



MEMORANDUM

TO: Sebastopol General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

FROM: Ben Ritchie and Beth Thompson, De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: November 12, 2014 Meeting – Circulation

DATE: October 24, 2014

INTRODUCTION

The November 12th GPAC meeting will focus on the topic of circulation. The Circulation Element is one of the seven mandatory elements of the General Plan. Circulation is addressed across several transportation modes, including vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, transit, goods movement (freight transport), air traffic (as applicable), and rail (as applicable).

This meeting packet includes specific reading materials related to circulation, and raises key issues to consider in preparation for the next GPAC meeting. As the GPAC is aware, it is critical that each member come to the next meeting having read the materials identified in this memo and having prepared and organized thoughts, comments, and questions related to this General Plan topic.

The Circulation Element will compliment the Land Use Element, building upon the work conducted for the Existing Conditions Report and the existing General Plan Circulation Element. Consistent with the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) *Update to the General Plan Guidelines: Complete Streets and the Circulation Element*, which took effect in January 2011, the circulation projects and policies included in the Circulation Element will balance local and regional roadway projects with a "complete streets" theme that emphasizes a multi-modal system providing safe access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

During the second Visioning Workshop held on May 14, 2014, participants were asked to identify which transportation issues they felt should be the top priorities for the General Plan Update. The majority of responses identified various priorities for circulation improvements in the Downtown area. Top priorities included expanded facilities and safety enhancements for bicycles and pedestrians, including additional bike lanes, additional pedestrian crossings with enhanced safety features, and improved signage and way-finding to connect bicycle and pedestrian facilities between the Downtown area and other areas of town. Throughout the Visioning Process, workshop participants stated that safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities need to be expanded to serve all areas of the city, including safe routes to schools. Participants also expressed a desire to see an expanded network of trails along creek corridors within the city.

Participants noted issues related to high vehicle speeds and unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicycles on Healdsburg Avenue (SR 116). These concerns have frequently been voiced for all segments of SR 116, mostly along segments outside of the downtown core.

During the second Visioning Workshop held on May 14, 2014, participants were also asked to identify the two locations (street corridors, intersections, etc.) that they think have the most critical circulation problems in Sebastopol. The vast majority of responses identified traffic issues near the Downtown intersections in proximity to the intersections of State Route (SR) 116 and SR 12. Several responses noted traffic issues along Bodega Avenue, at the intersections of Bodega/High St and Bodega/Main St. Participants noted the difficulty of travelling north through town from the Downtown core.

Although not the top priority, many participants noted the need for increased parking options in the Downtown area. Other priorities included opportunities for shuttle or transit services in the Downtown area to further reduce vehicle congestion and parking demand.

REQUIRED READING

Prior to the meeting on November 12th, please read the following items:

1. **Existing Conditions Report:** Chapter 2.0, Transportation and Circulation
2. **Issues and Opportunities Report:** Section 4.5, Transportation and Circulation
 - a. The Issues and Opportunities Report also includes detailed information and summaries of input received from the community that should be read and considered prior to the meeting.
3. **Existing General Plan:** Transportation Chapter (Chapter II)

WORK EXERCISE

After reading the materials identified above, please consider the following questions and be prepared to discuss:

1. Does the existing circulation and roadway network in Sebastopol function properly to provide regional access and convenient intra-city access?
2. How should bicycle and pedestrian improvements be incorporated into the city's existing transportation network?
3. In reviewing the range of public input regarding transportation and circulation issues received during the public outreach process (see Appendices A-D of the Issues and Opportunities Report), are there additional transportation and circulation issues that should be addressed in the General Plan Update?
4. Please review the Key Questions contained in Section 4.5 of the Opportunities and Constraints Report, and come prepared to discuss your thoughts in response to these questions.



TO: Sebastopol General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

FROM: Ben Ritchie and Beth Thompson, De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: General Plan Advisory Committee Meeting Summary from October 8, 2014
(Housing and Community Health)

DATE: October 16, 2014

This memo provides an overview and summary of the input received during the October 8, 2014 GPAC meeting on the topics of Housing and Community Health.

Initial Public Comment

- Summary of comments on noise at previous meeting was good. Opportunities remain for further improvements to the noise ordinance.
- Consider potential effects and hazards associated with electromagnetic frequencies to all individuals, including children, due to prevalence of wireless sources/devices (tablets, phones, watches).

GPAC Input on Housing

- Concern with changes to Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO) described by Action C-2. Need to consider equity and ensure affordable housing in all neighborhoods in regards to allowing an in-lieu fee in place of on-site development for the IHO.
- Having a pool of funding for housing activities is important. An in-lieu fee could help with this.
- Revise Action C-2 to review and revise IHO consistent with State law and case law, but remove discussion of potential revisions to IHO.
- Revise Action D-5 to pursue funding for housing and to consider allocating additional City resources, such as some portion of the budget, for housing.
- Allow residential-only projects in the Downtown on roads that do not provide primary frontage (e.g., Main Street, Petaluma Ave, etc.).
- Revise Action G-14 to establish minimum density requirements for housing only projects.
- Revise Action G-14 to consider allowing building heights up to 60 feet.
- Add provision for micro-houses in Downtown. Comment was also made that detached single family uses are not desirable in the Downtown.
- Would like to see Downtown heights remain at 3 stories and not in favor of decreasing parking requirements.

- Limited housing options in Sebastopol. Very few homes go up for sale and often there is not an opportunity for existing residents to either upsize or downsize to address changing needs of their household.
- Establishing Downtown parking structure could help alleviate issues around increasing housing density downtown with reduced parking requirements.
- Consider a tiny house/micro-house pilot project or demonstration project. Support was expressed for updating the Zoning Code to address tiny houses and for reducing fees for tiny houses.
- Action G-4: Allow tiny houses as second units; address in the 2nd unit ordinance.
- Current second unit standards should be improved, with a balanced approach.
- Consider increasing allowed sizes of second units, subject to the size of the lot and lot coverage restrictions.
- Vacation rentals and Airbnb should be addressed as part of the General Plan Update.
- Farmworker counts are inaccurate as most farmworkers and migrant workers do not respond to the Census or similar surveys.
- Overcrowding is a problem.
- Address day laborers and undocumented workers; this group also can experience difficulty in finding housing and often lives in overcrowded conditions.
- Strengthen City actions related to conservation and energy efficiency. *Note: This will be addressed comprehensively in the Conservation Element.*

Public Comment following Housing Discussion

- Request from property owner Adams to be removed from Sphere of Influence. *Note: The Housing Element does not include modifications to the SOI; this topic will be addressed in the Land Use Element and Land Use Map discussions.*

GPAC Input on Community Health

- Prohibit use of glyphosate/Roundup.
- Electromagnetic frequencies should be addressed in the Community Health Element.
- Emotional health and well-being should be considered and acknowledged in the General Plan.
- Be welcoming and receptive to immigrant populations and support cultural diversity.
- Look at ways to reduce farm to cafeteria barriers to local students can eat more local, healthy foods.
- Consider revisions to marijuana ordinance to allow a second dispensary and to require that no single entity owns/controls more than one dispensary license.

Subject: October 8, 2014 GPAC Meeting Summary

Date: October 16, 2014

Page: 3 of 3

- Periodically review and update marijuana ordinance and consider effects of 'grow rooms' as well as perception of community.
- E-cigarettes should be regulated the same as regular cigarettes both in terms of use and sales.
- Concern over bars that do not sell food. If a bar sells liquor late at night, it should sell food.
- Expand local agriculture and urban farming.
- Explore opportunities to expand community gardens into City parks and facilities.
- Encourage community gardens near high density housing and encourage incorporation into high density projects.

Public Comment following Community Health Discussion

- None.

4.0 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The General Plan Update will address an extensive set of issues and opportunities. Many of these issues and opportunities are defined by State law, while others reflect local concerns and desires.

Typically, in a general plan update program, the plan revolves around and is shaped by a handful of key issues and opportunities. Key issues in Sebastopol concern protecting Sebastopol’s small-town charm, unique character, and strong sense of community; supporting local business development and strengthening the Downtown core; improving traffic and circulation conditions through reduced congestion, reduced vehicle speeds, and providing expanded facilities for bicycles and pedestrians; emphasizing sustainability and environmental stewardship; providing a range of affordable housing opportunities; and ensuring ample opportunity for meaningful community participation in the planning process.

Despite the many challenges Sebastopol may face, there are also opportunities to take advantage of over the time frame of the General Plan. Opportunities include methods of boosting the local economy, enhancing the community’s character, providing community improvements, and expanding services for city residents. However, due to fiscal limitations and regulatory requirements, the City may not be able to address all of the issues and opportunities identified in this report. Therefore, the City and its leaders and residents will need to make important choices during the General Plan Update process as to which issues and opportunities are most important to shape the vision of Sebastopol’s future.

ISSUES

What is an Issue?

In the context of this report, an “Issue” is defined as an important condition or problem that needs to be addressed through the General Plan Update process.

Each issue is highlighted in a beige box. Following discussion of the issue, key policy questions associated with the issue are identified in italics.

OPPORTUNITIES

What is an Opportunity?

In the context of this report, an “Opportunity” is defined as a unique, favorable, or advantageous condition that the City can capitalize on through the General Plan Update process.

Each opportunity is highlighted in a teal box. Following discussion of the opportunity, key policy questions associated with the opportunity are identified in italics.

4.0: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.5 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Sebastopol's circulation system is largely dominated by the intersection of State Routes 12 and 116 that run through the center of town. The highways serve as the main transportation corridors connecting the town and Western Sonoma County to Santa Rosa, Highway 101, and the Sonoma coast. This intersection creates high levels of traffic congestion in the downtown core of Sebastopol during peak commute hours and summer weekends. A majority of commute trips by residents are in single occupancy vehicles, with a very low percentage of residents using public transit.

Bicycle circulation in Sebastopol is supported by an existing network of multi-use paths, on-street bike lanes, and bicycle routes. Notable facilities include the West County Trail, which comes into Sebastopol from the north at Mill Station Road and follows the old railroad right-of-way, and the Joe Rodota Trail, which provides access to Santa Rosa and parallels SR 12 and connects to Petaluma Avenue south of SR 12. Other Class I trails include the Eddie Lane connection between North Main Street and Morris Street, the Railroad Forest Path which connects the Joe Rodota Trail to Morris Street, and Jewell Avenue Path which connects the south terminus of Jewell Avenue to Lynch Road.

Pedestrian facilities include sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signal infrastructure, curb ramps, and streetscape amenities. The Sebastopol Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan identifies two Pedestrian Districts in Sebastopol (areas of high activity where pedestrian improvements should be prioritized). One is the downtown pedestrian district encompassing a large portion of the city's center, including the Barlow district. The boundaries of this district are Laguna Park Way, High Street, Willow Street, and Morris Street. The other pedestrian district is the Main Street Corridor, which provides access to Analy High School, Safeway, Rite Aid, and civic destinations near the center of town. Nearly complete sidewalk coverage, accessible curb ramps, and marked crosswalks are provided along arterial streets in Sebastopol. High-visibility crosswalk markings, pedestrian refuge islands, and in-roadway pedestrian warning signs, among other treatments, are provided at several uncontrolled crosswalk locations along SR 116.

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Issue: Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Improvements



Bicycle Transportation

Bicycle circulation in Sebastopol currently consists of sharing street travel lanes with motorists, together with a network of off-street multi-use paths. The multi-use paths include the West County Regional Trail in the north area of Sebastopol which connects to Forestville, and the Joe Rodota Trail and Railroad Forest Bike Path in the westerly portion of the City which connects to Santa Rosa. Bicycle lanes are not yet provided on arterial and collector streets, though a major step is underway to modify this network limitation with the design of bicycle lanes for State Route 116.

Pedestrian Transportation

Pedestrian circulation in Sebastopol consists of two settings, an urban town center and a surrounding rural setting. The urbanized town center has an effective network of pedestrian facilities presently, including mostly continuous sidewalks and numerous enhanced pedestrian crossings along SR 116. This corridor and intersecting streets, such as High School Road, Bodega Avenue, Sebastopol Road, Laguna Parkway and Morris Street, provide comfortable access to many local destinations in the Downtown area. For example, Sebastopol has numerous enhanced pedestrian crosswalks with pedestrian-activated warning systems to aid in the crossing of SR 116 that bisects the Downtown. However, connections to and along streets that extend beyond the town center are limited primarily by the lack of sidewalks mostly due to the transition from urban to rural conditions with ranches, farms and rural residential uses.

Guiding Documents

Pedestrian and bicycle mobility is addressed in the guiding documents, the *Sebastopol Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (updated 2014, SCTA)* as well the *Sebastopol Bike Lane Feasibility Study (2011)*. The Master Plan includes goals and policies for the development and expansion of a bike lane system that provides connections to key areas throughout the city. In addition, the *Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan for Sonoma County* includes additional trails which expand upon the existing and proposed networks to create a robust bicycle circulation system for bicyclists and pedestrians wishing to travel to and from Sebastopol to other communities in the region.

4.0: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Issue: Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Improvements

Priorities

The next priority identified by the City Council for bicycle facilities is to provide a network of bicycle lanes on local streets, including on Bodega Avenue and Covert Avenue, and to establish bicycle routes on a number of the other narrower arterial, collector and local streets with the use of Shared Lane Markings and signs.

Specific key connections that are still needed include Morris Street and other bicycle connectivity improvements to provide a convenient and safe connection between the Joe Rodota Trail and West County Regional Trail. In addition, more bicycle- and pedestrian advocacy design guidelines could be adopted or referenced in the General Plan to steer designers to the most up-to-date facilities for alternative mode travelers. Such documents, like the National Association of City and Transportation Officials (NACTO) have published guidelines that address bike crossings features at intersections.



The Street Smart Sebastopol program has been successful in creating numerous enhanced crosswalks throughout the City. More pedestrian improvements are desired, especially on the State Highway System (see companion discussion) where vehicular speeds are higher than in Downtown. There may be an opportunity to create arterial traffic calming treatments such as curb extensions and medians, although the inclusion of these features must gain the approval of Caltrans, which has jurisdiction over State highways.

An important longer-term need includes the creation of a multi-use path(s) to connect Sebastopol with Petaluma. The alignment of such a trail must still be determined. With City support, the County has applied for a grant to perform a feasibility study.

Issues

One crucial impediment to implementing bicycle and pedestrian-oriented transportation facilities in Sebastopol is the lack of ownership of the two main roadways in the city, SR 116 and Sebastopol Road. These facilities are state-owned, and all changes are subject to the review and approval of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). This situation represents an important disconnect between the local community and its transportation network.

Another impediment to the implementation and construction of bicycle and pedestrian network improvements is a lack of funding. Funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian network improvements are varied, and generally include:

- Federal, State, regional, and local government
- Private sector development and investment
- Community, special interest, and philanthropic organizations

Issue: Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Improvements

Funds from Federal, State, regional, and local government sources often require the submittal of a grant application and the administration of grant funds to be applied to transportation improvements. The process of preparing grant applications and administering grants can be cumbersome and time consuming for staff.

Key Questions

- *What type of bicycle and pedestrian network improvements should be prioritized in the General Plan Update?*
- *Should the City retain the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan as the primary planning tool for the bike/pedestrian network?*

Issue: Downtown Traffic Congestion

The primary intersections of State Route (SR) 12 and 116 consisting of Sebastopol Avenue/Petaluma Avenue and Bodega Avenue/South Main Street in the Downtown area are the source of most congestion occurring in Sebastopol as well as SR 12/Morris Street. While many communities have come to realize that downtown congestion can actually be an indicator of a healthy economy and vibrant commercial district rather than a hindrance to through traffic, in Sebastopol's case, the congestion is due to a combination of limited capacity, impacts of through traffic in two directions and typically occurs within a limited time of day and summer weekends:

Intersection Capacity - The intersections' capacities are restricted by existing historical structures, a higher level of pedestrian activity which lowered the vehicular capacity of these intersections, and traffic flow is often disrupted by drivers making parking maneuvers.

Route Options – There are very few route options for many West county vehicular travelers other than to use the Sebastopol Downtown intersections for access. Parallel North-South facilities include Llano Road to the east and Pleasant Hill Road to the west. Parallel East-West roads include Todd Road to the south and Occidental Road to the north. All of these roads have some limitations which do not make them viable bypass options in their current state including low capacity design, inconvenient connection points, and incomplete coverage of potential destinations.

Peak Hour Volumes - As in many communities, vehicular traffic volumes in Sebastopol tend to peak during weekday commute periods. 24-hour traffic volume counts on SR 12, SR 116, and Bodega Avenue reveal these trends. SR 12 has a particularly notable plateau in traffic nearing 2,000 vehicles per hour for several hours during the afternoon and evening commute. Volumes on Gravenstein Highway South show a similar trend, averaging approximately 1,800 vehicles per hour during the same time period as SR 12.

In order to reduce congestion in the Downtown, one of these three options or combination of options would be needed:

1. Expand the capacity of the intersections and approaching roadways
2. Provide bypass routes around the Downtown area
3. Expect travelers to seek other travel times or modes

The other alternative would be:

- Accept congested conditions

2-Way Street Option

It should be noted that the General Plan process will be evaluating the potential for a conversion of SR 116 back to a 2-way street system which existed prior to the 1980's. A 2-way street system should not be considered a cure for congestion, but a way to make the Downtown circulation more driver and pedestrian friendly.

Issue: Downtown Traffic Congestion

Capacity Expansion

Increasing capacity by widening roads in downtown areas can often disrupt the urban fabric and diminish the attractiveness of visiting and doing business downtown. Potential obstacles to this solution could include public objection and lack of funding.

Enhance Bypass Routes

Any bypass option which would decrease congestion in downtown Sebastopol would have to occur on roads which are located in the County, outside of the City limits. Previous versions of the County General Plan included the extension of Llano Road north to Occidental Road and the extension of the Todd Road alignment to the west, closer to Sebastopol. Both of these projects were not supported and no longer are included in the County General Plan. Recent workshops in Sebastopol discussed options to use Llano Road and Occidental Road as bypasses with roundabout intersections which create a more convenient connection. Obstacles to this course of action include funding, County support, and public consensus.

Seek Other Travel Times

Vehicular trips have already been spreading outside of the traditional peak hour to other times of day. This will continue to naturally occur over time.

Seek Others Modes

In order to have other modal options such as bicycling make any impact on congestion, bicycle lane and trail facilities would have to be significantly improved. Bicycle lanes on SR 116 through the downtown are currently in design which is just the first step in increasing travel routes for bicycles.

Accept Congestion

Because of the potential impact to community character with many capacity expanding projects, some communities have eliminated or relaxed their traffic level of service (LOS) thresholds in downtown areas to LOS E or even LOS F in favor of enhancing the street environment and/or prioritizing pedestrian, transit, and bicycle travel modes, and recognizing that downtown congestion is often a sign of concentrated activity and vitality. Santa Rosa, for example, does not have LOS standards for its downtown.

Key Questions

- *In reviewing the potential solutions to reducing Downtown congestion identified above, as well as the discussion points re-framing the issue, please consider your thoughts regarding the pros and cons of each potential approach.*

Issue: Downtown Parking

Parking needs in Downtown Sebastopol are served by many public and private parking lots as well as on-street parking. Several of the private lots are part of a Downtown Parking District intended to serve shared parking needs in the Downtown area. Off-Street parking lots include:

- Plaza parking
- Whole Foods commercial center lot
- Theater lot
- Burnett Street lot near Hopmonk
- Municipal lot across from the Veterans Building
- Municipal lot behind the library and City Hall
- Rite Aid lot
- Barlow parking

All of these parking lots are less than a one-quarter mile distance of the Bodega Avenue/Main Street intersection which is a common desirable walking distance of 5 minutes. The completion of the Barlow Center has resulted in the creation of more than 400 off-street parking lot spaces not previously available within the one-quarter mile radius of the downtown core which are accessible to the public. Based on consideration of Shared Parking principles, these multiple parking facilities should supply more than enough parking supply for the parking activity generated by the Sebastopol Downtown Businesses.

The off-street parking lots are supplemented by on-street parallel parking spaces on North and South Main Street, Burnett Street, North and South High Street, Wilton Avenue, Keating Avenue, McKinley Street and Laguna Park Way. Many of the parking spaces within the Downtown area have time restrictions of 1 or 2 hour limits, which are common for downtowns. Although the on-street parking spaces do not provide the volume of spaces compared with the off-street lots, they do provide convenient parking opportunities closer to some businesses.

In order to create more parking Downtown, parking structures would have to be pursued since there are no more substantial plots of land to create parking lots. Parking structures are generally very expensive, require large, well-located sites, and may, in the end, be underutilized if other surface parking is available nearby.

The system of parking lots in the Downtown core can be enhanced with both signage and better pedestrian connectivity. Existing directional signage is generally small, old, and difficult to find. New signage graphics with a common theme would help drivers from out of town determine locations to park. Since several lots require shoppers to walk and cross streets, continued enhancement of the safety, convenience and visual features of these sidewalks and intersections around the downtown core will make it more desirable to park, walk, and complete multiple combined shopping trips.

The City was developing a “way-finding” sign program to identify major destinations and public parking lots, but lost funding with the State termination of redevelopment agencies. More recently, there has been renewed interest in a pedestrian way-finding sign program.

Issue: Downtown Parking

Key Questions

- *Is the existing network of surface parking lots within ¼ mile of the Downtown area sufficient to meet parking demand?*
- *Is the installation of a well-coordinated parking and way-finding signage system the most effective tool to improve parking conditions?*
- *Is it reasonable, feasible, or desirable to pursue or consider a parking structure to serve the Downtown?*

Issue: State Highway 116 Safety

During the second Visioning Workshop, participants noted issues related to vehicle speeds and what participants felt were unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicycles on Healdsburg Avenue (SR 116). These concerns have frequently been voiced for all segments of SR 116, mostly along segments outside of the Downtown core.

Two segments of particular concern include SR 116 (Healdsburg Avenue) and SR 116 (Gravenstein Highway South). These arterials are generally characterized by a three-lane roadway cross section including one through lane in each direction and a center two-way left-turn lane. Speeds tend to be in the 30 to 35 mph range, although higher speeds occur.

The two sections of SR 116 do have several enhanced crosswalks with in-roadway warning lights. Recently, overhead warning lights were provided on Gravenstein Highway South near Fircrest Market. The pending project to stripe bike lanes on all segments of SR 116 within the City limits of Sebastopol will create narrower travel lane widths which may reduce travel speeds.

Healdsburg Avenue has less commercial opportunities along its frontage and residential frontage along its north side which results in a lower volume of vehicle turning movements. This condition contributes to the higher speed conditions. The westerly portion of the corridor does not have sidewalks along the north (east) side of SR 116 including the curve where it transitions north. Pedestrian improvements along this section would be beneficial. Additional arterial traffic calming features such as curb extensions and medians could help to bring speeds down and provide opportunities for pedestrian crossing features.

Gravenstein Highway South has significant commercial activity, which contributes to frequent vehicle turning movements. The road width varies significantly along some sections with excessive pavement in the northeast area of the corridor before it transitions to the one-way couplet. Sidewalk gaps are also an issue along the corridor. Similarly, arterial traffic calming features could help to bring speeds down and provide opportunities for pedestrian crossing improvements.

Obstacles to the completion of roadway improvements would be funding and the ownership of the highway by Caltrans. Caltrans would have to approve any improvements that are proposed.

4.0: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Issue: State Highway 116 Safety

Key Questions

- *Are there additional steps or measures the City should consider in order to improve safety conditions along the SR 116 corridor?*