Workbook Narrative Section II – Community Engagement, Filtering Ideas, Choosing Approaches

Reference: Corresponds to Chapter II of Task Force Workbook

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Coyote Valley Specific Plan process is been built upon active community participation. We have conducted four Community Workshops (March 13, May 15, June 12, and August 14, 2004), monthly Task Force Meetings and Technical Advisory Committee Meetings, and focused community stakeholder meetings (existing urban reserve neighborhoods, South Coyote Valley Greenbelt property owners, etc.).

The Community Workshops are briefly described as follows:

March 13th
Learn the site (1/2 day community site tour); Community input on planning visions for Coyote.

May 15th
Based on site understanding and planning vision inputs from March 13th, the community reviewed general Community Building Principles and Coyote Valley Planning Strategies; and advised the Task Force on Community Framework Approaches.

June 12th
Based on Task Force direction regarding the Community Framework approaches the Community was presented with 3 framework variations. The attendees were actively engaged in hands on Concepts, Design, and Vision studio sessions. These studios provided the planning team with additional details on community preferences as well as gave the participants an opportunity to actively engage in some of the trade off and problem solving challenges involved in the Coyote Valley Specific Plan process.

August 14th
Based on Task Force direction regarding the 3 framework variations presented on June 12th, the community was presented with summaries of technical evaluations of the variations and a proposed Composite Environmental Footprint and Infrastructure Framework for Coyote Valley. This Composite Framework was then filled in with a first pass at proposed land uses.

FILTERING IDEAS

Active community involvement in the decisions that will define Coyote Valley requires a true commitment to open dialogue on the Planning Team's part and

an equally sincere discipline and realism on the public's part. We have developed and graphically presented a "Filtering" process that begins with the premise that not all cool ideas will survive. Ideas must survive various tests or "Filters" to make it into the final plan. Through this process ideas ranging from futurist Personal Rapid Transit to a central focal lake have been proposed and evaluated in open public dialogue. Some have survived. Some have not. The planning team has been delighted with the sincerity, maturity, and discipline of the stakeholder and public workshop attendees in guiding us through these filters and even adding to them as a methodology for building a consensus plan.

The filters we initially identified for the evaluation of the CVSP include:

City Council Vision and Expected Outcomes
Function
Joy
Livability
Technical Feasibility
Regulatory Feasibility
Ecological Sustainability
Cost vs. Value
How Does It Start-How Does it Grow
Risk-Dependence on what can't be controlled
Social Equity
Contribution to San Jose and Region
Based on public input we added to these filters:
Traffic Impacts Within and Surrounding Coyote Valley
Healthy Lifestyle
Walkability
Equitable Spread of Costs and Benefits

CHOOSING APPROACHES

In order to develop various environmental footprint and infrastructure framework plans, we proposed and sought direction on a series of alternative approaches to these basic elements.

Environmental Footprint Approaches

The Goal of the Coyote Valley Specific Plan is to create a compact and sustainable urban ecology that respects the existing natural environment, and where intervention is required, creates a built environment that actually enhances many of the Valley's ecological functions.

At the broadest scale, the planning and urban design approach is to explore a series of natural and enhanced ecological functions that establish an "Environmental Footprint" that defines and gives shape to the overall valley's urban form. At a more focused urban design scale,

explore a series of urban form component options that give character and enhance ecological function at particular locations such as town centers or distinct neighborhoods. At the finest level of detail, define sustainable strategies that can be executed at an individual building or development project level.

Existing Conditions

From analysis of the existing conditions summarized in Workbook Narrative Section 1 during March and April 2004, and from discussions with the environmental consultants, regulatory agencies, City staff, Task Force and Public Workshops, the environmental elements have been distilled down into 12 Existing Conditions of environmental concern. These are:

1. Preservation of the Coyote Creek Corridor including park, Coyote Creek, Coyote Canal, and golf course
2. Fisher Creek in the Greenbelt
3. Laguna Seca storm water detention function
4 Keesling's Shade Tree
5. IBM wetlands
6. Hillock near Santa Teresa Blvd. and Bailey Avenue
7. Hills over 15% slope
8. Oak groves within Oak Savannah in western hills
9. Tulare Hill
10. Several streams in the western hills
11. The Hamlet of Coyote
12. One archaeological site in the western hills in Mid-Coyote Valley

Hydrologic Components And Principles

The single most important environmental component that will shape character and function of the Valley is hydrology. This includes everything from protection of the ground water aquifer to strategies for flood control and storm water management. In terms of the planning process, many planning principles related to hydrology will remain constant. Examples of these hydrologic principles include:

- Reduction of the extent of the existing flood plain areas in Mid-Coyote Valley
- Avoidance of adverse impacts in North-Coyote Valley, particularly to Laguna Seca
- Preservation of Coyote Creek corridor and avoidance of impacts to Coyote Creek
- Protection of ground water resources in Coyote Valley
- Encourage use of recycled water
- Employ water conservation in the landscape

Floodwater and Storm Water Management

A very significant hydrologic component is storm water management and flood control. The goal is to reduce the extent of the existing 100-year flood zone through a combination of additional detention and biofilteration areas and enhancement or additions to Fisher Creek. Through the course of the planning process, three fundamental approaches were tested to determine which direction survived the filtering process.

Approach 1- Floodway Improvement

Retain existing Fisher Creek alignment and add second reach of Fisher Creek to carry existing floodwater and future storm water.

Approach 2 - Restoration

Abandon existing Fisher Creek and re-align the creek to its approximate historical alignment. Make the new Fisher Creek more hydrologically efficient, provide additional quality habitat including new wetlands, provide pedestrian circulation along the creek, and possibly, include recreation along the creek.

Approach 3 - Dispersed

Provide the new restored Fisher Creek as described in Approach 2, but include lake and canal system to help retain in storm water in the central area of Mid-Coyote Valley. Also, consider the use of parkway and recreation lands as areas for storm water detention and bio-filtration.

Approach 3 was the preferred alternative by most community members and through the current analysis phase has survived the filtering process the best. The final details including restored Fisher Creek, Coyote Lake and Canal Park are described in Section V., Composite Framework.

TRANSIT APPROACHES

The Goal of the Coyote Valley Specific Plan is to create a pedestrian friendly and transit oriented transportation framework. We have explored ways to achieve this goal through several specific areas of study.

Regional Transportation

At the broadest scale we have explored and catalogued the transportation linkages between Coyote Valley and the whole metropolitan region. We have estimated out of valley trip generation and defined strategies that minimize the number of those trips that are private automobile trips.

Intra-Community Transit
We have explored alternative intra-community transit, bicycle and pedestrian frameworks that minimize need for intra-community private vehicle trips and we have explored new technologies that enhance transit options for both regional and intra-community travel.

We proposed two intra-community transit approaches:

1st Transit Approach

A Streetcar Or Fixed Guideway Surface Transit System
This "fixed guideway" approach is most successful when the community's most intense land uses are built around and along the transit spine.

Ridership success will be improved by making the streetcar as fun and as open as a San Francisco cable car. Its only going 3 miles and doesn't need to go that fast. It can accommodate bicycle piggybacking.

A Coyote Valley fixed guideway system might be expected to run at origin to destination travel distances up to 2.5 miles. By comparison, the San Francisco cable car from Market Street to Fisherman's Wharf is about 1.62 miles, though over considerably more challenging terrain.

2nd Transit Approach

New Technology Transportation Network
This system covers almost all of North- and Mid-Coyote with stations within a 1500 ft. walk. It is described as Personal Rapid Transit (PRT). One can ride individually or up to four people can ride together from any station to any other station directly, with no stops in between, on an elevated guideway.

During and following the May 5th workshop, discussion of these approaches concluded that the Personal Rapid Transit system incorporated new, unproven and theoretical technologies that would require a national level of policy and funding commitment before they would be made an effective option for an individual community. Further, the elevated rail was aesthetically troubling and there was a sense that, while offering similar convenience to an automobile, PRT's also create the same isolation. The streetcar approach does much better in enhancing values of urban sociability. Subsequently, the planning team was directed to focus its Intra-Community transit approaches on alternative alignments of street surface "Fixed Guideway" systems.

APPROACHES TO ROADS

Within Coyote Valley we have explored strategies that enhance function and aesthetics of existing trunk transportation systems, particularly the Monterey Road/Caltrain corridor. We have explored alternative urban design approaches to intra-community vehicle travel including:

- Traffic concentration as energizer (Grand Boulevard and Main street)
- Traffic dissipation through multiple limited access collectors (City standard road hierarchy)
- Traffic dispersal through local urban street grid; and
- Traffic dissipation through "merge and loop" parkway rings.

Approaches To Monterey Road

Monterey Road, Caltrain's proposed four rail lines, and even the potential bullet train create a significant aesthetic and community connection challenge.

1st Approach

Monterey Road As A Regional Through Road With Development East Of Monterey Road As Residential & Mixed-Use Enclaves Or Highway Commercial

Monterey Road is a significant design challenge. While we indicate a strategy to cross over and under the train tracks and road in the following section; that may prove to be financially infeasible. This approach basically follows existing plans that provide three freeway access points and two additional over-crossings. All of these "T" to Monterey Road requiring single or double traffic lights and do not actually afford direct access to the lands to the east. This would place eight lights along Monterey Road. The eastern lands would access Monterey Road via right-in right-out access to northbound only and thence U-turns at the nearest light to go south, or additional traffic lights. The lands to the east would remain isolated from the rest of Coyote Valley, and the recreational corridor along Coyote Creek would only have limited pedestrian and bicycle access from most of Coyote Valley to the West.

Development opportunities on these lands might include highway commercial, more isolated campus industrial, or they may be residential. As residential, they would be developed as somewhat self contained enclaves; well screened from Monterey Road, but with a strong orientation toward, and access to, the Coyote Creek Park chain.

2nd Approach

Monterey Road As Intra-Community Road With Development East Of Monterey Road Integral To Whole Of Coyote Valley

This approach looks at fundamentally changing the character of Monterey Road from a dead straight drag strip between stoplights to an integral part of Coyote Valley's Parkway system. This approach stems from the merge and loop Parkway concept discussed in the next section, and seeks to give Monterey Road a unique Coyote Valley character. The land enclosed between travel ways may be used for detention and biofiltration. Southbound Monterey Road remains straight with an unimpeded right lane. Northbound Monterey Road meanders to accommodate loop backs. The underpasses require about 300 ft. to climb up to grade before merging.

There are proposed three freeway connecting overpasses and two community connecting underpasses. The ease of looping between West Coyote streets and a new aesthetically enhanced Monterey Road would make it a part of the whole community's road system. Easy connections from the west may enter neighborhoods on the east at an open parkland point of access to the Coyote Creek recreational corridor. The improved aesthetics may dramatically increase adjacent property values to the east.

During and following the May 15th workshop, discussion of these approaches concluded that we should make every effort to link the land East of Monterey with all of Coyote Valley with a road approach similar to that to the West.

APPROACHES TO COYOTE VALLEY ROADS

1st Approach

City Standard Hierarchy; Neighborhood,

Collector And Arterial Network

This approach is typical of the collector arterial network in the City of San Jose's General Plan, the road network developed in the Coyote Valley Research Park plan, and existing roads in the Valley.

2nd Approach

Traditional Urban Grid

In a traditional grid, the main streets are lined with commercial and on-street parking. In theory, all streets serve to relieve congestion, eliminating the need for collectors and arterials. This does not seem to be born out in practice once a community grows beyond a small town. Large collectors have been built in traditional grid

Cities such as San Francisco, and residential neighborhoods fight to block through traffic.

3rd Approach

Parkway "Merge And Loop" + Infill Neighborhood Grids: Concepts, Character And Details

A precursor to our earliest freeways was the true parkway. These were literally derived from roads in parks. They can be seen in Fredrick Law Olmstead's plan for New York's Central Park.

They are popular throughout the most gracious communities in the Mid-Atlantic States such as Virginia and Maryland, and they are prevalent in the nation's Capital around Washington, Jefferson, & Lincoln memorials as well as the White House.

We proposed this approach as a counterpoint to our compact urbanism. These Parkways would become a soft, curvilinear green break and traffic dissipater between the dense urban grid neighborhoods. The land encircled by these loops would be part of the overall detention and bio-swale system of Coyote Valley. Parallel side landscaping and bicycle, jogging and equestrian paths are also a quiet counterpoint to the more sociable neighborhood sidewalks. Merge distances, are a function of speed, which is in part a function of the tightness of radii leading to merges, and traffic density. Right-in right-out junctions can happen anywhere along the road. Pedestrian crossings are safest right before the merge and are very short.

All road systems overload at some point. Unlike a collector arterial grid, which snarls at the intersections and is measured in terms of wait and light cycle time, these Parkways have no lights and no wait. However, when pushed beyond capacity they tend to universally slow down, like a freeway, and, they cease to be attractive and become a little scary when they exceed two travel lanes in each direction.

Their aesthetic advantage is in their narrow width. Ideally a two lane one direction pavement section would be less than 30 feet wide with a separated bicycle lane. The grace of a well-landscaped road of limited width cannot be over emphasized. That character is just not the same when a lighted intersection has a right, three thru lanes, and two left- turn lanes each way.

During and following the May 15th workshop, discussion of these approaches indicated a strong preference for a merge and loop Parkway in combination with neighborhood grids. We were directed to propose alternate alignments of this approach in our proposed infrastructure variations.

FOUNDATION APPROACHES-CREATE A “THERE” FROM THE BEGINNING

Establish A Coyote Valley Community Core From The Very Beginning

In our very preliminary conceptualizing sessions, we always come back to the most challenging question. How do we start an urban quality environment? Before there is a population to support the retail, dining, and entertainment components that make urban life rich and interesting, what do we do to attract the earliest residents to want to live in urban densities?

While we may have a major employment “event”, such as a major Silicon Valley tech company locating here and creating a job proximity incentive, we must still address the fundamental competitive position of a attracting a home buyer here over choosing a nice single family home on a generous lot just a few miles to the south. We must sell urbanism before it exists.

1st Foundation Approach

Create A Regional Retail, Dining, Entertainment Destination

Urban services and urban activities (shopping, dining, entertainment, people watching) are the selling points of higher density living. The dilemma with new development is that if it must rely on its own "rooftops" to provide the whole market for these services and amenities, they are not economical until near the end of the residential and workplace development cycle. Consequently, they are unavailable for years to the early residents, and not "marketable" as an amenity for most of the development/sales cycle. From experience, this dilemma has created difficulties in establishing town centers in new communities.

Very often, a village center is planned. It is central to the community and intended to service the local new community population. The retail village center must wait 6 to 10 years after initial residential development to have sufficient “roof tops” to be viable. By then the long period of residential development before the village center retail are developed forces residents to establish other shopping patterns outside the community, which help finance the upgrades of those centers. When finally built, the long planned town center faces tougher competition and must change resident's established shopping patterns.

In a recent experience the surrounding area was so devoid of any retail that there was a pent-up need even without the new community’s 3,000 residential units. Older residential areas had no grocery or convenience retail anywhere nearby, and thousands of

high-tech workers had nowhere to go but their own cafeterias at lunch. Consequently, a village center was built as phase one. There are lines out the doors of the restaurants at lunch, and, a bustling Safeway and related convenience shops. This viable village center, already thriving, has been a demonstrable, and marketable selling point to residential buyers.

This experience prompted us to consider the possibility, and explore the regional retail support for a creating a regional retail, dining, entertainment destination that could thrive even before the residential and jobs development within Coyote Valley.

2nd Foundation Approach-Celebrate Water

This approach integrates what we have already identified as the natural environmental condition that defines our urban form...WATER.

A central water body with adequate freeboard to perform a major storm water detention function could give us an early focal amenity that celebrates this important natural characteristic of the valley. It could be big enough to accommodate, canoes, rowboats and very small sailboats. Its lakeshore can vary from enhanced wetland to a hard-edged urban "quay", to a volleyball beach.

During and following the May 15th workshop, discussion of these approaches indicated a strong preference for a focal central lake. There was not only serious doubts about the viability of regional retail ahead of Coyote's own population, there was also a sense that a lake represented Coyote Valley's unique identity, while another shopping center could be anywhere. However, because a new lake could face regulatory hurdles, we were directed to pursue it, but continue to consider other focal concepts in case the lake did not make it through the regulatory filter.