

Town of Windsor General Plan Update Joint Study Session #2

August 26, 2014

On August 26, 2014, the Town Council and Planning Commission held a joint study session to review issues, opportunities, and assets identified during the Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups, discuss the Town's General Plan Vision, and identify potential community survey ideas. During the study session, Council members and Commissioners discussed their major concerns and priorities for the town and their expectations for a community survey. The following summarizes key themes of the discussion:

Issues and Opportunities

- **Expectation for Windsor's Future.** The vision for the Town needs to fit the community's expectations, not just the decision-makers'. Through the merit process, residents have been speaking from their neighborhood perspective on issues of water, trails, and open space.
- **Growth and Development.** We need to balance how we develop, but it's difficult to control the timing of development. The issue with some of the infill development is that we are given projects that are feasible, but may not be what we want or what is best for the town. We need to prioritize where we want growth to occur. We also need to make sure we don't develop just for the sake of developing. We need to make sure we don't damage what we have. What do Windsor's families want? We need to design development for families and young adults. We need to put forth what we want in the form of polices and codes that provide the structure and form for future development. We need to provide clear direction and expectations for development. There is often opposition about new development, but then people often like what is eventually developed. For example, many people were opposed to the Town Green. Now most believe it is the most positive thing in Windsor. We need to build consensus around ideas.
- **Development Constraints.** Many sites identified for infill development have limited capacity due to environmental or other constraints. The Zoning Map and districts don't reflect the on the actual conditions. We need to identify what is developable, and approve zoning that fits with existing neighborhoods.
- **Downtown.** The Town needs to develop policies that support smart growth and focus on Downtown to get a transit-oriented, vibrant downtown. We need to have more people living in and around Downtown. We need to complete downtown and put as much density Downtown as is practicle. We also need to finish the Green and get a boutique hotel.
- **Old Redwood Highway.** Old Red going Green is 10-year old planning project to develop the Redwood Highway as an urban corridor, with mixed-uses and higher densities. There is more recent community input to not develop more dense or urban uses along the corridor. Recent Redwood Highway development is better than other proposals that were too dense.

- **Shiloh Road Vision Plan.** We need to update the Shiloh Road Vision Plan. We need to have a constraints analysis completed for the area and provide specific direction on land use and roadways. The area should include a park.
- **Housing Balance.** We need to make sure we have a diversity of housing. We need a balance of detached housing for families and attached units for younger people and seniors in a central location. We need different housing types for different age groups. We need places for young adults and creative youth in lofts on a top floor. The younger population is more focused on living, rather than keeping up a home. They want a smaller house that is easy to maintain. We need places for seniors who want to age in place and not leave Windsor; smaller homes on smaller lots (cottages, attached single family homes).
- **Density.** There is a question of whether surrounding neighborhoods are willing to live with increased density. The community doesn't seem to want higher density development outside of the Downtown. They don't want it scattered throughout the town. There may be opportunities for higher density development along Shiloh Road Vision Plan area, but putting higher density at the edge of town can encourage more development around it. It's better to have lower densities at the edge of town.
- **Affordability.** We need to provide varying sizes of units in order to provide an affordable range of housing types and affordability levels. We also need to explain what housing affordability means and who the people are who need affordable housing. We need to have a mix of lower density and higher density housing in order to provide for a range of prices.
- **Transportation.** Transportation is a critical issue. We need to improve our ability to accommodate more traffic. We need to be able to continue to provide for walkability.
- **Trails.** We need to implement our trails plan. We will have a path along the train track, but no way to access it.
- **Civic Participation.** The demographics of Windsor do not lend themselves to a lot of people participating in Town business; they have kids, jobs, and other activities that keep them busy. Windsor's Latino residents have families and other priorities.
- **School District.** There is a gap with the communication with the School District. Is there really a need for an additional school? We need to work proactively to identify a location for the school.
- **Services.** There is a gap in Windsor for the services we need. We don't have services that meet the needs of our residents (i.e., plumbers, accountants, doctors, clothing, electronics, and furniture).
- **Jobs.** In order to have businesses we need to have jobs that provide a wage and places to live so people to live.
- **Drought.** The Town needs to encourage people to conserve water. We also need to provide opportunities to harvest water.
- **Healthy communities.** The most effective approach a city can take is to require healthy buildings to be built whenever development occurs. Developers have to go to the training to understand what a healthy building is (New York Fit City).

- **Action Oriented Plan.** The General Plan needs to be more than a passive instrument. The ideas won't move forward unless we have action.

Assets

- **Town Green and Community Events.** Town Green is the community's center and its events draw visitors. There is a unique feeling of community around our events and around the Green. They identify as "Windsor."
- **Schools.** The School system is great. We have great administrators and teachers. We need to work collaboratively with the School District and the schools.
- **Infrastructure.** Windsor's infrastructure is well planned and maintained, but we need to make sure we expand and maintain it in the future. Our focus on infrastructure is why we are successful and don't have a lot of problems.
- **Low crime rate.** There is a sense of safety and shared feeling of family. The demographics are great and they'll improve (e.g., young people in the downtown).
- **Town Design.** The town was designed to be the way it is. We need to continue this asset. It's what sets us apart. How can we make sure that our legacy is continued? We need to continue the level of understanding of the importance of planning and community design. There should be as much attention to detail in the future as there has been in the past in the formation of the town. It should be citizen-driven. People value their town. All our energy should move toward retaining the feel and character of Windsor. We need to tell the stories about how these things are maintained. The Town created itself in a short period of time to become great. It took the community.
- **Community Pride.** People are excited to share that they live in Windsor. People are proud of their neighborhoods. They love living here. The Council members are proud to represent the town.
- **Foothill Regional Park.** It is an asset that attracted community members to move here. Windsor is centered in the "golden triangle" of Sonoma County regional parks.
- **Community Garden.** It promotes community feeling among residents.
- **Housing and Affordability.** There is a variety of housing that provides for a range of residents. We have sweat equity housing.

Vision Statement

- **Vision.** Windsor should strive to be the community that current residents want Windsor to be.
- **Downtown.** Complete the Downtown. Plan for the SMART train. A Downtown core that provides a sense of community.
- **Place.** Windsor needs to be a town where people feel they are somewhere they don't need to be in a car. A community people should love to live in.
- **Community Driven.** Windsor continues to grow in the way it has, with community input.
- **Community Image.** Windsor is a positive community that others would like to emulate. It's a town in which people and businesses take pride.

- **Embrace Change.** The future has changes. We need to embrace changes in the way we want.
- **Agricultural land.** Russian River Valley is known as the premier wine region. We need to do more to capitalize on this.

Survey

- A survey will help us figure out the Vision.
- The survey needs to engage the residents who are representative of the community. We never hear from people in the Star Neighborhood.
- The survey should provide analysis to show what people really want.
- The survey needs to be comprehensive.
- The questions need to be clear and unbiased. It's really important.
- The survey needs to be easy enough so people answer the questions, but detailed enough to get good input.
- Need to make sure we survey Windsor residents.
- Survey Suggestions:
 - It should be in multiple formats.
 - It could be a kiosk where people to provide questions.
 - The survey should be a mailing that goes to every resident.
 - Engage the schools to get the surveys (football games?).
 - Divide the town into segments and ask people about what they want the Town and their neighborhood to become.