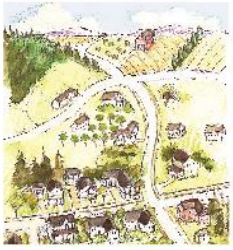


RIVER ROAD SANTA CLARA
Neighborhood Plan

Introduction

With adoption of Eugene's urban growth boundary complete, City Council directed staff to begin neighborhood planning in the River Road and Santa Clara neighborhoods. With this direction, City staff began collaboration with County staff and the two Community Organizations to ensure all residents are able to get involved.

This project update offers background information, summarizes some of what we have heard during the initial *Reaching Out* phase and outlines where we are headed in 2018.

Project description

The River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations, in collaboration with residents, businesses, the City of Eugene and Lane County, have been reaching out to neighbors to create a vision that will guide decision-making in River Road and Santa Clara for decades to come. The plan will focus on four major topics:

- *Land Use Planning:* What activities, like housing, shops or parks, do we want and where? How will the neighborhood feel and look?
- *Economic Development*: How will good jobs and services be supported?
- *Parks and Natural Resources*: What do we want to happen with outdoor spaces?
- *Transportation*: How will we get around?

The outcome of our work together will be a Neighborhood Plan adopted by the City of Eugene and Lane County to guide the future growth and development of the River Road and Santa Clara areas.

Community collaboration

This is a collaborative effort among the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations, the City of Eugene, and Lane County. The community organizations came together several years ago to work on the SCRROL (Santa Clara River Road Outreach and Learning, 2012) and SCRRIPT (Santa Clara-River Road Implementation Planning Team) initiatives. The community organizations dedicated countless volunteer hours in reaching out to and engaging neighbors. The results have formed a foundation for the neighborhood plan.

LANE COUNTY OREGON

RIVER ROAD COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The Santa Clarion

Eugene

Process to date

'Reaching Out' phase

In the summer of 2017 the community organizations and staff began the *Reaching Out* phase of this 18-month project. Our *Reaching Out* efforts had three objectives:

1. Raise awareness about the project;
2. Promote the October 17th community event at North Eugene High School; and
3. Create opportunities for people to provide input on the future of their community.

We began raising awareness about the project by meeting with neighbors where they were. We promoted the project at fun activities like Sunday Streets and the grand opening of the new River Road Elementary School and during routine errands at the grocery store. Volunteers from the community organizations canvassed their neighborhoods with informational flyers. There were stories in the regular community organization newsletters and we used social media to spread the information, too. In total, we attended more than 20 events in advance of the big October 17th event! This video contains footage of that outreach.

The community event at North Eugene High School was a huge success, with ***nearly 400 people*** filling the Highlander gymnasium. We were thrilled with this result. However, we know that many in the community are unable to attend evening meetings, so we've made an extra effort to meet with them at more convenient times and places.

We formed partnerships with trusted organizations like Saint Vincent DePaul, Food for Lane County, and our local schools. These organizations have helped us to reach a broader cross section of residents. Small group meetings were held with high school students, affordable housing residents, Spanish speakers, and rural residents in Santa Clara. In addition, a group of neighborhood volunteers and City and County staff did door-to-door canvassing of local businesses to gather their input on the neighborhood. This report includes the results of these targeted outreach events as well as the feedback heard at the community-wide Kick-Off event on October 17th. Our goal is to leave no stone unturned and give everyone the opportunity to provide input into the vision for their neighborhood.

What we've heard

The River Road-Santa Clara Neighborhood Plan will be organized around 4 major topic areas that were previously identified by neighbors. The following summaries provide some high points for each topic. These summaries are based on what we've heard so far this Fall. If you wish to read more, an inventory of all comments received at the North Eugene High School community event on October 17th, as well as other small group activities, is available online.

Land Use

Many neighbors asked questions about balancing growth and change while preserving the unique neighborhood character. Agricultural land and large residential lot sizes were the most prominent responses when neighbors were asked what they value now, with one resident describing the neighborhood as the 'interface between downtown and rural.' Some of the most common comments regarding a vision for the future were preserving agricultural land, properly planning residential infill, and keeping large lot sizes to allow for gardening. When discussing the future, some residents expressed concern over high-density developments not being matched with adequate infrastructure, such as parking spaces or traffic control.

Transportation

Transportation was the most heavily-discussed topic throughout this phase of public outreach. When asked what they value now, the most common transportation-related answers related to biking, walking, and the bus. Safety was discussed in relation to every type of transportation, such as neighbors saying that

they value crosswalks or walking to school safely. The most common suggestions for the future were adding more bike paths and bike lanes, calming traffic on residential streets, reducing traffic on main roads, and improving pedestrian safety. Congestion, especially during rush hour at main intersections, was a prominent area of concern and neighbors provided solutions such as redesigning River Road or increasing public transit use.

Parks & Natural Resources

Parks and Natural Resources was the category that received the second largest number of

comments, after transportation. The riverfront path received much attention within this category, both in terms of being valued now and as an area for improvement. Neighbors especially value the bike path and habitat along the river, and many people had suggestions about cleaning it up or making it safer. Many neighbors also said that they currently value their local parks, and Emerald Park in particular was mentioned in people's responses. Other suggestions for the future were more and better maintained parks, preserving natural spaces, and building/creating facilities such as a dog park or pool within the neighborhood.

Economic Development

When asked what type of services or shopping people value now, the most common answer was local markets, followed by small shops. Neighbors indicated that they value being near services and believe small shops make the neighborhood more friendly for walking and biking. The most common suggestions for the future were more restaurant and cafe options, local markets and farmer's markets, and small or locally-owned businesses. There was an especially common refrain that the neighborhoods need a gathering space, such as a public plaza or a welcoming food store with a communal space. Other visions for the future included job training in the community and zoning changes to allow for more businesses.

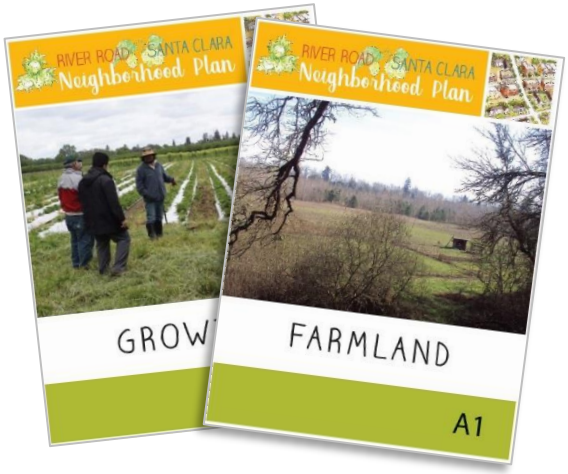
Other Topics

There were several common responses that do not fit into a specific category but reflect a widespread hope or concern. Many residents expressed a desire to build community with their neighbors, and a common vision for the future included establishing more community gardens. Addressing homelessness in the neighborhood was another priority among residents, and was discussed in reference to housing affordability, the river path, and overall public safety. Residents also provided many comments about the duplication of services between City of Eugene and Lane County providers. These comments ranged from concerns over emergency response times to support for special districts.

Reaching Out: Rural Santa Clara

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. The project team thought it was important to target outreach efforts at these constituencies. The following section summarizes the project team's approach to engaging this community and the resulting feedback.

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.

Reaching Out: Business Canvassing

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 to rural Santa Clara residents and the business community 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. The following section provides information on the various other forms of outreach that were directed at under-represented communities.

Inclusive Outreach

Building a foundation of trust and democracy starts with understanding who has a stake in the outcome of the project and how and when they can participate. Public meetings are often filled with elderly, white, middle class people listening to public servants slogging through long presentations. To bring in fresh voices, the project stepped out of the meeting room and into the community, conducting unique activities with interesting visuals that stimulated important conversations.

To involve youth, low-income residents, people with disabilities, and communities of color, we forged relationships with key community partners who have earned the trust and respect of under-represented community members with consistent service. Working in collaboration with organizations such as Saint Vincent De Paul, Food for Lane County, and the school districts, we involved people who do not attend public meetings.

From September to December of 2017, the project reached out to a wide variety of groups and individuals to facilitate conversations and collect information **about what works in River Road and Santa Clara now, and what people would like to see in the future**. People engaged by playing with a set of cards depicting common activities in the neighborhood, writing on a map and completing "My Idea" sheets.

What We've Heard

Themes from the outreach include the desire for equitable access to services, including transportation, housing, parks and recreation. Safety, whether at home or on the street, is an essential element for both residents and businesses. Finally, a sense of community and support for family is paramount for residents.

Transportation

Bicycle and pedestrian safety and access is essential. Improvements are needed to safely access schools, businesses, parks, recreation, and jobs in the area. For example, it is difficult and dangerous to cross River Road and walk on Division Avenue.

Traffic congestion contributes to the safety and access issues. Improvements are needed to transit access and frequency. Anti-EmX sentiment exists.

Land Use

Affordable housing is a critical component for low-income residents in River Road and Santa Clara. Better connections between residences and public transit is very important.

Preserving farmland was also a key factor in maintaining a healthy local food supply.

Parks and Natural Resources

Residents value natural areas, especially along the river.

Parks and Recreation provide activities for families and teens, but there are financial barriers to accessing services.

Public Safety

Crime, including drug use was a key concern. Residents requested neighborhood watch information. Problem areas include the riverfront park and the Ross Lane/Hunsaker area. People expressed concern about the planned transit station in Santa Clara, and the homeless issues it might generate.

Homeless issues must also be addressed. Because low-income residents frequently walk, bike, and use transit, they come into closer contact with the homeless population. People have compassion and want additional social services to help solve the problem.

Building Collaborations

The project collaborated with the following organizations in developing and conducting the outreach in Fall, 2017.

School Communities
North Eugene High School Leadership Class
Kelly Middle School - Multicultural Coordinator
El Camino del Rio/RR Elementary School
Irving Elementary- PTO

Low Income Residents
Santa Clara Place (SVDP)
Ross Lane (SVDP)
Greenleaf & Apple Orchard (Cornerstone)
Larry Collins Food Pantry (Food for Lane County)

Individuals with Disabilities
Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA)
LCOG Senior and Disabled Services
River Road Recreation District
Lane Transit District Accessible Transportation Committee (ACT)

Race/Ethnic Minorities
Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) of Lane County
Blacks in Government (BIG)
NAACP
Black Student Union
Latinx Leadership club at NEHS
Hola Oregon Magazine
River Road/Santa Clara businesses
Huerto de la Familia

Why inclusive outreach?

Our community and government has long recognized the value and importance of democratic representation in relation to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low-income, and limited English proficiency:

- The Title IV statute of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- The concept of environmental justice was defined in 1994: Executive Order 12898 directs federal agencies to identify and address disproportionally high adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

These laws are intended to make planning and decision-making more inclusive and to more equitably share the impacts and benefits of projects and programs receiving federal funding.

Where are we headed in 2018?

The next step in this process is to create a community vision for the next 20+ years. As the process graphic illustrates, previous work done by SCRROL and SCRRIPT has formed the basis of the Neighborhood Plan process. The Reaching Out Phase wrapped up in December 2017, and Working Groups and Community Advisory Committee members then set to work identifying neighborhood values from the huge amount of public input received. The identified neighborhood values will inform the creation of a Community Vision showing how the neighborhood will look, feel, and function over the next 20 years. The Community Vision will be turned into a reality through the Goals and Policies, and subsequent Action Plan. Neighbors provided numerous suggestions for the future during the Reaching Out phase, and establishing clear Goals and Policies will help prioritize that wealth of feedback as the Action Plan is created.

Just as the Reaching Out phase was a collaborative effort, so too will be the Vision and Action Plan. To that end, the Community Advisory Committee is made up of volunteers nominated by the River Road and Santa Clara Community Organizations who will collaborate with project staff and represent neighborhood voices. The working groups are also open to any neighborhood resident wishing to dive into greater detail on a specific topic area. Finally, another community-wide workshop will be held in May 2018 to bring everyone back together to review the project direction.

Get Involved and stay informed!

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