

Community Workshop #1

On October 26, 2004 over 50 people attended an evening visioning workshop for B Street between 2nd and 4th Streets. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss overall planning and design issues facing B Street. Working in teams, participants reviewed four potential options and identified other ideas they wanted to explore.

This summary includes a brief overview of policy themes discussed, a list of issues that were discussed with the entire group, and summaries of the five teams.



Overall Discussion Themes

The workshop participants' discussion is summarized as four overall themes. These include looking at the future of B Street within the larger community and neighborhood context; the degree to which B Street is preserved as residential in character or a new design and pattern are established; the amount of ownership housing included in the plan; and the linkage between density and financial feasibility.

Civic Context

The participants viewed the B Street area within the larger community context. At the General Plan scale, they quoted policies that supported both preservation goals and the commitment to infill development. At the downtown scale, people referred to the connection to planning policies and concepts found in the Downtown Specific Plan and Traditional Downtown Davis and Neighborhood Design Guidelines. At the neighborhood scale, the relationship to the park, 3rd Street and adjacent traditional residential areas were acknowledged as important parts of the B Street context.

Preservation

The University Avenue Neighborhood was originally developed as a single-family area. The influences of the University, downtown expansion and overall community growth have resulted in conversion of many of the original single family homes to apartments, student rentals or

commercial uses. New market pressures have increased speculation. This was reflected in participants expressing potential visions for B Street that assume various amounts of preservation of single-family character and landscape; or higher densities and greater connection to the downtown economy and citywide infill policies.

Ownership Housing

Participants spent a lot of time discussing who could or should be living on B Street. The range included seniors/empty nesters, families, well-heeled renters that support downtown economic development, and letting the property owners chose. Existing residents were concerned about adding more students to the neighborhood.

Density and Feasibility

Most teams discussed the economic feasibility of the options. Generally, low-density options that involved removing existing units were viewed as least feasible. The higher density options were seen to require more property owner cooperation or even Redevelopment Agency participation. The option that left existing houses and added alley units was viewed as easy to do but challenged by some as continuing to support student rentals without enough incentive for reinvestment in the B Street frontage.

Issues Discussion

The workshop participants reviewed and discussed planning and design issues that pertain to the B Street area. They discussed general issues and then land use and design issues. The summary below is from the facilitator's flip chart notes.

General issues:

- Traffic
- Street maintenance
- Plan B Street and 3rd Street together (A Street too?)
- Livability—traffic, family friendly neighborhood
- Who will live there?
- Stabilize retail with high density residential
- B Street is a civic street that is an entry to downtown
- Livability for single-family neighborhood
- Creating good public spaces—streets, park and sidewalks
- Civic context
- Neighborhood preservation policies are to benefit entire community
- Impact on tree canopy
- Underground utilities
- Diverse neighborhood (B, A, 3rd and University Streets) with different priorities and uses
- All of B Street is investment and rental properties (existing uses do not include single-family)
- Downtown Specific Plan emphasized intensifying the “core of the core” first and then grow outward
- B Street is urban rather than suburban
- Bike routes
- B Street is different north and south of 3rd Street
- Guidelines preserve identity

Land use issues:

- Less than 25% of neighborhood in single-family use (verify)
- Business association area (part of downtown)
- Uses that can take advantage of downtown location and transit
- Explore live-work

- Denser residential with a focus on ownership housing (careful about creating a student ghetto)
- Ground floor uses at park edge
- Flexible uses

Design issues:

- Oriented towards the park
- Tandem parking
- Urban environments—role of public and private open space
- Solar access
- Tree canopy—shade and character
- Traffic numbers and access to parking
- Design of 3rd Street—transit function, pedestrian character
- No curb cuts along B Street

Team Summaries

Working as members of five teams, participants evaluated four potential options. They discussed the pros and cons of each, issues that should be addressed regarding the options and then thought about what other options should be considered.

The following summary was typed from the flipchart notes provided by each team.



Team 1



General comment: Why is 3rd Street omitted from the discussion?

Option 1: Alley Units

Pros:

- High chance of saving historic resources and trees
- Retains historic streetscape
- Increases density modestly and appropriately
- Encourages pedestrian traffic and alley maintenance
- Minimum impact on existing houses
- Old North model shows alley revitalization works
- Adaptive reuse of single family housing compatible to 3rd Street

Cons:

- Business district looks residential
- 301-305 B Street are ignored
- All additional traffic on alley
- Does not recognize new urban environment
- Nothing will happen. No new investment.
- Provides minimum new housing opportunities

Option 2: Duplex and Alley Units

Pros:

- Encourages residential without excessive spread of commercial uses

Cons:

- Lose massing of historic properties on single family street
- Corner of 3rd Street ignored
- Residential in business district
- Why have more density north of 3rd?
- No new investment—too few units

- Ignores potential for variety of urban uses
- Cannot support needed parking
- Likely to attract students and change nature of family space in park

Option 3: Row Houses and Duplexes

Pros:

- None

Cons:

- No room for parking
- Inaccessible for utilities
- Is it possible to change lot lines?
- Inappropriately high density
- Not considering 3rd and B Street
- Unimaginative sameness
- Too small density

Option 4: Flats and Row Houses

Pros:

- High density for empty nesters

Cons:

- High density will bring students
- Total loss of historic aspect
- Cannot design-out students
- Ignores 3rd and B Street
- Violates General Plan assurances to retain existing residents
- Between 2nd and 3rd no investment will happen
- Requires condemnation implementation issues
- Owners should do what they want

Most important issues to study:

- Let property owners propose what they want
- Rezoning for the long-term
- Maintain balanced diversity
- Urban planning context
- How to accommodate parking densification will bring
- Context of 3rd Street
- Preservation of historical ambience
- Consistent maintenance
- Incentives for investment

Is there an option left out?

- Yes. The M.O. option
- Status quo

Team 2



Option 1: Alley Units

Pros:

- Maintains historic character, streetscape
- Would improve alley maintenance issues and would preserve trees
- Add transportation friendliness of alley
- Densifies without overwhelming the neighborhood
- Lots are 150' deep—this takes advantage of this
- Allows separate office space and increase home ownership opportunities

Cons:

- Too big an impact on alleys—too much traffic
- What could be done to mitigate it?
- Inefficient use of land—would like to see higher densities and/or connect buildings
- Why are we even considering densification?

Things to study about Option 1:

- Supports conserving existing neighborhood and is compatible with design guidelines
- Traffic
- Solar access

Option 2: Duplexes and Alley Units

Pros:

- Same pros and cons as Option 1—but requires demolition (which is a con)
- Could implement on small number of lots and not destroy many homes

Cons:

- Demolishes existing without much gain in units
- We lose our heritage and wipe-out past

- Parking and traffic issues

Things to study about Option 2:

- Consider provide incentives to preserve units contributing most character and ensure that new units respect it

Option 3: Row Houses and Duplexes

Pros:

- Increased density—but with more destruction of existing units

Cons:

- Row houses have less opportunity for light and air
- Increased density—too high end

Other issues:

- Needs quality property management (home owners association)
- Requires property owners to work together
- Who will live in and own these units

Things to study about Option 3:

- Traffic
- Property management
- Wholesale demolition

Option 4: Flats and Row Houses

Pros:

- None offered

Cons:

- Too large
- Too big for neighborhood
- Would be too many students living there

What we have not considered:

- Providing affordable and moderate income housing for long-term owners and for renters—Redevelopment Agency would have to be involved
- Consider something like Aggie Village—could have walking path down the middle. Design would be based on historic properties
- Keep what is there and add second stories
- Have more units with fewer bedrooms—this would increase owner occupancy
- Need adequate private open space—will be critical in site plans
- Densities need to be high enough to make projects financially feasible
- Consider narrow alley houses to have more of them
- Preserve the Davis Townhouse Apartments (DTA)
- Another nice-looking apartment building on B Street does not have to look like DTA, but nicer and well maintained
- What is happening with 3rd Street?

Team 3



Option 1: Alley Units

Pros:

- Minimizes impact
- I like yards

Cons:

- New buildings are not visible from B Street
- Destroys parking, leaves crappy buildings
- Undesirable to live behind existing old building
- Parking and alley traffic
- No incentive to improve B Street frontage
- No financial incentive to do anything
- Does not address front units

Option 2: Duplexes and Alley Units

Pros:

- Makes use of lots
- Would be purchased
- Open space

Cons:

- Would not buy duplexes

Option 3: Flats and Row Houses

Pros:

- Control/student rentals supervised by owner

Cons:

- None offered

Option 4: Flats and Row Houses

Pros:

- Flats and row houses breaks away from existing
- Rethinks possibilities
- New vision

Cons:

- Takes out big trees
- Could be better vision
- Produces student housing
- Who will live there?

What are the most critical issues?

- Parking
- Marketable
- Long-term maintenance
- Traffic flow
- Balance of neighborhood?
- Appearance (design)
- Owner occupied
- For-sale units
- Less parking
- Fewer bedrooms per unit
- Attract older people
- Traffic
- Not a student ghetto
- Redesign of B Street to accommodate pedestrians and bikes
- How options relate to park/downtown in general
- Owner-occupancy
- Active edge to park
- Buffer? Between R-1 neighborhood and B Street
- Transition to remaining properties
- How relates to neighborhood
- How relates to Davis commitment to urban infill
- How to make B Street an attractive place to live and work
- How does improving B Street improve park and B Street activity at night
- Incentive to developers

What options have been left out?

- Detached units for sale
- Combination/variety of types
- Denser infill at rear with existing to remain
- Less dense at front
- Incentives to developers
- Detached units with yards
- Commercial
- Housing coops

- Urban style lofts
- Mixed-use
- Senior housing
- Underground parking
- Denser build-out/more units per lot
- 5' setback (shallow)
- 5' rear setback
- Empty nesters housing

Team 4



Option 1: Alley Units

Pros:

- Retain streetscape
- Preserve historic character
- Best gain in units for least character destruction
- Granny flat opportunity
- Least controversial—easiest
- Preserve tree canopy

Cons:

- Not using park setting
- Static
- Parking
- Waste space
- Outdated
- Missed opportunity

Option 2: Duplexes and Alley Units

Pros:

- New B Street frontage with least disruption
- New vision (vital)
- More amenable to home ownership

Cons:

- Impact on tree canopy
- Fails to “frame” park
- Does not promote activity

- Less flexibility to use interior open space
- Too low density
- Mid-density gives minimum traffic impact

Option 3: Row Houses and Duplexes

Pros:

- Row houses allow live-work
- Taller gives better views from interiors

Cons:

- Too much uniformity
- Major streetscape change
- Conflicts with design guidelines

Option 4: Flats and Row Houses

Pros:

- Individual designs could be good
- New fresh, vital vision
- More density
- Makes use of downtown location

Cons:

- Loss of tree canopy
- Loss of interior open space
- Not tall enough
- Parking and traffic issues
- This density could work south of 3rd Street

What are the most important issues to study regarding each option?

- Parking and transit for all options
- Affordable housing
- Owner vs. rental
- Open space for kids
- Provide new type of Davis housing

Is there an option that was left out? Describe it.

- B Street property owners option—Higher density, small footprint, for sale, minimum parking
- High density at edge of town with transit (no build)
- Car planning secondary
- Businesses along B Street with residences along alley (revised Option 1)
- Preserve design guidelines

Team 5



Option 1: Alley Units

Pros:

- Little impact on streetscape scale
- Preserves single family feel
- Open green space
- Historical character
- Least impact on tree canopy
- Not on street (living)
- Status quo

Cons:

- Little opportunity for improvement of neighborhood
- Higher maintenance on alley
- Increased parking requirements
- Missed opportunity for urban edge
- Missed opportunity for additional retail
- Not enough room available for renters
- Little opportunity for owned units downtown

Option 2: Duplexes and Alley Units

Pros:

- More ownership opportunities
- Density-not gobbling up existing infrastructure
- Increases opportunity for people to live downtown

- Easier to maintain
- Character with duplexes rather than townhouses to maintain the character of neighborhood
- Modest impact on open space

Cons:

- Not economically justifiable
- No consistency of types of housing
- Duplex odd building type for neighborhood facing park
- Street not conducive to that type of housing
- Not enough room for renters
- Increases parking demand

Option 3: Row Houses and Duplexes

Pros:

- Creates positive urban edge for park
- 2-story scale consistent with existing architecture
- Significant open space
- Adding diversity
- Greater ownership potential
- Better looking than apartment buildings
- More efficient use of space

Cons:

- Does not optimize use of space
- Not enough room for renters
- Loss of historic fabric
- No rhythm to street
- Changes character of neighborhood

Option 4: Flats and Row Houses

Pros:

- Maximizes use of space
- Desirable three levels with potential for fourth
- Requires alley access for parking
- Hides parking
- Chance to redefine neighborhood
- Better support/more customers/more residents downtown

Cons:

- Requires most cooperation among property owners
- Least diversity of design
- Light and ventilation
- Added traffic
- Very large scale

Important issues—each option:

- Option 1—economic viability, limited scope, little visual change, invites rentals
- Option 2—economic viability, limited scope, street rhythm/scale, invites rentals, no future planning opportunities
- Option 3—economic viability, impact on community, change of street/neighborhood scale, traffic and parking

- Option 4—enhanced zoning opportunity, architectural design, change of scale, traffic and parking

Options left out:

- Multi-tiered condos
- Multi-family
- Mixed-use
- Four story structures
- Develop more density (FAR)
- Financial feasibility of options
- Senior housing/empty nesters
- Smaller lots—build vertically to densify
- Include other B and 3rd Street parcels