

**Committee member comments from the 8/23/12 meeting of the
Bellevue Corridor Community Plan (BCCP)
Citizen's Advisory Ad-hoc Advisory Committee (CAC)**

Agenda Item I, Part A: Committee Review of the Draft Introduction Chapter

(refer to Staff's PowerPoint presentation)

Bandoni Property

A member of the CAC asked whether or not the Bandoni Property should it be included in the BCCP. Staff commented that the Bandoni site was left out respecting the work that had been completed on their annexation project at the time the City applied for the grant application for the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan. Shortly, Staff will meet with Bandoni to discuss their interest in the BCCP project.

Plan Subject Matter (1:22)

A member of the CAC asked whether or not the grant limits the plan subject matter that the City can include in the BCCP Project. Staff commented that while the state grantor will not limit the subject matter in the BCCP, the focus of the plan is guided by language in the Merced Vision 2030 General Plan.

Market Study (1:23.4)

A CAC member pointed out that while a developer will perform a market study to determine what is "consumable" to help drive their proposed development plan, the BCCP is different in that it has a specific boundary that includes lands anticipated to develop as a result of the growth of UC Merced and the City in general, and the City is having a market study prepared, not the land owners.

Opportunity to Plan (1:24.5)

A CAC member pointed out that given new rules & regulations for planning, for example from the air district and SB375, and given the blank slate nature of the plan area, there is a real opportunity here. Seeing what happened in the past, absent an economic viewpoint of what makes sense for the existing taxpayers for the City of Merced, (in regard to underground –sewer & water-, waste being sent to southern edge of City), the BCCP is a chance to do something different (think outside the box) than what we've seen before. UC brings research about use of resources and energy, that could help define the plan and future growth models. The Plan should describe what services the City has to offer and how current residents and property owners can benefit from them.

Agenda Item I, Part B: Foundation Report (1:27.1)

Conceptual Boundaries and Meaning of BCCP Illustrative Plan (1:32.1)

A CAC member asked Staff to describe the purple circle in the middle of the BCCP Illustrative Plan, as well as the “Bellevue Mixed Use Corridor.” Staff explained that these represent conceptual designs which need to be defined in the planning process.

Support for Flexible Map/Unrestrictive Code (1:33.2)

A CAC member asked how the planning process is structured to get input to inform the City/Consultant how much of what land use, how tall the buildings would be in the “Bellevue Mixed Use Corridor.” Staff stated that the general plan emphasizes a mix of uses including future research and development. A CAC member interjected that they applaud the flexible nature of the illustrative plan and that they can adjust the land uses based on what the market dictates, for example, depending upon the type of research that comes into the community. The CAC member cautions on the number of restrictions that are placed on users or businesses that wish to come into the community. For example, retailers do not want to be in the village block, and Merced has over-zoned for residential. He emphasized again an appreciation for the flexibility of the map, but hoped that the development code is not too restrictive, which could prevent Merced from being competitive. Another CAC member concurred with the need for flexibility due to unforeseen amounts and types of spin-off development markets from UC Merced.

Support for Defining the Land Use Bubbles & New Types of Housing (1:36.0)

A CAC member commented that while flexibility is important, the plan should include, generally, amounts of anticipated land use types, for example, office space. Another CAC member noted that the committee is not comprised of young people, and that the BCCP area will serve a large student population, and, while there is a place for market studies, simply looking at the market alone could get the City into trouble (referred to recent economic conditions and state of development in Merced). The member went on to say that the plan needs to be responsive to how the new or younger population wishes to live; not everyone wants to live in single family homes; How we live today is going to be different from how they choose to live in the future. From *this* perspective, flexibility is important.

Depiction of Design Concepts (1:39.4)

A CAC member suggested that when images are shown to depict design concepts, that the phrase “one-option” or “illustrative” is used to emphasize flexibility in placement of streets, buildings and parking areas, to avoid the plan from dictating specific form.

Example of Local Urban Village Development (1:40.2)

A CAC member asked if there were any examples of “urban villages” in Merced. Staff noted that the downtowns of many older towns, like Merced, contain urban village concepts such as grid street patterns, variety of size and location of uses and parking, residential over retail (the lofts), “village greens,” for example Bob Hart Square (1:43.3). Some contemporary examples exist, but not locally.

Transportation Connection between UCM and Downtown (1:47.1)

A CAC member noted that routing regional transportation into an institution such as UC Merced on the outskirts of town helped such city center decay by not having a connection directly with the City, and hopes the transit corridors envisioned in the plan would include connectivity with the city and the university, and not just provide connection to the UC via the regional loop road. The BCCP is a means to help facilitate a “UCM – City Connection” concept. Staff noted the consultants were cognizant of this issue.

Transit Planning (1:48.4)

A CAC member commented that MCAG just passed the Short Range Transit Plan (May 2012) and that there are on-going discussions about the local “Cat-Track” connection to UC Merced. The consultant should be aware of this study, and, the BCCP should address transit service within the plan area, and connections between the BCCP and UCM with the rest of the City.

Interagency Coordination (1:49.3)

A CAC member noted and appreciated the presence of Merced County in the audience, and is encouraged to see cross-communication between the City and County at all levels. The member also asked if there would be a County staff liaison at the BCCP Citizen Ad-hoc Advisory Committee meetings. Staff stated he would send an invitation to representatives of UCM, Merced County and MCAG to attend these meetings.

Transit Planning (1:51.3)

A CAC member commented that an assumption is that all the traffic gets to Bellevue Road and doesn’t affect other roads in the area. The traffic study should look at traffic amounts on all roads in the plan area, and, that transit priority sites and/or regular stops should be considered for other plan area roadways, for example the SE corner of Cardella and Campus Parkway.

Light-Rail (1:53.2)

A CAC member asked if the light-rail is planned to go from UCM and down Bellevue to Atwater, or down Lake Road, or other routes such as the Campus Parkway; how much thought has been given to this topic? Staff noted the consultant has begun to look at right-of way reservation and location for a future light-rail option.

Road Plan Line for Bellevue Road (1:55.4)

A CAC member noted that the centerline for Bellevue Road should be determined soon, and that it can avoid impacting existing homes along the street, and so that near-term development does not negatively affect the future design of the road. Staff noted the BCCP planning effort should address and define the location of Bellevue Road.

Land Use and Road Plans (1:56.4)

Several CAC members commented that a map showing land uses and roads (Campus Parkway) should be created to depict how the area as a whole (planned by UCM, Merced County and the City) is being developed. The Plan should also consider the phasing of infrastructure and development to minimize traffic-related impacts, for example to Lake Road. Staff noted that Attachment D (otherwise known as Appendix B, "Projects and Plans") is a text and map description of all development in and near the BCCP project site.

Urban Village Concept (2:01.2)

A member of the audience commented that the CAC consider whether or not the urban village plan is the right concept for the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan, especially since the UC plan, a strong interface with the BCCP plan, doesn't meet the villages plan. The BCCP would be a good opportunity to assure that both plans (UCM and BCCP) work together. A CAC member noted that the consultant is constrained and not able to look at this as an open slate, and won't be able to look at various land use ideas, and is hand-cuffed to the village concept, which will constrain the future vision for the area. Another member noted that perhaps by deviating away from the village concept, you will attract high-end job-creation type developers that are inclined to create the infrastructure (roads, etc.) that is needed in the area.

Job Creation (2:03.3)

A CAC member asked whether or not job creation means more than "research and development," and that allowing for a very broad definition would enable development to occur as defined by the highest and best use, as opposed to restricting who can come into an area. Another member noted that would be OK so long as it is not the same types of developments based on letting the market prevail that have gotten the area in the hole it is today, vacant single-family lots and homes. This member supports looking to attract jobs first, before homes, and to look at things differently. What is the landuse/circulation model? Urban village? Strip Malls? Something else? Another member noted that the BCCP needs to create a community that connect with downtown and motivates people to live and work in the Plan area, and not migrate to other communities or into farmland areas. The plan should look 21st Century. This conversation continued at tape time 2.11.5. A CAC member noted that just because the economy crashed, does not mean the plan in place was bad. As the economy turns, the City is prepared to provide housing. What happened in the national market shouldn't be a reason to alter local plans. A CAC member (original commenter about single-family homes in this thread above)

responded that while that makes sense, the issue is to be able to provide for housing for the market of the future, and that single-family homes may not be the only product of value in the future. Trends indicate that a broader/different housing market is forming. Perhaps a larger part of the Bellevue Corridor will be devoted to job creation as opposed to the traditional single-family housing market? The BCCP needs to look at the long-term, and not react to the immediacy of the current market.

Long-Term View of UC Spin Off Growth (2:10.0)

A CAC member asked if the consultant can determine how much square-footage of office space is attributable to UC's in other communities, for example, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Riverside, etc.. Rates could be different due to lack of space, for example in Santa Cruz compared with Irvine and Riverside (due to greater availability of ground). This planning effort is long-term from the perspective of assuring land availability for spin-off growth from development of UC Merced. Another member of the CAC noted that market demand exponentially increases after the student population reaches 10,000, which is only 5 or so years away. Staff informed the CAC that a presentation by UC Merced students about an "innovation hub" will occur at their November 2012 meeting. Development of an innovation hub could enhance the rate of spin-off growth in Merced.