



**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED FOR
Wednesday, April 17, 2019**

From: Ken Joye

Sent: Tue 3/12/2019 3:28 pm

To: City Council, North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan, Rebecca Sanders

Subject: staff report 9921 feedback (NVCAP)

Staff Report #9921 was submitted to the City Council at the 11 March 2019 joint meeting held at the Ventura Community Center and I would like to submit my feedback regarding this report. Some of my comments are very general, others are quite specific; I have tried to present the most important comments at the beginning, meaning that some items which deserve attention may be buried at the bottom (including suggested corrections to errors).

I recognize that R-1 single family homes on Olive and Pepper Aves are at risk, but am not willing to quietly sacrifice them for the "greater good". The 1960's saw any number of Urban Renewal projects which we now look back upon with **shame**.

Though it is mentioned in the [grant proposal](#) for the NVCAP project, there has been virtually no focus by the Working Group on the large **395 Page Mill Rd** parcel. If the NVCAP is to offer a "non-piecemeal" approach, shouldn't potential re-zoning of that parcel be an explicit focus? Who is the owner of that parcel and why was that person/entity not listed as a stakeholder?

As it is stated that this plan "should describe a vision for the future" (Comp Plan Program L4.10.1), I would like to offer that it should include provision for **a light-rail line** running from the California Avenue Caltrain station up to the Stanford Research Park. Presumably this would run along Page Mill Rd, but conceivably it could run through the center of the study area and cross El Camino Real at Hansen Way (perhaps forming a loop back via Page Mill Rd).

The Stakeholder Meeting Notes (Attachment C), include input from a variety of individuals who spoke with staff and consultants at non-public meetings. I requested to speak at the "Transportation Interests" meeting due to my position as Vice-Chair of Palo Alto's Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee and membership in the local SVBC chapter. After attending that stakeholder meeting, I was asked by the NVCAP team to review the notes from the meeting I attended and I submitted corrections; however **not all of those corrections were incorporated into this staff report**. Specifically, the report contains the statements "*Page Mill/ Ash Street crossing: may be a desirable pedestrian crossing [...]*" and "*transit through the Plan Area may not be sufficient*"; I refuted those assertions, but that was not

reflected in the staff report. NB: I am told that the stakeholder meeting notes on the project www site have been edited to reflect all of my corrections.

Some specific points which I raised at the “Transportation Interests” stakeholder meeting were not captured in the summary, so I include them here for the record: (1) because it is a designated Bicycle Boulevard, disruptions on Park Blvd should be limited to excavation of utilities (2) any steel plates installed during excavation of utilities should be installed flush to the asphalt roadway (3) a bike lane on Park Blvd should be treated like a street tree—during construction, there should be a “virtual fence” around it which cannot be breached by any contractor work (4) pedestrian tunnels should be constructed whenever a sidewalk is disturbed, so that walkability is never interrupted (as has been done during construction downtown)

The staff report included the text of Comp Plan Program, L4.10.1, which contains the phrase “*an interconnected street grid*”; the NVCAP project goals approved in March 2018 state that a connected street grid should be created **where appropriate** (emphasis added). Perhaps those things are the reason that the P+W “Existing Conditions” memo (Attachment E) contains the statement “*volumes within the site are extremely low in comparison, potentially again reflecting the lack of effective permeability through the site for cycling*”. As a long-time resident of the Ventura neighborhood and a regular cyclist, I do not believe that the low volume of cyclists within the study area compared to the bicycle boulevard on its perimeter has anything to do with the “permeability” of the street grid. I believe that the consultants have placed an inappropriate emphasis on demand for a connected street grid and that their assertions should be regarded with a keen eye.

The P+W “Existing Conditions” memo (Attachment E) mentions vaguely how consultants studied pedestrian flow through and around the study area. I would like to see more transparency regarding the **methodology** used to assess pedestrian demand at Ash St & Page Mill Rd. Please clarify this with staff/consultants. Note: I addressed this intersection in [my comments](#) following the November 2018 Working Group meeting

At the joint meeting between City Council and the NVCAP Working Group, one Council member questioned whether it would be appropriate to have a grade separated crossing at Ash St & Page Mill Rd. Given the proximity of controlled crossings at both El Camino Real and Park Boulevard, I believe that pedestrians do not currently experience an undue burden (nor do bicyclists). As I stated in [my comments](#) during the “Transportation Interests” stakeholder meeting, I believe that new residents of the Ventura neighborhood should have the ability to drive toward Hwy 101 without having to go through the intersection at El Camino Real & Page Mill Rd. As such, I would argue against a grade separated crossing at Ash St & Page Mill Rd (motorists in that part of the Ventura neighborhood should be allowed to make a right-hand turn to head toward northbound Oregon Expwy).

Should the “Existing Conditions” section of this staff report describe the transportation choices of employees of businesses located in the study area, in addition to those of residents (Census Tract 5107 Block Group 1)? Is there any TDM data showing how **existing employees** at Cloudera, Playground

Global, etc. commute to work? If the “drive alone” mode share for study area residents (52%) is lower than that for Palo Alto as a whole (71%), is the same true for employees of businesses in the study area?

The meeting notes for the February 2019 Community Workshop #1 (Attachment D) summarizes input gathered there. Unfortunately, the questions posed during the “Interactive Study Discussion” are not printed in the staff report, only bullet items explaining the participants' votes. The staff report will be a **better record** of the Community Workshop if it is amended to contain the slides presented to City Council by P+W on 11 March 2019. That slide presentation should be added to the joint meeting [event page](#) on the project www site as well (it is missing there).

In the “Residential Interests” Stakeholder Meeting Notes (Attachment C), there is the statement *"Olive and Pepper restricted to vehicular access from El Camino to prevent cut-through traffic"*. As that meeting was not open to the public, I was not in attendance, so can only surmise that is simply an awkward wording. I would think that the intent was to say "restrict vehicular access from El Camino Real onto Olive & Pepper to prevent cut-through traffic". **Please clarify** this with staff/consultants.

I believe that the following should be considered **errors** in the staff report and perhaps could be **corrected** in an amended version of the report: (1) Fig 2 [P+W memo] shows Portage Ave as a through street connecting El Camino Real & Park Blvd (2) Fig 3 [P+W memo] does not show existing office use on Portage & Lambert (perhaps legal nonconforming uses) (3) The “Open Space and Creek Corridor” section [P+W memo] states that Community Playing Fields are used for Stanford sports practice; City Council already asked that those fields be removed from park space calculations (4) Fig 18 [P+W memo] walking isochrone shows it takes greater than 10 minutes to go from the origin to 441 Page Mill Rd, calling into question the methodology of generating that map (5) [VTA 522](#) is not reflected in the report, though the stop at El Camino Real & California Ave is within 10 minutes walk of the map origin for Fig 18 [P+W memo] and it offers 77 stops eastbound per weekday (6) Fig 30 [P+W memo] does not reflect off street parking such as that at 195 Page Mill Rd, distorting the amount of parking in the study area (7) in census tract 5107 analysis, the methodology is not transparent which raises questions about the conclusions: what is the sample size and how does it reflect non-resident commute time to businesses or the ratio of building types (housing)? how many vehicle trips in the study area are by residents vs. non-residents?

Though it is outside the scope of the project, I encourage the City Council to consider how Caltrain commuters tend to walk on the automobile bridge which links the “south” end of the California Ave station’s parking lot to the Ventura neighborhood (i.e., at the intersection of [Sherman Ave & Page Mill Rd](#)). If a pedestrian/bicycle path on the railroad right-of-way over Oregon Expwy were created, the **commuter experience** would be significantly improved.

As they say, “all politics is local”. Because the NVCAP project is happening in my neighborhood, I have an inordinate focus upon it. Thank you very much for considering all of my thoughts on this matter.

respectfully,

Ken Joye

Ventura neighborhood

From: Loren Brown

Sent: Wed 3/13/2019 11:13 AM

To: North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan

Subject: NVCAP Stakeholder Input After 3-11-2019 Town Hall Council Meeting

3-13-2019

Hi Elena,

I attended Monday night's City Council Meeting at Ventura Community Center regarding the NVCAP and would like to share some observations and comments with you and/or the NVCAP working group and design team:

First of all, I identify myself as a stakeholder in the NVCAP boundary. I represent the ownership of three properties within the NVCAP boundary; 3101 Park Blvd., 3197 Park Blvd. and 3241 Park Blvd. and my construction company (Vance Brown, Inc.) has operated its business continuously within the boundary (or within 1 block of the boundary) since the early 1950's and currently operates from 3197 Park Blvd. Former locations for Vance Brown include a Pepper Avenue location (in the 1950's) and 2747 Park Blvd. (between 1960 and 1995). I have worked full time at Vance Brown since 1978 and am very aware of the existing conditions and recent history (going back 40-50 years) of the neighborhood. Our three properties consist of a total of approximately 2.62 acres or approximately 4.3% of the total NVCAP area.

Observation 1: Much if not all of the public input last night was offered by Palo Alto residents; many of which lived outside the NVCAP boundary. While I understand that adjacent neighbors (living outside the NVCAP boundary) are peripherally impacted by what is decided for the NVCAP area, I would hope that the input of existing NVCAP stakeholders would be given greater weight and I would hope that the input of NVCAP commercial property owners is both sought out by your team as well as respected and incorporated into the eventual NVCAP.

Observation 2: Many speakers who are NOT property stakeholders within the NVCAP boundary area lobbied for parks, schools, natural creeks, duck sanctuaries, retail services, etc. that would serve them; all of which would have to be located on land that belongs to existing NVCAP stakeholders (i.e. not the people speaking in the Public Comments period of time). Please do not disrespect or be deaf to the existing NVCAP area landowners and existing NVCAP area businesses. While there may be a way to achieve some/all of the suggested amenities that would serve/benefit the local community, an eventual conversion from existing NVCAP land uses to revised uses should only be achieved through offering incentives to some/all existing of existing NVCAP property owners (dependent upon the public amenities desired as well as the location of such properties where those amenities would be located, etc.). Keep in mind that most all existing NVCAP property owners bought zoning-compliant properties or developed their properties consistent with City of Palo Alto zoning ordinances and they should not be penalized (i.e. downzoned) by owning a property in an area of the City where the City has paid little attention to for at least 70 years.

Observation 3: I have seen little information offered by the City to the general public regarding the time frame in which the public could expect the NVCAP area to convert from existing uses into the full NVCAP plan. I suspect that any such NVCAP plan would take decades or even several generations to manifest (depending upon the condition of existing improvements properties, etc.). I sensed on Monday night that speakers had expectations that improvements planned under the NVCAP would be coming immediately after the NVCAP is approved. Perhaps the NVCAP team can generate a timeline that help the public understand how long a process the ultimate redevelopment might take (or even the substantial amount of redevelopment).

Observation 4: Redevelopment of the Fry's site was discussed last night as well as surface parking lot areas (which are located on current commercial properties owned by private-sector parties). There was little to no discussion of possible redevelopment of existing residential properties within the NVCAP areas. The optimum NVCAP will arise out of a scenario where 100% of the properties within the NVCAP area are considered for re-purposing (parks, schools, affordable housing, retail, duck sanctuaries, bicycle paths, bioswales, market-rate housing, commercial, etc.). Have these NVCAP stakeholders been notified of this possibility? If yes, have these NVCAP stakeholders been given the opportunity to react/comment or offer their input/concerns on whether their very own properties are rezoned?

Observation 5: A NVCAP does not originate with a blank canvas such as Mission Bay development in San Francisco (i.e. most all existing parcels of land within the NVCAP are already fully developed - some more than others). The most problematic parcels for the NVCAP to contend with are the larger parcels having existing uses that are not compatible with NVCAP goals and objectives. Two such parcels are the 15-acre Fry's site owned by Sobrato Organization and the 10-acre 395 Page Mill site owned by Jay Paul. Together, these two parcels compose over 40% of the NVCAP area and these parcels are located in areas very key to the possible success of any NVCAP. If the existing improvements on these two properties are found not to be consistent with the NVCAP, any NVCAP approved by the City will not be meaningful or relevant to the community until such time that the existing uses on these two parcels are converted to the revised uses defined by the NVCAP. It is key to the NVCAP residents/businesses, the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the greater City that these two particular parcels of land be redeveloped sooner rather than later in order to set the tone for the remainder of the NVCAP properties.

The type and scale of redevelopment of the Fry's site is dependent upon whether the existing warehouse structure is deemed historic (such that it cannot be removed). As this site has been previously earmarked for significant levels of housing, a historic designation of the warehouse structure could be quite detrimental to aspirations of significant housing being added to this site. Further discussion of the future use/uses of this site should probably wait until the City decides on the fate of the warehouse structure. Additional Comment: If the existing Fry's warehouse were to be deemed historic and need to be preserved, it would make sense to place any required school site at the former Ventura School site and relocate the community center to the historic building - because multi-acre sites for schools use are rare and the historic warehouse could likely not be retrofitted structurally to allow a public school facility.

The existing use of the 10-acre 395 Page Mill site seemingly is not consistent with the NVCAP goals and objectives, but converting the existing office/R&D use will be very expensive and perhaps it is unrealistic to develop any expectations that such conversion will occur in the next 30-50 years (until the existing office/R&D buildings are functionally or structurally obsolete??). The 395 Page Mill property currently houses a 225,000 sq. ft. office/R&D building (constructed approximately 20 years ago) as well as a multi-

level parking structure and is a dead zone with respect to passing pedestrians and bicyclists. Based upon current market rents of approximately \$8.00/sf, the property currently generates approximately \$21 million annually and has a potential sale value of approximately \$430 million. The existing land owner is likely only going to be willing to repurpose the site (consistent with the NVCAP) if they can both earn an equal amount of rental income and additionally recoup any redevelopment costs caused by prematurely re-developing the site. If the NVCAP were to create incentives to encourage redevelopment of the properties within the NVCAP and if the NVCAP call for this property to only contain housing (for example), the density of housing allowed on this site would have to be set at over 450,000 sq. ft. (based on housing income being approximately half of office/R&D income). Additional development density might have to be offered to offset the cost of premature redevelopment (i.e. the cost to demolish the existing structures plus the cost to design/construct the replacement structures plus the lost rental income during the period in which the new structures are constructed. These economics would indicate that huge densities would have to be allowed on this site in order to achieve early redevelopment to meet new NVCAP zoning. Alternatively, if the existing office/R&D were allowed to stay and the site area was targeted for redevelopment, huge parking structures would be required in order to serve both existing office/R&D space and any new uses (i.e. housing, etc.) designated for the site.

Observation 6: Some speakers expressed their desire for Materdero Creek to be naturalized. Within the NVCAAP boundary, Materdero Creek largely abuts private property on both sides and is lined with concrete walls. As a stakeholder that currently owns the land of both sides of Materdero Creek (3197 Park and 3245 Park), I do not want the flood protection measures of the existing concrete channel diminished nor do I want to give up land on either of our parcels that provides the parking required by our property development in order for the creek to be naturalized. Please elevate the concerns and property rights of creek-abutting property owners over unvetted ideas for frog and duck sanctuaries in the creek.

Observation 7: One or more speakers objected to placing housing adjacent to the railroad right of way saying it was inappropriate. Between San Francisco and San Jose there are thousands of housing units adjacent to the railroad right of way (including hundreds in Palo Alto). Noise from trains can be mitigated with insulated walls and windows. There is no need to rule out residential uses as an option for parcels within the NVCAP boundary (In fact, Park Place Apartments located at 2865 Park Blvd. are a good example of dense housing abutting the railroad right of way within the NVCAP boundary area). Note: The existing GM zoning along Park Blvd. does not allow housing - extending the PTOD radius to 1/2 mile (to Lambert Street) along with increasing allowable densities could provide the impetus for Park Blvd. property owners to convert their property uses from office/R&D to mixed use (including a housing component).

Observation 8: The idea of converting surface parking to other uses was mentioned at the Town Hall meeting. Decreasing the amount of surface parking without eliminating the requirement for parking only means that the required parking must be located within a smaller footprint (i.e. underground parking or structured parking). Both underground parking and structured parking cost significantly more than surface parking. Thus, in order for property owners of existing surface parking to replace that parking with underground parking and/or structured parking, the NVCAP will need to incentivize those owners (likely with increased allowable development density that would work to offset the increased parking costs).

Observation 9: I support the concept of an underpass at Ash Street that passes under Page Mill Road for pedestrians/bicycles and that cuts through the Fry's site.

Observation 10: Do any members of the NVCAP working group represent commercial property owners within the NVCAP area? If not, why not?

Thank you for reaaading the above and any consideration you can give to these ideas in the formulation of the NVCAP.

Loren Brown
3197 Park Blvd.
Palo Alto, CA. 94306