



## HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD MEETING

MINUTES: June 8, 2023

Council Chamber & Virtual Zoom

8:30 A.M.

### Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Alisa Eagleston-Cieslewicz; Vice Chair Samantha Rohman; Board Members Gogo Heinrich, and Margaret Wimmer

Absent: Board Members Caroline Willis, Christian Pease, and Michael Makinen

### Public Comment

### Agenda Changes, Additions and Deletions

### City Official Reports

1. Historic Resources Board Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

### Study Session

2. Study Session to Review the Draft North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan

Sheldon Ah-Sing, Principal Planner, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Draft North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan. He explained that City Council initiated the process for a coordinated area plan for the North Ventura area back in November of 2017. Goals and objectives were established, along with consultants and staff. The Plan is community-based, with community involvement. The City Council appointed members to the working group which has met and discussed components of the plan, leading to alternatives that were presented to the PTC. The PTC recommended alternatives for their endorsement of a preferred plan in January of 2022. Since then staff has worked with their consultant to develop a draft plan. Further refinements of the endorsement from the Council were established late last year. Along the timeframe there have been other projects in the plan area submitted, "pipeline projects," which are not subject to the plan until it becomes adopted. Projects afterwards would be subject to the plan.

Mr. Ah-Sing explained the objectives of the study session, including receiving feedback on the draft document as it relates to historical resources. Community workshops have been held, numerous working group meetings, stakeholder group meetings, online surveys, meetings with previous decision-makers, including City Council, the Historic Resources Board, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission and the Architectural Review Board.

Mr. Ah-Sing shared six items which need to be incorporated into the Plan, including location of proposed land use designations; proposed public and private improvements; development of regulations, Public Works projects; site design and architectural standards and criteria for private development; determination of the economic feasibility of the Plan; and environmental review with maximum extent feasible tiering from the Comprehensive Plan. The Draft Plan is substantially consistent with goals adopted from the Council. There were also adopted objectives that the working group, staff and consultant followed when preparing the document, including using a data-driven approach; inclusion of meaningful community engagement; creating a comprehensive user-friendly document and implementation; determining economic feasibility; providing a guide and strategy for staff and decision-makers; and compliance with California Environmental Quality Act.

The NVCAP Plan Area includes 60 acres bounded by Oregon Expressway/Page Mill Road to the north; El Camino Real to the west; Lambert Avenue to the south; and the Caltrain rail corridor to the east. There are mixed uses including established single-family neighborhoods; El Camino Real, a commercial corridor; industrial and office. Notable sites in the Plan area include the Matadero Creek channel and the buildings associated with the Cannery. The Council-endorsed plan, preferred alternative, includes a 20-year period build-out; 530 dwelling units; greater densities along El Camino Real and Park Blvd and no minimum or maximum parking because of the adjacency to the Caltrain Station. They are also looking at moving the concrete channel and widening the corridor as well as adaptive reuse of the cannery building.

Mr. Ah-Sing explained that the NVCAP represents a rare opportunity within the City of Palo Alto to plan proactively for transit-oriented, mixed use, mixed income, and a walkable neighborhood. Components of the plan include Chapter 1, describing background of the area; Chapter 2 describing the framework and vision for the area; Chapter 3 to 6 are the meat of the document that include the design standards to be applied. This includes the public realm, streets, parks and open space and building standards. Chapter 7 describes the implementation of the plan.

Mr. Ah-Sing stated that they expect a lot of transition in this area from the existing commercial that would be reduced and replaced overall with more residential. There would be some new, limited office spaces, maximum 5,000 square-feet. Existing uses would be grandfathered, so that as the market turns over, the vision would come to fruition. Parcels currently zoned commercial will become mixed use zoning or residential. The Plan anticipates 530 additional units at buildout.

Mr. Ah-Sing brought the Historic Resources aspect more into focus, stating that the NVCAP does support the adaptive reuse of the cannery building that would be consistent with Secretary of the Interior Standards for treatment of historic properties. Currently, there is some office and some vacancy, but as the market would allow, they would expect this to be turned over to residential or perhaps other commercial. Additional analysis would be required to determine the feasibility based on the proposed use.

An implementation action is included in the plan, that within the first year after adoption of the Plan, there would be exploration of initiation of the California or National Register, or local inventory as appropriate as determined by the Council, for the cannery and the Ash office building, the two sites previously identified as being eligible for historic designation.

Allowable building heights in the Plan range from two to five stories, slightly higher along El Camino Real as well as Park, and an affordable housing site is identified across from the cannery, on Portage Avenue, the private drive adjacent to the cannery could also be a site that could also go up to five stories. A minimum of 15-foot ceiling heights would be expected for the ground floor in mixed use buildings to allow for more commercial space and amenity space. That height would expect to transition lower to lower-density residential areas. Regarding environmental review, adoption of the plan would require a supplemental EIR that tiers from the Comprehensive Plan EIR. A notice of preparation was released in March, 2023. The next step is to release a public draft of the Supplemental EIR for public comment for a period of 45 days.

Mr. Ah-Sing noted that study sessions were held with the PTC and the ARB last week. Follow-up will be done on zoning components. The PTC is identified as a recommending body, and they are seeking feedback from the ARB and the HRB for the PTC to consider. The Draft EIR will be released for public review. All of the feedback will be collected and developed into a final NVCAP document and EIR, request a recommendation from the Planning Commission, followed by Council adoption in the fall of 2023.

Mr. Ah-Sing recognized that there are guidelines and standards throughout the Plan, it does make sense that in Chapter 2, a subsection has been added about historic resources weighing in a little more than in the past, to set forth the context. Mr. Ah-Sing noted that staff was seeking HRB feedback on the Draft Plan as it relates to historic resources.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited comments from the public. There were no public comments.

Board Member Heinrich asked if the Sobrato project has been superimposed onto the NVCAP showing the housing that they are proposing versus the housing being recommended. Mr. Ah-Sing responded that he is familiar with their plan and was part of the City's negotiating team early on. At that time he had the backdrop of the NVCAP in the back of his mind and tried to bring those ideas forward as much as possible..

Board Member Heinrich asked if the Draft NVCAP would be updated to show plans already in the pipeline. Mr. Ah-Sing replied that the idea with the NVCAP is that it is a community-based plan, so they need to show the preferred plan that the Council had endorsed, while understanding that there will be plans or projects that come through even after adoption of the Plan, and it is not the intent to update the document in that way.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz said it looks like there are higher-density or modifications proposed to the size of the cannery building. She asked if this was part of the adaptive reuse. She wondered what the boundaries of the cannery building use are as far as the plan is concerned. Mr. Ah-Sing stated that the Council's direction was to have an adaptive reuse. There wasn't a specific submittal that would show something otherwise, but it would need to be consistent with Secretary of the Interior Standards. The intent is that the footprint would be the same. Looking at the character-defining features, the walls, et cetera, would have to remain the same. The roof, other than the monitor roofs, are probably not as defined so there may be some possibilities for sunroofs or something to get light in, but the intent was not to expand the footprint at all.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz noted her appreciation that the Plan includes listing of the structure at the outset.

Board Member Wimmer asked if the plan in the packet is the preferred plan. Mr. Ah-Sing confirmed that was correct. Board Member Wimmer referred to packet page 55 and stated there are interesting notes about energy efficient buildings, green stormwater infrastructure, enhanced urban forest, celebrating history, community open space. She asked if other portions of the preferred plan other than what is already in place, the residential area, would eventually transition into something more in keeping with the overall plan. Mr. Ah-Sing responded that the Plan indicates more of what could be the case 20 years from now.

Board Member Wimmer thought then that there may eventually be other applications that come to the City. She asked if Sobrato owns the property or just owns the rights to develop the property. Mr. Ah-Sing replied that Sobrato owns about 15 to 16 acres, including the Cannery, the big parking lot of which the creek is a portion, the Audi building, the sliver going out to Lambert behind the cannery. He thought that the part they do not own includes the gym, which is an option for them to purchase.

Board Member Wimmer asked if Sobrato is aware of the City's preferred plan and hoped that they are being respectful of that. Mr. Ah-Sing noted that this is true and that one of the Sobrato group is in the working group, and they are familiar with the NVCAP plan.

Board Member Rohman asked about the community feedback and the sentiment of the community garnered from the meetings. Mr. Ah-Sing noted that he wasn't involved with that aspect of the project, but when they went to the Council as recently as last year some people wanted more units, some people wanted less. They did not want office. Opinions were quite varied, and it was unlikely that they could make everyone happy.

Board Member Rohman asked about comments with respect to the historic resources. Mr. Ah-Sing asked one of their staff members to respond to this. Chitra Moitra replied that there was mixed feeling about the cannery building, but on the whole people generally preferred to maintain the outward structure of the building and the adaptive reuse of the building.

Board Member Wimmer referred to packet page 63 and asked what "active edge" refers to along Oregon Expressway and possibly Park. Mr. Ah-Sing explained that active edge has to do with more of a pedestrian-oriented types of uses on the ground floor. It could be retail or other types of service-oriented uses. In residential cases, it could be amenity or recreational space on the ground floor. Along El Camino Real it's more likely there would be spaces there, so there is more of a requirement there. In other areas it is encouraged.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if the majority of this is in "encouraged active edge," or "acquired active edge." Mr. Ah-Sing responded it is "encouraged." Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked if there has been discussion about whether the historic designation of the site would include the cannery building proper or also the Ash Street office building. Mr. Ah-Sing thought it included both.

Board Member Heinrich asked about the Portage Avenue woonerf and if there is any example of this currently in Palo Alto. Ms. French responded that there is a woonerf at the main Rinconada Library which extends between the Art Center, between the Community Garden and the Library.

Board Member Heinrich wondered if there would be a soft introduction to the community about the use of the woonerf. Ms. French thought that as development occurs and woonerfs occur, there will be opportunity to help educate the public on how to use it. Mr. Ah-Sing said the hope was that the design would help people learn how to use it. Ms. French encouraged Board Members to visit the woonerf behind the Library, as it is a nice example. She wasn't aware of studies about how such a space is used, but she imagined it would be used more by pedestrians as opposed to vehicles.

Board Member Wimmer asked what consideration or impact is coming from the Caltrain and the possible future high-speed rail that has been discussed over recent years since the property borders the Caltrain tracks. Mr. Ah-Sing noted that CEQA would be the tool for that and would definitely be part of the evaluation.

Board Member Wimmer asked about the individual property owners highlighted in the report and when they go to sell their property. She wondered what the impact on them would be, living in this environment of development around them, if there might be a type of eminent domain that would occur. Mr. Ah-Sing said there would be no eminent domain. For properties on Pepper and Olive, for the most part the Plan expects those to remain as is. Perhaps at the peripheries as they abut the properties along El Camino Real, they are sensitive to the transition of future buildings and height, but the rest would likely remain the same.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited further questions or comments.

Board Member Wimmer commented that the packets are interesting, and she wished she had more time to read them, but during the meeting and after the presentation, the packet acquires more meaning. She loved the old historic photographs and their value in the packets.

Board Member Heinrich appreciated the fact that the designation for the cannery and other buildings will be considered by Sobrato in the future for their inclusion in the federal, state and local registers.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz asked what was needed following the discussion. Ms. French advised that this is the HRB's opportunity to comment on the project. Mr. Ah-Sing added that the EIR will be published in late summer, and anyone can respond to that. There may be opportunity, when they go to the Council, if any representative from the Board would want to attend that meeting, it may be something to work out. Ms. French noted that she will send Board members the link to the EIR once it is published. As individuals, they can review it. Comments are welcome. The next process after the Draft EIR would be a Final EIR where comments and questions and correspondence would be addressed in the final EIR. As Liaison to the HRB, Ms. French said she is happy to keep Board Members apprised of when it is going to various commissions, such as Planning Commission, for their recommendation to Council on the plan. There can also be an opportunity for representation from the HRB at the Planning and Transportation Commission as well.

### **Approval of Minutes**

3. Approval of Historic Resources Board Draft Minutes of May 11, 2023.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz invited comments/changes to the minutes.

Motion by Board Member Wimmer to approve the draft minutes of May 11, 2023. Seconded by Board Member Rohman.

Since Board Member Heinrich needed to abstain, there was not a quorum, and approval of the May 11, 2023, minutes will be deferred until the next meeting.

### **Board Member Questions, Comments, Announcements or Future Meetings and Agendas**

Ms. French announced the next meeting will be June 22<sup>nd</sup>. She is preparing a report regarding the Review Bulletin to facilitate discussion and understanding about the current permit processes related to historic resources. Topics for the retreat could also be on the agenda, looking at a Friday evening as opposed to a Saturday for the convenience of many Board members as well as recording of the meeting and participation

by all Board members and staff. A target date is July 28<sup>th</sup>. She asked for an indication from the Board members present, all of which felt that this date would work. If this works with the remaining members, the regular meeting date the prior day would be cancelled. For the July 14<sup>th</sup>, the Chair will be absent, so it may be cancelled as well. Ms. French asked the other Board members to let her know their thoughts on vacating this date.

Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz felt that agendizing the discussion of retreat topics was a good idea.

Board Member Wimmer commented that she was on California Avenue the day before, where they are painting murals in the middle of the street intersections. One is being painted this week, and she thought there would be a dedication on Friday evening. She remarked that this is a wonerf happening on California Avenue. There is no parking on the streets, and it is more dining and open public use. One big semi-permanent street mural was painted in the intersection. It will eventually wear off as people walk over it. She found it very interesting. Ms. French said there were opportunities to provide feedback on the user experience. She thought there was a QR code with which to provide comments to the group studying the idea.

Board Member Heinrich announced there will be another PAST tour on Saturday of the Birge Clark buildings on Stanford Campus at 10:00. Information is available on their website.

### **Adjournment**

Motion by Chair Eagleston-Cieslewicz to adjourn. Seconded by Board Member Heinrich, the motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 a.m.