

# HELM RANCH ROUND 1 - COMMUNITY WORKSHOP AND OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

*Tarpey Elementary School, Clovis, CA  
April 30, 2014 – 6:30pm-8:30pm*



## SUMMARY

On Wednesday, April 30, 2014, staff from the City of Clovis and PlaceWorks facilitated a community workshop aimed at introducing the City's Urban Greening Plan process and getting feedback from participants on their concerns and interest in developing the Plan in Helm Ranch. The workshop was paired with a community update regarding on-going planning for Shaw Avenue, located to the north of Helm Ranch.

Approximately 30 (31 signed in) members of the public attended the meeting, which began with a brief overview of the Shaw Avenue urban design plan and the introducing the Urban Greening Plan, including the Proposition 84 funding provided to develop the Plan, common features found in greening plans in other areas, and draft goals and strategies identified for the Urban Greening Plan in Clovis.

Following the presentation, participants independently visited urban greening and Shaw Avenue stations facilitated by staff from the City of Clovis and PlaceWorks. The interactive stations were developed to gain feedback on preliminary urban greening features and community concerns.

The Urban Greening stations included:

- **GOALS AND STRATEGIES** presented the draft goals and strategies developed by the City as guidelines for the Urban Greening Plan. Participants were encouraged to read through the goals and provide feedback by writing directly on the list or highlighting components that they agreed or disagreed with.

The station also included an interactive board where participants used stickers to vote on the environmental issues that they considered to be most important to themselves or their community.

The final interactive board of the station presented urban greening strategies from other areas. Using stickers, participants voted on which features they wanted to see in their community.

- **URBAN GREENING NEEDS ASSESSMENT** displayed a draft map of greening opportunities in the Helm Ranch, as well as separate board of greening precedents corresponding to the types of potential opportunities in the neighborhood. Participants were asked to mark



the map with sites that they liked or disliked, as well as sites that were not presented but should be considered for greening opportunities.

A second interactive feature at this station asked participants to brainstorm words that they considered to represent their neighborhood and write them inside a blank map of the community. Since implementing urban greening efforts requires community support and endorsement, each neighborhood within the Urban Greening Plan will have a unique character tailored to the community it represents. This free-form activity was intended to provide a way for Helm Ranch residents to start to define their neighborhood in their own terms and provide City Staff with a better understanding of how to shape the plan to match the character of the community.

- **PLANT PALETTE** encouraged participants to think about the style of plant features they wanted to include in their neighborhood. The station included one board representing qualities of different tree types. The exercise did not present specific trees, but rather the general shape and look that the participants wanted to see in the area. Using stickers, participants voted on the qualities that they preferred.

The station also included a second set of boards presenting different views of streets trees and asking participants to vote on their preferred look, including large trees versus small trees and consistent plantings versus diverse species.

The combined Urban Greening and Shaw Avenue station included:

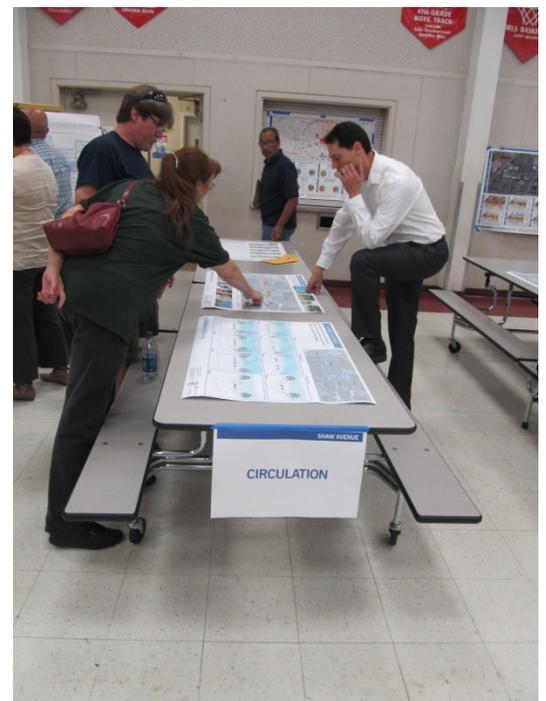
- **CIRCULATION** invited participants to mark a series of maps showing how they move through their neighborhood. The exercise involved three identical maps of the neighborhood, showing streets, schools, community amenities, and major landmarks. On the first map, participants marked areas that they considered dangerous or unsafe in red. On the second map, participants marked the areas where they currently walk or travel to in green. On the third map, participants marked the places where they would like to see improved connections in orange.

An additional circulation board at this station presented different configurations of a conceptual four-lane street in the neighborhood. The new configurations presented opportunities for new plantings and bike lanes. Participants used stickers to vote for their preferred street layout.

The station also presented street layouts and proposed sections for Shaw Avenue. The street design reflected comments from previous community meetings and recommendations for improving pedestrian and multi-modal connections along the Shaw corridor.

The Shaw Avenue stations included:

- **PATTERN BOOK** introduced the proposed urban design interventions for Shaw Avenue, including potential retrofit options



and potential improvement strategies, including construction recommendations and cost estimates. The station included a draft version of the pattern book and encouraged participants to provide feedback on the usability of the product.

- **TIER 1, 2, AND 3 OPTIONS** presented voluntary improvement options for buildings located in the Shaw Avenue zoning overlay. This station provided the big picture vision of the Shaw Avenue improvements and the results of the planning efforts, provided participants with background information on the project and allowed them to ask questions about the process.



In addition to completing the scripted exercises listed above, facilitators at each station also encouraged participants to write comments directly on the boards or recorded their feedback on the exercise. In some situations, participants' responses fell beyond the scope of the exercise; however this input was recorded as a means of tailoring future workshops to residents' concerns.

## RESULTS FROM URBAN GREENING INTERACTIVE STATIONS

### Goals and Strategies

On the board outlining the City's draft goals and strategies, participants indicated support for "Increase Public Health, Community Amenities and Quality of Life," and "Improve Government Operations," as general goals. They also indicated support for "design for minimum maintenance," as a strategy for achieving these goals. Participants also added the following items:

- Electric scooter path
- Plant without creating hiding places
- Code enforcement

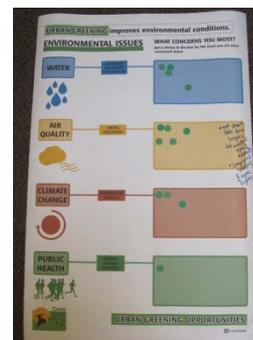
At the environmental issues board, participants voted that air quality was the issue that most concerned them, while water was the second highest concern. Participants also noted on the board that air quality could be improved by installing smart left turn lights at key intersections to reduce the time that cars idle in these areas.

Participants indicated that they preferred "Street Trees and Planting" as potential urban greening strategies. Participants voting for alternative transportation strategies pointed out the need to consider the needs of the community, emphasizing that the population is aging and needs opportunities to get from place to place that are easy, convenient, and not solely targeting highly active modes, such as biking adjacent to moving cars. Other participants added the following strategy considerations:

- Smarter irrigation: mix of perennials and native species,
- Consider safety in plant selection [to avoid creating hiding places].

### Urban Greening Needs Assessment

Utilizing the map of the urban greening needs assessment, participants identified plan options that they liked or other greening opportunities,



including new potential parks at the vacant lots on Willow, Gettysburg, and Santa Ana Avenues, as well as further improvements in the median along Willow Avenue. Participants also indicated new potential projects including improvements along N. Villa Avenue north of Gettysburg Avenue, which was described as blighted. Some participants also wanted to see improvements to the existing San Gabriel Park, writing that it feels unsafe there.

Participants also used the map to list amenities that they would like to see in Helm Ranch but did not identify a space for them. These included:

- More parks
- Covered bus shelters

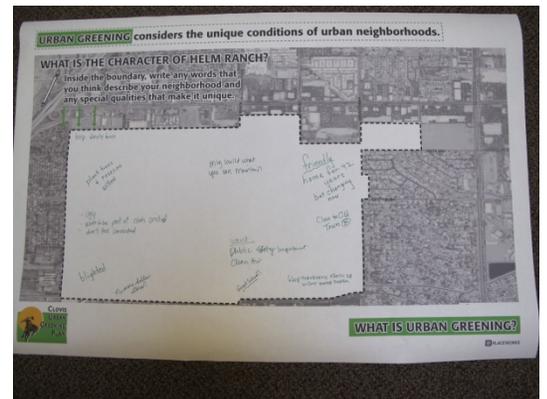
Participants also identified some circulation issues on the urban greening map. The intersection of Peach and Gettysburg Avenues was identified for having accidents and being unsafe and the alley connecting Peach and Gettysburg Avenues was called out for being unsightly.

During the brainstorming exercise for words that represent Helm Ranch, many participants decided to be more specific with their direction for future development in Helm Ranch. From discussion with participants, many felt that their neighborhood could be significantly improved and although some residents provided descriptive terms others preferred to use the activity to voice their concerns. These notes included the following:

- Keep density down
- Plant trees and roses on Willow
- Ugly
- Want to be part of Clovis Unified
- Don't feel connected
- Blighted
- No more dollar stores
- Only build what you can maintain
- Want public safety
- Want clean air
- Great school [Tarpey Elementary School]
- Friendly – home for 42 years but changing now
- Close to Old Town
- Keep maintenance effort up [on] Willow Avenue median

The urban greening map was also used to write down general comments from participants about their neighborhood or words they thought described it. Many of these specifically expressed the frustrations they have with the condition of the neighborhood and an interest in making changes. They included:

- Still waiting
- Gangs
- Fresno schools [Participants felt overlooked because they are not part of the Clovis Unified School District]
- Streets don't feel safe



- Rental of houses
- Citizens keep the weeds down in medians

## Plant Palette

Many of the participants at this station indicated that they did not have a precise preference for the look of streets trees but would simply like to see more; however, they had specific direction for keeping them safe and easy to maintain. Few participants voted on plant type, although some preference was indicated for deciduous trees with red or yellow fall color or large flowers. One participant indicated that conifers that go all the way to the ground are very hard to see around and numerous participants agreed with this concern. Additionally a number of participants agreed that they would prefer trees that minimally upset the sidewalk with its roots.

In the preference for large or small, more participants voted for large trees, although many asked to create a third category for medium trees due to people's concerns about not being able to see past the trees and not creating visual barriers between drivers and streets signs and in areas where people might be able to hide. Again, participants indicated their preference for trees that will not upset the sidewalk with its roots.

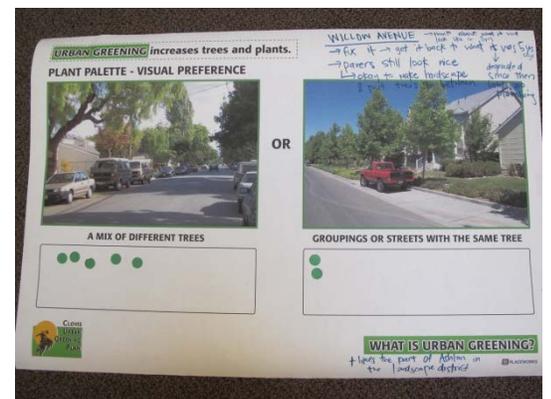
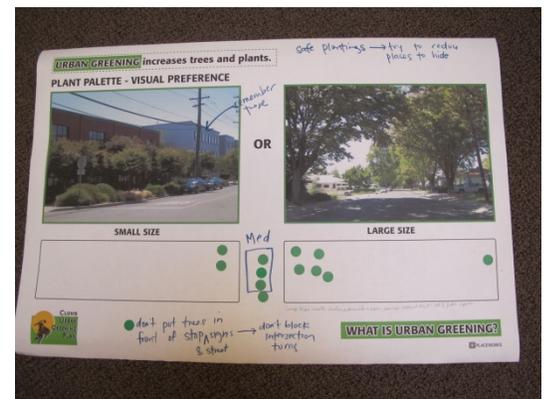
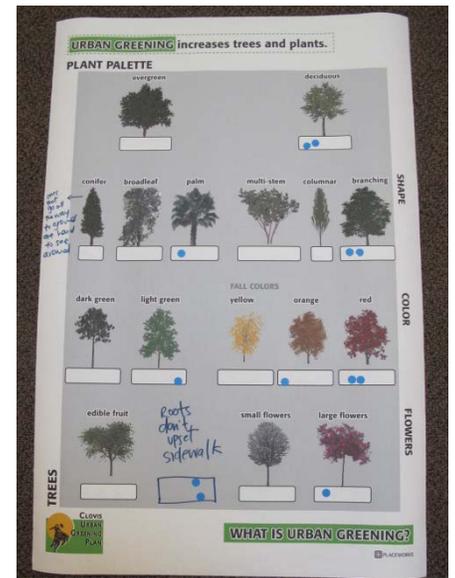
Participants did show a preference for having a mix of different trees as compared to having the same type of tree along a corridor, indicating that it would be preferred to have some variety in both shape and size along the streets. One participant expressed significant concern for the maintenance of the median along Willow Avenue, suggesting that it would be greatly improved by providing some water and creating a vegetated median area.

## Circulation

At the board indicating dangerous streets and areas, participants identified areas where they had safety concerns, as well as areas they believed to need maintenance attention from the City, such as street light replacements or landscaping improvements. Willow, Gettysburg, Peach Avenues, and part of N. Villa were identified as dangerous streets. Participants also identified Shaw Avenue north of Helm Ranch as a dangerous street with pedestrian conflicts with bikes on the sidewalk. The basin park on Minnewawa and Ashlan Avenues was identified as being difficult to access, particularity from the north.

Major areas of concern included the following:

STREET	CONCERN
Intersection of Peach and Gettysburg Avenues	Accidents in the intersection Jaywalking across streets outside of intersections Missing sidewalk Low wattage street lights
Willow Avenue	Needs trees and shrubs Lots of exhaust and fumes at intersection with Shaw Avenue Median improvements do not look maintained Artificial turf in the median is not a good alternative to real vegetation



Ashlan Avenue at N. Winery Avenue	Needs trees and shrubs at the entrance to City of Clovis [along irrigation canal]
Minnewawa Avenue	Bikes on sidewalk create conflict with pedestrians Narrow street with high traffic
Median on Peach Avenue between Pico and Santa Ana Avenues	Not maintained by the city

Participants indicated where they liked to walk in green marker and identified the trail along the irrigation channel passing along the northern edge of the basin park at Minnewawa and Ashlan Avenues. The irrigation canal continues to the east towards Fresno, but this trail was not identified. Participants identified Peach Avenue, sections of Willow, Gettysburg, and Santa Ana Avenues, as well as residential east-west connector streets as places where they currently walk. There was a distinctive loop incorporating Gettysburg, N. Villa, W. Santa Ana, Rail and Crescent Avenues, which might make an effective walking circuit if formalized and improved with pedestrian amenities.

Participants noted in orange areas where they would like to walk or areas that could be enhanced to improve the pedestrian experience. Many of the streets indicated as dangerous streets in red, were identified here as places where participants would like to walk, suggesting that residents are not using direct connections within their neighborhood due to safety concerns and that streetscape investment might improve pedestrian quality along these streets. In particular, participants identified Gettysburg Avenue between Helm and Minnewawa Avenues, N. Villa, Peach, Helm, and W. Holland Avenues, as well as a connection to the irrigation trail at the basin park on Minnewawa and Ashlan Avenues.

Very few participants showed preference for any type of street layout with new bike lanes or tree plantings. The greatest preference was to provide shading through a central median and creating shared bike lanes on the street with cars.

As noted, some other circulation issues and recommendations were addressed at the urban greening needs assessment station, described above.

