

## Urban Land Institute Experts study North Texas Street

Many regular readers are familiar with the 80-to-80 planning study now underway for the entire West Texas Street/Texas Street/North Texas Street. The City is sponsoring a series of public workshops to investigate the future of the corridor.

As we have discussed in previous columns over the years, there is significant recognition in the Bay Area-and locally-that infill and mixed-use development will be an increasingly important way of the City meeting its housing obligations-and economic growth goals. Transit-oriented development is also particularly important in the Bay Area's newly developing vision for the future of the region.

The development community is also recognizing the growing importance of infill and mixed-use development near transit. Urban Land Institute San Francisco, a development industry organization, is sponsoring a conference in September focusing on transit-oriented infill development.

As part of this conference, ULI panelists are visiting cities planning for infill and transit-oriented development. The panels consist of developers, architects, landscape architects, urban designers, experts in real estate finance, economic development experts, and redevelopment specialists.

Fairfield hosted a ULI Panel on Thursday, July 26, visiting North Texas Street between Acacia Street and East Pacific Avenue. Staff led a tour of the corridor, pointing out the existing development pattern, vacant parcels and underutilized properties, the Fairfield Linear Park, and the future site of the Silverwing "mixed-use" development.

The visit focused on the intersection of East Tabor and North Texas Street, one of the sites being considered for a Central Bus Transfer Facility. The Central Bus Transfer Facility will be the focal point for the City's bus system, providing for efficient staging of bus services and a central transfer point.

The panel discussion after the walk was quite interesting. It is often useful to step back and listen to outside parties who can bring a unique perspective to a situation. This panel certainly did that, with some panelists having a little bit of history with the corridor. Some of the key recommendations included:

- Think big and especially think longer term. Small projects surrounded by conventional suburban development don't always accomplish much. Even given limited financial resources, the City should endeavor to combine properties wherever possible in order to build a critical mass or a node of mixed use and residential development.
- Pedestrian-oriented development. Retailers may want big parking lots up front, but the environment created by such lots will always be hostile for pedestrians. Avoid making the "same mistakes" again wherever possible.
- Making bus transfer facilities a part of the community is a challenge. Make sure that the project is part of a larger development that incorporates uses and services valuable to the users of the bus system. A police substation was also mentioned as one component of the project.

The panel will be presenting their recommendations at the Urban Land Institute's September 28, 2007 Symposium on Transit Oriented Development in Berkeley. City staff hopes that the panel's recommendations will provide insight to the 80-to-80 process now underway.

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