

Community Outreach

Soliciting Resident Input

We began our project outreach by meeting with the leadership of the Rosecreek Neighborhood Association on December 30, 2016, and listening to their concerns and the need for traffic calming on Cowell Boulevard. They also supported bringing a neighborhood coffee shop accessible to both student residents of The Plaza and neighborhood residents, linked to their neighborhood by a safe, lighted crosswalk access to the bike path.

We then met with residents from the neighborhoods of Rosecreek, Green Terrace, Halsey Circle, and Farragut Circle on January 29, 2017. A two-hour, general listening session was held at the Round Table Pizza in the Oakshade Town Center. All Rosecreek residents were invited to the listening session via an e-mail from their neighborhood association leadership. We walked door-to-door in the Green Terrace neighborhood, delivered a written invitation to every household to attend the meeting, and discussed the project with several residents. We also solicited written or telephone comments with the invitation. All residents of both Halsey Circle and Farragut Circle were invited to the listening session by U.S. mail.

Resident Comments and Concerns

Several residents from the Rosecreek Neighborhood Association leadership also attended the listening session and reiterated support for traffic calming actions.

Green Terrace residents made up the majority of attendees at the listening session. Their concerns echoed that of their Rosecreek neighbors who had called for traffic calming on Cowell Boulevard. Residents gave examples of high-speed driving accidents and unsafe conditions for exiting the Green Terrace internal street, especially during the new Friday afternoon rush hour. Phone map apps that find alternative routes to I-80 when it is backed up on Friday afternoons or holidays have increased neighborhood frustration with traffic on Cowell Boulevard and Research Park Drive.

Residents were also vocal about the danger making a left-hand turn out of Green Terrace due the limited visibility down the curved road. There was overwhelming support for a signalized intersection at Cowell Boulevard and Research Park Drive. The need was highlighted by several residents who noted that the new hotel on Cowell will also bring added traffic of an unknown magnitude.

Green Terrace attendees voiced a strong preference for sufficient parking at the Plaza and more street parking on Cowell Boulevard. Their neighborhood has only a few designated visitor parking spaces and limited street parking on Cowell that is also used by sports participants. It was generally agreed that the new apartments should have enough resident parking. A parking garage was acceptable depending on its size and location within the apartment complex. Attendees also supported working with the city to use the Playfields Park parking when it is not being used by attendees at sporting events.

Green Terrace neighbors favored a community-accessible coffee house and asked us to reach out to the owners of the nearby Common Grounds shop to see if they would be interested in running this second location. But the project coffee house was not seen as a major benefit to the community because residents felt students would use all the tables for long amounts of time, resulting in no room for the public.

There was support for improved bus stops and a lighted crosswalk to ensure safe access to the bike path system by pedestrians and cyclists. Residents were also concerned that cyclists would cut through Green Terrace to reach the bike path if no better connection was available.

Two residents from Halsey Circle and Farragut Circle attended. One resident submitted written comments in support of a high-density project that would make nearby retail stores more viable. He also supported a design that put parking next to the freeway, with a significant tree barrier, a new Unitrans stop (and perhaps a roundabout), and Class II bicycle parking.

The project was described to all the attendees as having units anywhere from two to seven stories, and there was little comment as to size. But there was universal dislike of the proposed New Harmony project and what was termed its “institutional” design. Having three to four stories of mixed design and building size seemed to garner the most support. Planting trees near the freeway and within the development also received strong backing. In addition, there was universal concern with the homeless population that lives among the trees on the City-owned lot adjacent to Green Terrace and across Cowell Boulevard from the project.

Early in the session, one participant commented on the need for changing the zoning of the site at all, expressing the thought that South Davis needs more services, not housing. No other attendees agreed with that view. From that exchange, however, came group consensus that student housing on the site is acceptable if the traffic and parking issues are adequately addressed.

Student Comments and Concerns

We also met with six student representatives to discuss issues of project design and housing affordability. Their suggestions on apartment design, amenities, transit, bicycling, common space, and parking were taken into account in developing the Plaza 2501 application.

The students were very supportive of our intent to address affordability by design. They liked the inclusion of micro units aimed at residents who want affordable housing without the need for roommates. The students also supported our plan to have some units available with discounted rents for low-income students who demonstrate eligibility through acceptance of UC Davis tuition or support grants. They indicated a willingness to help work with Plaza 2501 staff and both UC Davis and City of Davis officials to design an easy-to-administer eligibility program.