achieve the end result.
Mr. Steele advised there will not be one project that will build all 1,000 units but there should be some pressure on the smaller projects, providing connections through open spaces. The idea that it will be a struggle to have very small projects built as a good part of the 1,000 should not be discounted. He leans toward C, but the comment that often there are in-lieu fees and other things that go towards the City to find larger assemblages of land, like the expansion of the park on Lambert might solve a good part of this if the smaller pieces pay into it. He would like some smaller open spaces, but the four acres per 1,000 people should be done to the extent it is feasible.

Mr. Reckdahl noted people talk about SOFA, but that was so much easier because they had one property owner and could guarantee that this would be developed at one time. All the development in this area will be done at different times. If the vision is known, then there can be movement towards that.

Ms. Price reiterated she primarily emphasized publicly-owned land, but not discounting the possibility of having options related to private properties to create parks.

Ms. Tanner indicated there were four members who preferred option B, which would mean if someone did build a private park or open space that would not achieve the four acres. The question of how to get the four acres may have mechanisms that requires land dedicated to parks.

Ms. Price noted the municipal code in the future may be much more flexible by necessity and the Group does not need to get too caught up in the super details of this.

Question 11. What type of zoning should be considered for Olive?

Ms. Price preferred A, B, C, D and F. New solutions should be a new category of overlay of zoning that allowed for a range of housing in modest configurations and heights that compliment current R-1 zoning but allows for some intensification and a range of residential uses. She supported allowing up to three stories, including examples of modest-sized townhouses and multi-family. She also supported designing single-family homes so they can be converted to duplexes in the future.

Ms. Dellaporta preferred A, B and C for all the reasons Ms. Price stated. There is a variety of different possibilities and a lot of flexibility. She did not like D on the half of Olive between Ash...
and Park. That could create a non-residential feel, but D would be okay if it was between Ash and El Camino.

Mr. Kaczmarski understood this is not telling people what to build but setting the parameters of the maximum allowed concentration for the future. He preferred D because it would be the maximum that could be built on that block. It is appropriate because it is in the middle of the whole development and should be consistent with the same rules that run throughout the development.

Ms. Summa found this question difficult to answer the way it was phrased. She did not care what size the building is as long as it is in the development standards, the FAR and the height. The number of stories is not meaningful because it does not define the height. She remarked all the lots are pretty small. What should the FAR and height be? She believed some of the choices would cause displacement of people because most of the houses are rented not owned. She thought the current FAR is appropriate but there are more paved over areas and backyard habitat is being lost. Any great relaxation of development standards will potentially make buildings that are not compatible with neighboring buildings that haven’t been redeveloped.

Mr. Reckdahl preferred B and C but felt this was a hard problem because normally you would be worried about the neighborhood feel, whatever evolution takes place, the neighborhood feel needs to be preserved. However, over the back fence there may be pretty high-density housing built and a lot of the property owners own a cluster. From an owner’s standpoint, there isn’t the worry about someone building next door and changing the neighborhood feel. In the future, Olive might be totally changed and D might not be as objectionable at that point.

Mr. Kaczmarski clarified not what is there currently, but zoning for this area is thirty units?

Ms. Tanner explained these parcels were not zoned for RM-30

Mr. Steele thought the street should stay with a single-family feel, but the lots are not real shallow, and are predominantly owned by two investors. It is not a candidate without merging it with other parcels to be anything more density wise than what is there now. There might be some replacement with row home type of buildings, bringing the homes together more, but still have a very residential feel and backyards. There may not be strong pressure even with a different kind of zoning because of the size of the lots. He felt there should be more focus on that street on the zoning standards that go with it to keep the residential feel, potentially allow
for some densification if it continues to capture that feel. The larger type of density probably would not happen without some kind of merger to other parcels to get more actual depth.

Ms. Tanner heard a desire to keep the residential feel, but how would that relate to what new development may go on around it. There may be an openness to more units, but how that looks and feels and performs is more important than the number of units.

Ms. Dellaporta asked Mr. Steele if he was saying the lots are so shallow that you couldn’t put a multi-family building on it?

Mr. Steele answered it is very difficult to get any kind of height and mass when the lot is so shallow between the street, sidewalk and the property line behind it. To get a physically larger lot that is deeper, you would have to merge with 340 Portage. If the zoning dictated that this had a different kind of design guideline than the Portage parcel, then merging will be more difficult.

Ms. Dellaporta inquired if he was suggesting that to increase density, it might be advantageous to make Olive and 340 Portage the same zoning?

Mr. Steele answered referring to what goes on at Cloudera. As an example, if a property is identified as a higher density residential on the facing side of that surface lot to Olive, then you will want to see some density, even though it might step back of Olive. Going in that direction, Olive should be open to having a similar kind of response on the other side of the street. If Cloudera is to be very low density or stay a parking lot, then keep the character of the one- and two-story homes but for a little more density, allow them to have enough design guidelines to let them explore some densification. Identify the character pieces within the zoning design and then let that lead itself.

Mr. Kaczmarski followed that logic but ended up on the opposite side of the argument. It is like restrictive rules are being created and therefore, if more flexibility is desired on how to develop this at a later time, it should be opened up for more possibilities rather than less. If the number of units is kept low, then that opportunity is closed. If it is open, people can still build low density but they are given the chance to go into the different options of connecting the lots and merging and looking for different options to develop.
Mr. Steele explained he was trying to respond to the comments about complementing the single-family residential feel that is there. To retain that, it is designed into the zoning guidelines. If you want it to be open to something more, then let the design guidelines and the zoning direct it in that way.

Ms. Tanner advised she heard most people were reflecting a desire to change some of the design standards and development standards to allow for a certain range of heights or FAR, etc., but still retain the neighborhood feel. There should be some flexibility in that so people can merge lots together and maybe do a row of townhomes which would retain the rear yards and the setbacks and character.

Ms. Price didn’t believe there were common words or comments. Everyone was trying to envision the site currently and what it might be able to evolve to in the future to provide more housing. The real issue is the broader flexibility or more restrictions. She asked if, within the current municipal code, there are restrictions regarding assembly in R-1 neighborhoods. It would be useful to get the current zoning.

Ms. Dellaporta remarked it sounded like a decision would have to be made if the Group is comfortable with changing where people live. Tearing down where they live and making it part of the 340 Portage site. Deciding to keep the character of the street the way it is or changing the entire character of the street. That did not change her preference for this street, A, B and C.

Ms. Price thought one issue of many is that ultimately the City Council will decide. Her impression is the goal of this Group was to come up with a vision or alternatives that provide choices.

Ms. Summa explained R-1 is not all the same. Some districts within R-1 that establish minimum and maximum lot size. The number of units on a lot is not important to her. That is the risk for the property owners making the units so small people don’t want to live in them. There is an assumption that if this was up zoned and creating a greater revenue stream on the houses, in the future people will be displaced. Keeping some of the more affordable single-family home rental stock in Palo Alto is very important to keep diversity in the City.

Mr. Kaczmarski had a hard time accepting the fact that the Group responsible for displacing people. This shouldn’t be looked at from the point of view of how much money owners will make redeveloping it. There is a choice of making more people happy within the space and he
thought that was the goal the Group was trying to achieve. He did not see why in the middle of this space, this very small area is segregated that makes an impact of everything around it and deciding those few people have to be allowed to have their backyards, and at the same time not building more units for equally low income people who want to live in this area. It is not a straightforward moral thing.

Ms. Summa clarified there was an assumption in all the scenarios that no one would be displaced and that is a false assumption. The new housing built will be more expensive than any existing housing available per square foot.

Ms. Tanner responded her perspective is similar to Ms. Summa’s. First, some might see this as a trade-off, some a moral issue. How do the actions undertaken either promote or further displacement, but might that displacement also provide more housing units?

Ms. Price addressed the issues of rent controls and displacement issues which are critical. She would like to see that addressed in the context of the plan but that cannot necessarily be solved at this moment on Olive. It does raise a lot of issues including fair housing laws. It seems that is important but parallel to what is being discussed right now.

Question 21. Should Olive be connected to 340 Portage if agreement can be reached with property owners?

Mr. Kaczmarski believed Olive and 340 Portage should be connected and wouldn’t mind it being connected for cars as well. That, however, might create a problem with pass-through traffic.

Ms. Dellaporta felt a road for cars would provide more opportunities for the cut-through traffic and it also violates the vision of a development with cars on the periphery, not the center. There would be more connectivity between the north side and south side of the area if an agreement can be reached with the property owner to put a pathway for bikes and pedestrians.

Ms. Summa responded she had no interest in a car cut through in this area. Pedestrian and bike connections are nice, but it is not extremely important.

Ms. Price shared her choice is D, Other Ideas. Maybe the use by car could be very limited and restrictive. Designing connectivity now is premature. The broader question is, is there support to the extent feasible, less car use and stronger emphasis on pedestrian and bike activity. She
believed there still needs to be conversations about concepts and have choices created by the consultant with staff and go from there.

Ms. Tanner explained a consultant did create a choice of showing a path connecting these streets, so that is why the question is here.

Ms. Price advised that it would ultimately depend on how the site is utilized. There is general concurrence that bike and ped connectivity is critical and limited car use is feasible on the park side of the property.

Mr. Reckdahl preferred option B. He agreed with Ms. Summa’s concerns about displacement of people living there. It is significant to have bike access, especially for people on Pepper who are somewhat isolated. A bike/ped path would cause the loss of less lot space.

Mr. Steele did not feel it was a priority. He did not want to lose a house and should not be a road for cars.

Ms. Tanner summarized that most members did not want to pursue this for cars. For bikes and pedestrians this could be a good opportunity for connectivity, but it needed to be balanced with all the other priorities for the project area.

Ms. Summa remarked maybe there was a general preference as this area redevelops over time to look for more bike and ped connections, instead of specifying one now.

Ms. Tanner noted there is an interior north/south connection that is part of what’s missing.

Mr. Kaczmarski responded there is a question if this will end up as two separate sites or one. If there is no connection through Olive than this will end up being two separated sites.

Question 22. How much parking should be included for each housing unit?

Ms. Dellaporta advised she did not see this question or options in the packet.

Mr. Reckdahl asked if there were any numbers to show of how much parking is actually used?
Ms. Summa responded there was a parking study by a consultant about two years ago, and again later. Both times the consultant did not see there was any reason to reduce any parking standards at all for multi-family housing except for all senior housing. In some neighborhoods, and this is one of them, there is almost not enough parking on the street when most people are home. With ADU and JADU not being required to be parked, there is even more of an issue. The one parking standard that does not have credible evidence is the one about covered parking spot. Staff provided a parking study for the North Ventura area that she thought showed the average household owns 2.2 or 2.4 cars.

Ms. Tanner indicated that would probably be option E, one space per bedroom.

Mr. Reckdahl reiterated that parking, if it’s not used, is a wasted space. With no evidence that parking needs will change, he would choose E.

Ms. Summa affirmed she chose E. Last year parking reduction standards were approved for multi-family which took away all the guest parking. Having parking near or at your home is a safety issue.

Ms. Price agreed with the comment about senior housing. Often the number of those parking spaces are not used. Also, for low and very low-income individuals in multi-family units, the parking lots are not full.

Ms. Dellaporta advised she agreed with Ms. Summa and Mr. Reckdahl choosing E. Her caveat to that would be that if the building did include some low or very low income or senior housing, perhaps the number could be less.

Mr. Kaczmarski would like take advantage of the commercial parking. He understood there would be a certain number of offices in that area, and they will be required to provide parking. He felt all parking should be open to the public after about 4:00 PM. The residents could then take advantage of that parking in the evening and overnight. He is trying to accommodate the requests from housing advocates saying the cost of construction cannot be lowered if the parking requirements are not reduced.

Mr. Steele preferred E with the exception that it is a max, not a required number. There should be no more than one space per bedroom and capped at two per unit. Part of this area’s designation and the reason for the studies is because of its proximity to the train station and...
public transportation. The premise of the money received from the MTC and the VTA is to plan it near a transit hub.

Ms. Price supported option B. There are sustainability and climate action goals and there should be a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing parking space and expanding alternatives in order to make that possible. Option F, the price of a parking space should be separated from the cost for the housing, thereby providing some relief in terms of costs. She liked the idea about sharing surface parking lots used by office or corporate entities.

Ms. Tanner summarized there were new ideas offered, making these parking numbers maximums, shared parking between commercial and residential users and the cost of parking should be separated from the costs of the unit.

Ms. Dellaporta supported both Mr. Steele’s and Mr. Kaczmarski’s ideas. She noted her thirty-year-old daughter reiterated that many people continue to use Uber, don’t want to have a car and don’t need parking.

Mr. Reckdahl liked the idea, if the free market can handle it, if you uncouple the parking from the rent and then charge for street parking, people would have a big incentive to get rid of their cars. If there is no charge for street parking people will park all their cars on the street. Then if a bike lane is put on the street, there will be neighborhood uproar because they need that parking spot. Streets should be for transportation, not parking.

Mr. Kaczmarski hoped to get rid of the parking along Park Boulevard.

Ms. Summa was reminded of a situation where condos were built without parking and those condos did not sell. An ad hoc committee that looked at subsidized housing for the PTC found most people in the Bay Area who can afford a car will have a car. Shared parking is tricky because of liability and people who use public transportation still need a place to park their car during the day. First Community studied all their properties and only people who could not afford the insurance and costs to own a car did not have a car. Developers would prefer not to build to parking standards or unbundle parking.

Mr. Kaczmarski noted there are other jurisdictions in the area that have the zoning requiring sharing the parking. There is not a big difference between sharing the parking and having public parking in front of the stores and didn’t see the liability issue.
Ms. Price believed it is necessary to think of opportunities and look at what other communities are doing. There are many examples of innovative parking programs that work.

Ms. Tanner summarized there is much support for option E, with the caveat that it is a maximum versus minimum. Other options could be sharing parking with office and commercial sites or unbundling parking from residential units.

Question 19. If Portage Avenue continues to exist between Ash and Park (going through an area that could include housing, parkland and retail), how should it be designed?

Mr. Kaczmarski remarked this is difficult because it is quite a long reach and not having any access by cars would be difficult, but it is important not to make access to Park Boulevard. As long as access is from the El Camino side, a certain amount of car traffic should be allowed to service this area.

Ms. DellaPorta thought it was not necessary to have cars going through Portage if they are allowed to access the other side of that property from the railroad spur area. That is adequate for car access. Option C, for bikes and pedestrians only would allow for a restful and enjoyable, beautiful area no matter what is there.

Ms. Summa thought there are very aspirational ideas of what should go on the Fry’s site. She is not interested in any kind of vehicular access there. Depending on how it gets developed there may be a reason to have pedestrian and bike access there. It is very premature and can only be answered at a time when the Fry’s site applies for redevelopment.

Ms. Tanner agreed it depends on what happens around it. There are currently under the right-of-way a number of utilities. If there was a large development, those could potentially be relocated, but it is unlikely that area would be covered with a building.

Ms. Summa reported she would like to get cars off of Park as much as possible and maximize the bike/pedestrian use there. It is an important north/south Palo Alto connection for bikes.

Ms. Price thought, depending on the right-of-way, it could be a combination of A, B and C if the bike and pedestrian use were protected passageways. It depends on the final use of the

ADA. The City of Palo Alto does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. To request accommodations, auxiliary aids or services to access City facilities, services or programs, to participate at public meetings, or to learn about the City’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may contact 650-329-2550 (voice), or e-mail ada@cityofpaloalto.org. This agenda is posted in accordance with government code section 54954.2(a) or section 54956. Members of the public are welcome to attend this public meeting.
property and the uses of the adjacent parcels. This should be talked about in conceptual terms because of the uncertainty of what will happen.

Mr. Reckdahl did not want car access onto Park, so whether Portage is a bike path or pedestrian walkway would work, so he preferred option B.

Mr. Steele thought the parking lot is a potential for some residential at some point and there is no other street to face on, so the residential units would have to be accessed from somewhere. If pedestrian and bikes are protected, this should not be too restrictive about what other kinds of transportation will go through there until there is a development proposal.

Ms. Summa clarified her comment about not wanting it to be a vehicular thru street, that didn’t preclude driveways.

Ms. Tanner summarized there seemed to be a strong desire for flexibility, but prioritize bikes and pedestrians.

Question 24. The buildings at 340 Portage, the main building and the old dormitory/office building, have been found to be eligible for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources. What would you like the Working Group to recommend regarding the cannery buildings at 340 Portage?

Mr. Steele suggested some rearranging of the description. The building would not be reused for building or offices because those are current uses. So, he suggested changing the wording to continuation of the current uses or reused as housing. He then preferred A. It has been made clear that that is Sobrato’s interest in moving forward, keeping the building the way it is, improving it further to preserve those architectural features identified in the Historic Study and continue to use and reuse the buildings for various uses allowed.

Mr. Kaczmarski preferred keeping the dormitory building as an historic structure and recognizing the overall site as an historic site, but not keeping the building itself. He felt as a whole, the building was an obstacle for the redevelopment of that area. The more that is kept, the more confined the different options for redevelopment will be.

Ms. Summa acknowledged she understood that the Sobrato Organization would like to keep the current uses as they are. The community has been hopeful for many years when the zone
change happened that this would become housing. That is a political conflict. She has a strong interest in retaining the historic structures as much as possible. Her first choice would be to retain and adapt the Fry’s building for housing. She likes the idea of retaining and adapting the smaller building for a community use.

Mr. Reckdahl responded that it would depend, probably option D. The old buildings can add a lot of character to neighborhoods, but the old buildings can also be very expensive. It comes down to feasibility and functionality. Is there a use that fits with the community’s use and can it be done for a reasonable price?

Ms. Dellaporta chose either B or C but she preferred B, but didn’t know how feasible that would be. The Monitor Buildings and especially the Dormitory building add a lot of character to the area but she didn’t feel the rest of it did. Depending on the costs, she would be okay with C, but would choose B first.

Ms. Price was interested in options C and D. She felt it was important to recognize and commemorate the history of the site, but allow new buildings and uses, emphasizing residential use. Design guidelines for the parcel should incorporate architectural features and materials that capture the attractive design features of the original buildings. She also proposed moving the working housing building and incorporate it as part of a community center.

Mr. Kaczmarski commented that exploring this further was not an option because for the Working Group to make recommendations about keeping the building or not, further studies regarding the feasibility of converting this into residential would be needed.

Ms. Tanner explained a study looking into feasibility of adaptively reusing it for residential would be within the capacity of the City to undertake. To do the engineering and other assessments necessary to understand what it would take to turn that building into a multi-level residential building is beyond the scope of this planning exercise.

Mr. Steele added that kind of study would have a very short shelf life, because the feasibility has much to do with what the market supports in paying for residential to justify putting in the investment. Under the current environment, there is no real demand for that housing to be built relative to rents.
Ms. Price noted that it really depended on how staff and the consultant deal with the kinds of comments the Group made and different members of the Group have different views about some of the issues. She understood that the economic consultants would look at some of the conceptual planning scenarios and do some preliminary assessments.

Ms. Tanner clarified that the economics of repurposing the building would not be assessed.

Ms. Price assumed the feasibility and economics of these would be done at some level which will make the plan have some meaning.

Ms. Tanner advised there is some economic understanding, but it will not get into balance sheets and figure out how to make this work for Sobrato. The environmental analysis and the economic feasibility of what could be there are not necessarily related.

Mr. Kaczmarski felt logically the only action the Group could take would be restrictive. The only decision is whether to keep the building or not.

Ms. Summa did not think that the NVCAP process had the ability to look at the existing historic structure of the cannery building and determine its feasibility and suitability from an engineering and architectural point of view for housing. It has been zoned for 27 years for housing. If the building is not able to be historically protected from a safety point of view, you can’t force people to keep even an historically protected building that cannot be engineered to be safe.

Question 24.2. What zoning policy for the 340 Portage property do you think would lead to the best results for the NVCAP?

Mr. Kaczmarski noted this was confusing for him with the thirty units per acre because it is per lots that will be redeveloped for actual residential. There cannot be a current office plus thirty units per acre because the current office already covers a large portion of the existing area.

Ms. Tanner suggested reading the question as, if you imagine the building goes away, what would be the zoning that would be underlying it to which the developer could build. The current footprint would not have to stay where it is. If there is a new building it could be thirty dwelling units per acre, plus the existing office square footage could be rebuilt in a new building, but only the existing amount.

ADA. The City of Palo Alto does not discriminate against individuals with disabilities. To request accommodations, auxiliary aids or services to access City facilities, services or programs, to participate at public meetings, or to learn about the City’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may contact 650-329-2550 (voice), or e-mail ada@cityofpaloalto.org. This agenda is posted in accordance with government code section 54954.2(a) or section 54956. Members of the public are welcome to attend this public meeting.
Mr. Kaczmarski thought, based on the sketches done previously, almost everybody was trying to get over 1,000 units in this area, just to have an impact on the actual residential needs of the City. He did not know what it meant in actual units per acre for the lots that would be available.

Ms. Tanner clarified this is just on 340 Portage, not every lot.

Mr. Kaczmarski remarked that lot is currently covered by office. So, if that office space was kept, where would the thirty units per acre be built.

Ms. Tanner responded it is somewhat of a two-part question. If the building is taken down and the site cleared, then what should be allowed to be built there? If the building is retained, what should be in that building or in the parking lot?

Ms. Dellaporta affirmed this question was just about the 340 Portage property. In terms of the future, what would lead to the best results for the NVCAP? Would it be best over time to just stick to housing or would it be best to add housing eventually to the current office square footage on that site. It is currently zoned for just housing at thirty dwelling units per acre even though there is office space and retail space there now.

Ms. Summa commented that what is confusing about the choices is that in an all residential it is well defined. In a mixed-use scenario, the residential use is defined but the other uses are not defined. All options other than A says thirty dwelling units per acre in addition to what commercial development is envisioned.

Mr. Steele remarked the Sobrato vision somewhat aligned with options A and C and captures some of the comments. Letting the building be used as it currently is being used, the parking lots have potential under certain schemes to add residential with the building The caveat is in the event the building is to be removed and redeveloped, that the underlying is 100 percent office or 100 percent mixed use, whichever is more feasible at that time.

Ms. Price observed because there is a lot of confusion about the wording, she suggested this be skipped for now and provide more clarity in the wording of the options. She also felt it was not appropriate to be specific regarding a small Target use.
Mr. Reckdahl noted his vision would be options B. Sobrato has put money into this and that needs to be respected. There shouldn’t be a rush to change things. In the long run, there is no choice but to make this housing.

Mr. Kaczmarski thought because of the proximity of the public transportation and mixed use better utilizes a space, he would prefer mixed use. There should be more housing but there is also a benefit of having some workplace area.

Ms. Price concurred with Mr. Kaczmarski about mixed use with a strong emphasis on residential. She also supported increased intensification of the site in the range of forty to seventy-five dwelling units per acre. She promotes flexibility, not an absolute number, but a range.

Ms. Dellaporta advised her choice is mixed use because if there are a lot of people living there, retail should be available for them in the area so they don’t have to make a lot of trips outside the area, that is option B. She did agree with everyone that the greatest need is for housing but with some small neighborhood-serving retail. The current office space might be helpful in creating the affordable housing.

Ms. Summa didn’t think retaining the current office space would help create affordable housing. She felt it really was not possible to envision a mixed use without understanding how much of the commercial is added on top of the thirty dwelling units per acre, so she felt it was not possible for her to answer this. She would prefer option A but knows that will not happen any time soon. This needs much more discussion with more specificity.

Question 9.1. Should the Cloudera site be zoned to allow for housing as well as office space?

Ms. Dellaporta, Mr. Kaczmarski, Ms. Price and Mr. Steele voted yes.

Ms. Summa is not against considering rezoning the Cloudera site, particularly because it is the only site in this area zoned the way it is, which doesn’t make sense. She would like to see more discussion about what kind of mixed use would be there.

Mr. Reckdahl would be open to having housing at Cloudera, but unsure about additional office density there.
Ms. Summa asked if anyone would consider the possibility of making it all zoned housing in the future when the property is redeveloped it would be housing and some retail, rather than office.

Ms. DellaPorta was not against that.

Mr. Reckdahl thought that would be a great location for all housing.

Mr. Kaczmarski inquired how that would be done? Would redevelopment of the site be restricted and put housing on the existing parking until the office is removed?

Ms. Tanner responded the suggestion was if somebody purchased it or the current owner wanted to switch to something else, they could keep what they have or switch to all housing and retail.

Mr. Kaczmarski asked if the housing could be added without taking down the office? He would like to allow that.

Ms. Tanner answered it would depend on the perspective of the developer and what was proposed.

Ms. Price supported allowing the existing square footage for office, even if it’s reconfigured and have residential added to it. She thought this was similar to what the current property owner has talked about. It also depends on how much housing is developed on the rest of the properties.

Ms. Summa asked if the Group Members could send their answers to the last questions in writing.

Ms. Tanner would send out the last questions to the Group Members and they can respond in writing.

Public Comment:

None.
NVCAP Comments:

None.

Staff Comments:

None.

Future Meetings and Agendas:

July 28 will be the meeting for the other group.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM

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