
Memo

To: Lisa Wight, Planning and Building Director
Town of San Anselmo

From: Jeffery Baird, AICP, Baird + Driskell Community Planning

Subject: Summary of Visioning for San Anselmo Avenue Between Ross and
Bolinás Avenues (see attached Summary)

Date: 16 January 2008

Attached is a summary of the key directions and comments from the three community visioning workshops conducted in September, October and November, 2007 for the area of San Anselmo Avenue between Ross Avenue and Bolinas Avenue. Workshop summaries for each workshop have also been prepared.

As I see it, the value of this process has been to identify community concerns and directions regarding future planning for this area. The combination of the workshop summaries plus any specific policy directions determined by the Town (through a public review process) can provide a developer with valuable materials, directions and process considerations for their proposal. Further, it may be possible for the Town to identify guiding principles for development for the area and possible “trade-offs” for future development to help achieve the community’s vision.

Below are some of the key findings:

- (1) **Overall Character:** Any development should be consistent with the “village character of San Anselmo” in terms of the height of buildings, eclectic design style, pedestrian friendliness, etc. It is desirable to make the area more inviting to visit by making the experience more pleasant for pedestrians and creating areas where sitting and gathering are encouraged.
- (2) **Height of Buildings:** In general, two-story height limits prevail so that views of the hills are maintained for autos and pedestrians. Narrow “view corridors” between taller buildings are generally not desirable, but some taller buildings (3-story maximum) should be allowed in limited instances. Three-story buildings could be desirable if there is a specific public benefit provided, such as a landmark building that creates a sense of entry to the community or area,

affordable housing is provided, a public gathering space is provided, etc. Staggered building heights and step-backs of upper stories might be ways to minimize impacts, and impacts on adjacent residential areas should be minimized.

- (3) **Pedestrian Improvements and Traffic:** Sidewalks, cross-walks and pedestrian and bicycle routes are safe and inviting. Parking and traffic flow is improved.
- (4) **Land Use and Commercial Development:** The area avoids competing with the downtown in terms of commercial development, but may be appropriate for more housing or uses that support the downtown or provide housing for people who work in San Anselmo. To the extent possible, local businesses are maintained.
- (5) **Greenness and Sustainability:** New development in the area is built along green building principles and support sustainable development principles. This includes the types of materials used as well as “smart growth” types of development that reduce use of cars.

Summary of Visioning Workshops for San Anselmo Avenue Between

Ross and Bolinas Avenues

*Summary of Three (3) Community Workshops Conducted at Wade Thomas School
Between September and November, 2007*

Summary of Vision Directions

Overall Vision Directions (San Anselmo Avenue in the Year 2020)

- (1) We have maintained the village character of San Anselmo in terms of the height of buildings, pedestrian feel, family-orientation.
- (2) Sidewalks and pathways are used by pedestrians but they are not too crowded.
- (3) The intersections at Bolinas and Ross have been improved.
- (4) Parking and traffic flow have been improved.
- (5) We have maintained the quality of surrounding residential areas.
- (6) We have effectively planned the entire area along San Anselmo Avenue Between Ross and Bolinas Avenues as a whole.
- (7) We have maintained the historic style and character of the area.
- (8) We have recycled and re-used materials, and developed the area based on green building principles.
- (9) The area's changes have helped the Town become self-sufficient.
- (10) We have maintained and provided for local businesses, and developed the area to be compatible with and support other areas of downtown.
- (11) We have provided affordable housing opportunities, including housing for people who work in San Anselmo.
- (12) There are public spaces created. We have created more sitting and gathering areas, and beautification includes such possibilities as a water feature and kiosks.
- (13) There are no monolithic structures.
- (14) The area has staggered building heights, with no 4-and 5-story buildings.

Area Design Style, Feel and Attractiveness

- (1) Assure a variety of design and materials (an eclectic, individual design style).
- (2) Reflect a "San Anselmo look" similar to the current architecture, and retain historic buildings and facades.
- (3) Encourage small cluster projects and avoid monolithic, large structures.

- (4) Integrate new buildings seamlessly, without a “faux” look to them.

- (5) Integrate utilities (possibly underground), streetscape, landscaping, street lighting, etc. throughout the area and, where appropriate, with other areas, such as the downtown.
- (6) Assure sustainable building design, energy conservation and materials.
- (7) Vary roof heights, shape, and design.
- (8) Provide a “village feel” that is not contrived but is more organic and human in scale.
- (9) Provide a welcome portal to San Anselmo.
- (10) Break up the building frontage to allow space for alcoves and courtyards.

Building Heights and Intensity

- (1) Vary building heights.
- (2) Possibly allow some three-story buildings in limited locations if views can be protected, impacts on surrounding areas avoided, and upper stories are setback from the street front (“wedding cake” design).
- (3) In addition, three-story buildings should be linked to specific public benefits or improvements in the area or for the town as a whole.
- (4) Assure proportions of buildings fit with one another and maintain a comfortable pedestrian feel for the area.

Improvements and Incentives

- (1) Provide for flood improvements and flood resistant design.
- (2) Link developer contributions with needed improvements in the area.
- (3) Provide for trade-offs of developer incentives with the public benefit of improvements (such as the creation of a public “gathering spot.”

Gathering Places and Other Public Amenities

- (1) Consider a central focal point and gathering place in the area (possibly an area near the post office).
- (2) Create sitting areas in the median and connected to commercial uses and buildings.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

- (1) Assure that the area is pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and is designed with a scale and interest that makes the experience of being there enjoyable.
- (2) Assure a safe, comfortable walking and bicycling experience.

(3) Link with the downtown and transit.

- (4) Consider ways to reduce traffic and parking impacts, possibly close off the street at certain times, and, in general, elevate the importance of pedestrian and bicycle circulation in this area that is linked to the uses and experience of being there.
- (5) Link street paving, landscaping, gathering places, building design and attractiveness, etc., with creating a pedestrian-friendly environment.

Vehicular Traffic and Parking

- (1) Look at ways to hide parking, such as behind the buildings.
- (2) Improve vehicular safety, circulation and access.
- (3) Assure adequate parking in ways that also make the area more attractive.
- (4) Improve the safety and functioning of intersections.

Relationship to Other Areas

- (1) Consider impacts on downtown businesses.
- (2) Link the land use, design, energy/vibrancy and access for this area to surrounding areas.

Potential Change/No Change Areas

- (1) US Bank.
- (2) Economically non-viable commercial uses.

Views, Creek and Other Area Attributes

- (1) Protect long-range views of Bald Hill, Mt. Tamalpais and the Seminary.
- (2) Link the attractiveness of views with landscaping treatment.

Mix and Types of Uses

- (1) Provide for a mix of uses that include both commercial and residential (possible live/work), as well as public spaces.
- (2) Provide vibrant businesses and uses that attract people to the area.
- (3) Assure small-scale businesses.
- (4) Retain the post office.
- (5) Consider potential impacts of uses on other areas of San Anselmo.
- (6) Provide commercial on bottom floor with housing above.
- (7) Consider nighttime uses and other activities to create a more vibrant place.

Summary of Preferences from Workshop #3 Dot Exercise

Comment	# Dots
_____ No 3 stories	31
_____ 3 stories ok: higher percentage affordable housing	22
_____ Allow some three-story buildings in limited locations if views can be protected, impacts on surrounding areas avoided, and upper stories are setback from the street front (“wedding cake” design).	14
_____ Assure that the area is pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and is designed with a scale and interest that makes the experience of being there enjoyable.	11
_____ Unique local retail uses (like S F Ferry Bldg) encouraged	11
_____ Workforce housing	10
_____ Community center that engages all members of the community	10
_____ Potential 2nd & 3rd story residential/over commercial lower units: "mixed use"	9
_____ In addition, three-story buildings should be linked to specific public benefits or improvements in the area or for the town as a whole.	9
_____ Affordable housing w/limited parking	9
_____ Reflect a “San Anselmo look” similar to the current architecture, and retain historic buildings and facades.	9
_____ 2 stories/30 '	9
_____ Safer for cyclists	9
_____ Possible late night bar activity ok if it doesn't disturb but encourage vibrant evenings, family-oriented, arts, music, theater, live music (location is key)	9
_____ No big box stores & chains, but stores with practical products (Vision)	9
_____ Encourage parcel by parcel development, not master plan	8
_____ Economically viable	8
_____ Provide for a mix of uses that include both commercial and residential (possible live/work), as well as public spaces.	7
_____ Public toilets	7
_____ No exceptions to current 2 stories	7
_____ Allow for parcel by parcel development	7
_____ Vary roof heights, shape, and design.	6
_____ Plaza/courtyard	6

_____	Identification & preservation of historic bldgs	6
_____	Another small, tasteful hotel	6

	Comment	# Dots
_____	Improve bicycle circulation	6
_____	Recruit neighborhood-serving retail, such as hardware, grocery	6
_____	Make road more meandering (like upper SA Avenue)	5
_____	Flood Improvements	5
_____	Park w/play structure, plaza, courtyards, fountains	5
_____	Strong emphasis on high-quality design	5
_____	Fund public improvements with a bond	5
_____	Special planning zone for this area	5
_____	No neighborhood bars (beer & wine okay)	5
_____	No chains or big box	5
_____	Expand the berm into a park	5
_____	Neighborhood bars	5

Summary of Key Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges for the Area

- (1) Construction Costs
- (2) Flood Zone and Flood Mitigation
- (3) Seismic Safety
- (4) Mix of Uses
- (5) Business Turnover
- (6) Need for Tax Base
- (7) Rental Affordability
- (8) Traffic Impacts, Flow and Congestion
- (9) Finding Other Location for Post Office
- (10) Pedestrian Friendliness
- (11) Median Strip Underutilized
- (12) Underutilized Properties (I.e. Ongaro)
- (13) Impact on Existing Local Businesses
- (14) Redevelopment Challenges
- (15) Distances Between Businesses

- (16) Value of Residential Over Commercial
- (17) Noise Levels
- (18) Potential Loss of Character (Historic)
- (19) Underground Utilities
- (20) Protect View Corridors
- (21) Visibility from Sir Francis Drake
- (22) Parking Needs
- (23) Keep Variety of Architecture
- (24) Impacts on Adjacent Residential
- (25) Parks and Open Space Needs
- (26) Need for Workforce Affordable Housing
- (27) Bank Building
- (28) Revitalize While Maintaining Charm
- (29) Potential Building Height Impacts
- (30) Protect Light and Privacy
- (31) Need for Community Gathering Areas
- (32) Relationship to Downtown
- (33) Increasing Senior Housing Need
- (34) Get People to Shop Locally
- (35) Avoid Chain Stores

Opportunities in the Area

- (1) Post Office Draw
- (2) Tax Revenue Opportunities
- (3) Affordable and Market Rate Housing
- (4) Median Strip Improvements and Use
- (5) Create Gathering Place
- (6) Place for Teens
- (7) Bicycle and Pedestrian Friendliness
- (8) Green Building
- (9) Enhance Post Office
- (10) Better Parking
- (11) Landscaping Improvements
- (12) Improved Attractiveness of the Area
- (13) More Interesting Building Height Variations
- (14) Public Art/Entertainment
- (15) Possible Street Closures for Pedestrians

- (16) Mixed of Uses that Work Together
- (17) Knock Down Bank Building
- (18) Create Better Link to/with Downtown
- (19) Underground Utilities
- (20) Balance of Day and Night Activities
- (21) Interesting Pathways/Alleys
- (22) Less Car Use
- (23) Improved Intersections and Traffic Flow
- (24) Height Restrictions to Address Impacts
- (25) Possible Courtyards and Sitting Areas
- (26) More Attractive Street Design
- (27) Improvements to Infrastructure
- (28) Provide Needed Local Commercial Services
- (29) Flood and Seismic Improvements
- (30) Support for Public Transit
- (31) Better Building Design