

SACRAMENTO GENERAL PLAN AND SOUTH SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATES PHASE I - TOWN HALL FORUM SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The City of Sacramento is conducting a comprehensive community participation program as part of the update to the City's General Plan and the South Sacramento Community Plan. Public participation and input throughout the planning process are crucial in creating a plan for growth that truly reflects the community's visions and values.

As part of this commitment to including the community in the planning process, a series of 14 town hall forums were held throughout neighborhoods within Sacramento from May 16 to June 18, 2005. These forums represent the first phase of three sets to be held as part of the City's General Plan and South Sacramento Community Plan updates. The main purpose of these forums was to help plan for growth in the neighborhoods and in the City by identifying features the public valued or wanted to change, and to define their vision for Sacramento's future. Another purpose was to solicit input on the public's view of the most important issues Sacramento is facing. Input from these forums will help shape the development of the vision statement, a statement describing a common vision for what Sacramento will become in the future, and the guiding principles that will help define how growth will occur in the City. The vision and guiding principles will then be used to direct the development of land use alternatives under the General Plan and Community Plan. Public ownership of the updated Sacramento General Plan and South Area Community Plan will be created through community participation.

At each of the forums, a brief presentation on the background and purpose of the planning processes was given, and then participants provided input through the use of interactive map exercises and by filling out a survey of important issues. In the survey, participants identified the top five issues Sacramento was facing. In the neighborhood mapping exercises, participants were asked to identify places where they gathered, features they valued, features they did not like, and things they would like to see changed on the aerial map of their neighborhood. Participants were also asked to list five things that make a great neighborhood. In the second mapping exercise, participants thought about the City as a whole, and identified great places in the City and what they did not like on an aerial map of Sacramento. Additionally, participants were asked to list five features that would make Sacramento more livable, and every table had the opportunity to present their top choices to the entire forum. This public input helps to identify general trends on what the community values and what their vision for the future is, as discussed below.

Over 1,000 persons (1,004) attended the forums, representing an average of 71 participants per forum. The following table shows attendance at each forum:

Forum Location	Attendance
Hart Center	96
Clunie Center	75
Sierra 2 Center	80
Kennedy High School	117
Coloma Center	111
Sim Center	57
Robertson Center	107
Shriner's Center	80
Natomas High School	41
Natomas Charter School	106
Meadowview Center	77
Mack Elementary	25
Cosumnes River College	29
La Familia Center	3
TOTAL	1,004

GENERAL TRENDS

Issues Survey

In this exercise, participants were given a list of issues that Sacramento is facing, and were asked to choose the five most important issues to the individual. There were a total of 42 issues to choose from within the following categories: land use, major development areas, community character and design, population and demographics, housing, economic development, resource conservation, natural resources, roadways, transit services, bikeways and pedestrian facilities, public safety, parks and recreation, and noise. The five most highly ranked issues are as follows:

1. *Safe neighborhoods* was ranked the highest, where seven of the 14 forums ranked this issue as either the most important or second most important. This issue also received the most total votes.
2. With an average rank of 2 and the second highest number of votes, *mixed-use and higher density developments around light rail stations and along commercial corridors* was ranked as the most important issue in four of the forums.
3. The *distribution of affordable housing and walkable neighborhoods* within the City both ranked as number three, with the third highest number of votes. Eight of the forums ranked the distribution of affordable housing in their top five most important issues.
4. Both the *protection of agricultural land and open space*, and improving *streetscape quality* were tied for the fourth most important issue.

5. Lastly, there was a four-way tie for the fifth most important issue: *amount of affordable housing, jobs near housing, improving air quality, and expanding the light rail system.*

Interactive Map Exercises

As part of the interactive mapping exercise, participants answered a series of questions about their neighborhood and the City in table groups, ranging from a few people to as many as 10. The exercise allowed participants to define their own “neighborhood” in order to answer the questions. Answers to these questions were documented by forum and table, resulting in the ability to quantify similar responses across all forums. For analysis purposes, the following 11 general categories were created as a framework to assess the responses.

1. General land use;
2. Commercial (retail, shopping);
3. Employment (office, industrial, jobs, economic development);
4. Housing (affordable and distribution of housing);
5. Mobility/accessibility (automobiles, pedestrians, bicycles, streetscape);
6. People
7. Public facilities/private institutions (churches, community centers, libraries, private clubs, schools, public/personal safety, noise, police, fire);
8. Entertainment/restaurants, community activities (festival, community events, cultural facilities);
9. Parks/recreation/open space;
10. Aesthetics/community design/neighborhood structure/appearance (architecture, code enforcement issues); and
11. Miscellaneous.

Neighborhood

Participants in the interactive map exercises answered five questions about their neighborhood. Participants were asked to circle features on the neighborhood map, and to list them on the side of the map for the first four questions. For question 5, participants chose their top five components of a great neighborhood.

1. Where do you gather?
2. What do you like?
3. What don't you like?
4. What's your future?
5. What makes a great neighborhood?

Gathering Places

- Particular gathering places that were classified as a public facility/private institution represented approximately one-third of the total answers aggregated

by table. Specifically, schools, churches, libraries, community centers, and private clubs were mentioned the most often.

- Nearly one-quarter of the answers were related to parks/recreation/open space, with McKinley Park, Hagginwood Park, Land Park, and East Portal Park identified the most frequently.
- Over 21 percent of the total responses by table identified commercial areas as the most popular gathering places within their neighborhood. Malls, shopping centers, bookstores, grocery stores, and downtown Sacramento were popular gathering places within the commercial area category.
- Nearly 18 percent of the total answers identified gathering places within the entertainment category, which included cafes, restaurants, theaters, bars, and farmer's markets.

Features We Value

- The most commonly identified features of the neighborhood that participants liked, representing approximately 31 percent of all answers, were within the category of parks, recreational facilities, and open space. Specific facilities such as the American River Parkway, McKinley Park, Curtis Park, Tahoe Park, and Lawrence Park were mentioned the most often. Other facilities such as golf courses, canals, the American River, the Sacramento River, and other neighborhood parks were also identified.
- Nearly 15 percent of the total answers selected features under the mobility/accessibility category. The most frequently identified feature was bike trails where it was mentioned in nine of the forums, walkable areas was mentioned in eight of the forums, and the light rail system was identified in seven of the forums.
- Approximately 15 percent of the total answers can be categorized as public facilities/private institutions, where libraries (mentioned in nine of the forums), community centers, and schools were identified the most often.

Features We Don't Like

- Over 37 percent of the total answers for this question were related to mobility/accessibility. The most commonly identified issue that was mentioned at ten of the 14 town hall forums was traffic congestion, safety, and accidents. Other issues identified in this category include poor public transit access, lack of sidewalks, and lack of adequate parking.
- Over 17 percent of the total answers can be classified under the category of aesthetics/community design, with blight, abandoned/condemned buildings, illegal dumping, and graffiti identified as features that residents did not like about their neighborhood.

Things to Change

- Over 24 percent of the total answers for features the public would like to see changed in their neighborhood related to the category of mobility/accessibility. Specifically, maintaining bike trails, expanding bikeways along all major corridors and the rivers in the City, and improving bikeway access were mentioned by several tables in 10 of the forums. Light rail expansion and improvement was also mentioned by 13 tables across 10 forums, and pedestrian expansion and improvement was also listed as things residents would like to see in the future at 12 tables in seven forums.
- Approximately 18 percent of the total answers were related to land use issues. Adding more mixed-use development, and changing the R Street Corridor and the Union Pacific Downtown Railyards site were identified the most often.
- Nearly 17 percent of the total answers involved improving commercial areas such as Florin Mall, the Broadway Corridor, and the Stockton corridor, as well as adding commercial uses to various parts of the City.

Components of a Great Neighborhood

- Over 19 percent of the total responses were related to mobility/accessibility. Walkable streets and neighborhoods where services and amenities could be reached by foot were identified as the top choice.
- Nearly 15 percent of the total answers can be classified under the category of parks/recreation/open space. Participants felt that the presence of parks, and recreational facilities and activities were features that would make a great neighborhood.
- Public facilities were represented in approximately 13 percent of the total answers, where schools were the most commonly identified feature of a great neighborhood.

Citywide

In the second part of the interactive map exercises, which focused on the City as a whole, participants were asked three questions. Participants were asked to identify any feature or destination for the first two questions. In the last question, participants were asked to list ideas that would make Sacramento more livable.

1. What are the Great Places of Sacramento?
2. What don't you like about Sacramento?
3. List five things that would make Sacramento more livable.

Great Places

- Approximately one-third of the total answers by table selected features classified as parks/recreation/open space. Land Park and American River Parkway were the top choices selected by numerous participants as two of the great places in the City, followed by the American River, Sacramento River, and McKinley Park.
- Nearly one-quarter of the total answers by table for this question-identified features within the category of entertainment/restaurants/community activities. Specifically, Arco Arena was the most commonly selected place, followed by Raley Field and the Sacramento Zoo. Many tables also selected cultural facilities such as the Crocker Art Museum and Towe Ford Museum.
- Almost one-fifth of the answers by table indicated great places within the category of private facilities/pubic institutions. Cal Expo, Sacramento State University, and the State Capitol were the top choices within this category.

Features We Dislike

- Nearly one-third of the answers to this question pertained to mobility/accessibility. Within the answers provided by table in this category, almost 32 percent identified traffic and freeway congestion as the issue they disliked the most about the City. High speeds and congestion at certain freeway interchanges and highways were listed. Inadequate public transit and the lack of connection between Old Sacramento and the rest of the City were also mentioned as features that the public did not like.
- Approximately 13 percent of the total answers by table for this question indicated features within the category of aesthetics/community design/neighborhood structure/appearance. Specific issues mentioned within this category include abandoned buildings, blighted areas commercial corridors, vacant lots, and the sprawling nature of the Natomas area.
- Nearly 13 percent of the total answers indicated that commercial uses, especially K Street Mall, were features that were not liked within Sacramento. WalMart (proposed) and the Florin Mall were also specifically mentioned.
- Approximately 12 percent of the total answers included features considered within the land use category. Union Pacific Downtown Railyards was selected at every town hall forum as a place that everyone did not like, and the need for development at the site was also indicated. In half of the forums, the Richards Boulevard area was also mentioned.

Components of a Livable City

- Almost one-quarter of the answers by table selected features within the mobility/accessibility category. Enhancing transportation options and improving public transit were most commonly identified.
- Nearly one-fifth of the answers were related to land use, of which almost half of the answers pertained to the inclusion of mixed-use developments within

Sacramento. Creating a vibrant downtown as one of the things that would make Sacramento more livable was mentioned at half of the forums.

- Approximately 12 percent of the total answers were classified in the housing category, where the provision of affordable housing was mentioned in 11 of the forums.

CONCLUSION

Issues, values, and preferences identified by the public in the 14 town hall forums will help identify how growth should occur in the neighborhoods and in the City as a whole. This input will help shape development of the vision for Sacramento's future. Guiding principles will also be developed to respond to the issues, visions, and values. The vision and guiding principles in turn influence preparation of land use alternatives in the next steps of the Sacramento General Plan and South Area Community Plan update processes.