



Reaching Out: Rural Santa Clara & Business Canvassing

The 'Reaching Out' phase of the River Road – Santa Clara neighborhood planning process focused on broad public awareness of the project and soliciting input on the neighborhood vision from a diversity of voices. This report summarizes the targeted outreach conducted by City staff and neighborhood volunteers to two specific stakeholder groups: rural residents of Santa Clara and businesses interests in both neighborhoods.

For different reasons, business interests and rural residents do not typically attend traditional community engagement events. Business owners are often tied to their store all day and may return to other parts of the city in the evening. On the other hand, rural residents may not feel that an outreach event for the 'neighborhood' includes them. The project team though it was important to target outreach efforts at these constituencies. The following sections summarize the project team's approach to engaging these communities and the resulting feedback.

Rural Outreach

The Santa Clara Community Organization includes rural residents who live beyond the urban growth boundary (UGB). Members of this community are unlikely to participate in broader neighborhood workshops that are not tailored to their unique geographic location.

Over twenty participants attended the rural Santa Clara workshop held at Madison Middle School on December 14, 2017. Jointly hosted by the City of Eugene, Lane County and the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations, attendees had the opportunity to participate in the same activities as those who came to the large community event in October: a mapping exercise to identify what they value about the area, and a 'my ideas' activity that asked participants to share their future hopes for the neighborhood. These activities generated the following results.

Land Use

Land use was discussed extensively by participants at the rural outreach event. The majority of land use comments were about protecting the existing farm zoning and high quality soil. That said, there were also frustrations expressed over the limits to land uses resulting from being outside the UGB. A recurring suggestion was to address the



perceived mismatch between zoning and the unique characteristics (e.g., soil type, size, existing uses, etc.) of each plot. Moreover, there were a few requests for specific lots to be included within the UGB.

Transportation

Transportation was also discussed at the rural outreach event, though it was not a major focus. Several rural Santa Clara residents identified congestion around River Road and the Beltline as an issue to be addressed. Other recommendations included improving the bus routes and pedestrian safety in Santa Clara. Residents expressing mixed views on adding sidewalks on roads that feel rural.

Parks & Natural Resources

Parks and natural resources was the category that received the second largest number of comments from the rural group after land use. Residents said they value farmland and soil quality, and want to protect it. Many residents indicated that they appreciate the habitat and wildlife in the area. The river is also valued for recreation, and people expressed a desire for increased river access.

Economic Development

The main economic development feedback from the rural outreach was about the need for a farmer's market. This was described as being good for the farms and as a way to bring people together and foster community. The [online map](#) produced by the neighborhood planning team reflects suggested locations.



Other Topics

Among the rural outreach participants, there were comments about the value of the current sense of community. Participants expressed a desire to foster this asset. Suggestions included community gathering spaces and more community events.



Business Outreach

Regardless of whether business owners and employees reside in the neighborhood, they have a stake in the outcome of the neighborhood planning processes. However, they are often tied to their work place and may not be able to attend conventional neighborhood outreach events. With this in mind, the project team made a concerted effort to reach out to businesses in the River Road and Santa Clara neighborhoods.

In November and December, neighborhood volunteers teamed with City and County staff to conduct door-to-door outreach. These pairs spoke with nearly three hundred businesses along River Road and in other commercial areas throughout the two neighborhoods. They promoted the neighborhood planning process, conducted interviews, and encouraged business owners and employees to get involved. The results of the interviews are summarized below.

Land Use

Land use did not receive many comments from the business owners or employees. The few points of concern that did emerge were limitations of zoning and frustrations with the permitting process and signage regulations.

Transportation

Businesses offered many comments related to transportation during the canvassing. Traffic along River Road was the most common transportation-related concern. Respondents said they had witnessed minor accidents as cars tried to turn in and out of parking lots. A handful of respondents supported another bridge over the river to ease congestion. The River Road – Randy Pape Beltline interchange was identified as a problem area for traffic congestion.

Economic Development

Many respondents said they enjoyed the neighborhood and liked the businesses around them. There was interest expressed in a business association for the River Road area to support communication between businesses. A recurring concern among respondents was the

effect that homelessness had on their operations. Comments on the topic of homelessness are discussed further under *Other Topics* below.



Other Topics

There were many valuable comments that reflected widespread views but did not fit into one of the main plan topic areas. Homelessness was the most common concern among business respondents, and some expressed frustration at the lack of services. Attitudes reflected a mix of compassion and frustration with dealing with issues that business owners attributed to the homeless population, such as trash and vandalism around their businesses. Along these lines, business canvassing revealed concerns about graffiti, crime, and a desire for increased police presence.

Conclusion

This targeted outreach helped diversify the voices involved in the neighborhood planning process. The values, hopes, and concerns expressed by these stakeholders will be balanced with those expressed by other members of the public to create a comprehensive community vision.

Where we are headed in 2018

The *Reaching Out* project phase concluded in December, 2017. In 2018, we will move into the next phase of the project, crafting a *Community Vision* and an *Action Plan* to turn that vision into reality. Just as the *Reaching Out* phase was a collaborative effort, so too will be the Vision and Action Plan. To that end, the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations have nominated a Community Advisory Committee. The Community Advisory Committee, along with Focus Groups – one for each topic area – of neighbors and local experts, and City and County staff will begin reviewing all these great ideas. These ideas will guide the creation of a *Community Vision* and *Action Plan*.

Get Involved and stay informed!

If you received this project summary from a neighbor, consider [signing up for the project e-newsletter](#). The e-newsletter will keep you up to date with the neighborhood planning efforts, notify you of upcoming meetings, and alert you to volunteer opportunities.

Visit the project website!

www.RiverRoad-SantaClaraPlan.org

Have questions or comments? Let us know at CEPDDRRSCPlan@ci.eugene.or.us or 541.682.5485.

