

Colma Serramonte Blvd. and Collins Ave. Master Plan



Stakeholder Interviews Memo

February 2018

Prepared by

DYETT & BHATIA

Urban and Regional Planners



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I Introduction

I.1 Goals and Objectives of Project

Serramonte Boulevard is an east-west arterial street with two lanes in each direction that serves Colma's commercial area and is a thoroughfare that connects traffic to and from the Interstate 280 freeway, Daly City, Junipero Serra Boulevard, El Camino Real and Hillside Boulevard. Collins Avenue is a two-lane collector that connects El Camino Real and Serramonte Boulevard, and serves a retirement community, car dealerships and auto body shops, and a variety of light industrial activities. Due to incremental developments along both Corridors over the last few decades, both lack uniformity in mobility improvements, including safe pedestrian infrastructure, on-street parking, and turn lanes serving businesses, as well as appearance.

The Town of Colma is in the process of preparing a Master Plan for the Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue Corridors. More specifically, the plan will outline a vision for this key commercial district and provide guidance for strategic improvements to circulation, streetscape, infrastructure, and aesthetics to improve the overall design and function of this important business center in the years to come. Specific objectives identified for the Master Plan include:

- **Streetscape and Traffic Improvements.** Carry out streetscape and traffic improvements to provide safe, accessible, attractive, and vibrant corridors with a cohesive design and aesthetic elements.
- **Economic Development.** Support and increase commercial business activities while fostering a dynamic and sustainable business district that can respond to changing market conditions.
- **Land Use and Urban Design.** Incorporate land use and urban design elements that sustain and enhance the function and unique identity of Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue.
- **Sustainability.** Create design alternatives that promote sustainable development and green infrastructure along the corridor.

1.2 Purpose and Format of Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews are one tool by which the planning team learns from community members about the challenges facing the Corridors and the opportunities for the future. As part of the community outreach effort for the preparation of the Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue Master Plan, the planning team interviewed 12 stakeholders on February 8, 2018. All interviews were conducted at the Colma Police Department. The interviews were conducted in groups of three to four, with one hour allotted for each interview session. Stakeholders included business owners and representatives and property owners.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn about stakeholders' experiences living, working, and owning businesses and property in the Corridor, and to learn from their perspectives about what is working well, and not so well, in the study area. Specifically, interviewees were asked about their priorities and vision for the Corridors. Stakeholders were asked how they would prioritize the accommodation of bike infrastructure, parking, and pedestrian facilities in the Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue roadways. They were also asked what types of streetscape improvements and parking management strategies they would like to see. Business and property owners/managers were asked about the operational and logistical challenges they currently face and how public improvements to the Corridors could help mitigate them. In addition to these particular topics, interviewees were given the opportunity to discuss issues of significance to them.

It is important to recognize that the issues presented in this memo may not necessarily be representative of the community at large, or a comprehensive assessment of opportunities and challenges faced along the Corridors. While the stakeholders represented a diversity of business interests along the Corridors, the results cannot be generalized as the sentiments of the community at large. Resident and visitor opinions and comments are anticipated to be captured by the online survey. It is also important to recognize that information presented by the stakeholders included perception and opinion. Nonetheless, the valuable insight shared during the interviews greatly informs the planning process for the Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue Master Plan.

The full list of discussion questions and prompts are included in Appendix A. The list of participants is included in Appendix B. The following summary presents the range of responses organized by topic area, without attributing any remarks to specific individuals.

2 Stakeholder Comments

2.1 Key Themes

During the stakeholder interviews, several themes were identified. Those mentioned by many stakeholders are summarized below for quick reference. The following sections provide the varying individual perspectives on these topics as well as additional issues that were raised.

- Parking is a concern on both Corridors, particularly in terms of a shortage of employee parking.
- Serramonte Boulevard should be safer and easier to cross and more pleasant and attractive to walk along.
- Vehicular traffic and congestion is a significant concern; any streetscape improvements should manage or mitigate congestion in some fashion.
- Increasing the public's knowledge of Auto Row and other businesses in Colma through the use of monument signage would help to increase traffic and sales along the Corridors.
- Speeding is an issue on both Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue.
- The Collins Avenue/ Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue/ El Camino Real intersections are unsafe and lead to many close calls.

2.2 Stakeholder Comments

A comprehensive summary of comments made by the stakeholders, organized by topic, follows.

MOBILITY

In general, stakeholders were concerned about pedestrian safety, a lack of parking, particularly for employees of Colma businesses, vehicular traffic, and certain unsafe intersections. Several stakeholders acknowledged that a shuttle from the BART station to businesses along the Corridors would be useful, and that cycling could be another way of connecting employees and visitors coming from BART to Colma businesses.

Pedestrian Facilities

- Safe crosswalks at various locations along Serramonte Boulevard are needed to facilitate efficient pedestrian mobility and to discourage jaywalking. Raised or signalized crosswalks could be considered. Crosswalk location suggestions include the following:

- Between the Ford property/ auto-dealerships and Vivana Fair. A fair number of people that wish to take an efficient route from the dealerships to go to Starbucks, Chipotle etc. can be observed crossing here.
- The intersection/crosswalk in front of Target should be lit up or signalized; it is currently not a crossing that feels safe.
- Between the Dollar Tree site and Lexus and Nissan sites.
- Some stakeholders wondered how many pedestrians actually walk along Serramonte Boulevard, and whether proposed pedestrian infrastructure investments would be worthwhile.
- Stakeholders' opinions regarding pedestrian infrastructure on Collins Avenue tended to reflect a desire for improvements to the existing sidewalk on the north side of the street while maintaining the south side of the street as space for parking.

Bicycle Facilities

- While some support for a bicycle lane on Serramonte Boulevard existed among stakeholders, stakeholders were generally wary of supporting bicycle lanes if that meant reducing the number of lanes on Serramonte Boulevard.
- A Ford representative brought up the possible introduction of Ford Go-Bike bikeshare docks and bicycles in Colma.

Transit

- Some stakeholders, particularly those that transport vehicle service customers, agreed that a coordinated shuttle service from BART to the Corridors would be a great addition given that people don't like walking from BART. Lucky Chances offers shuttles from the Colma BART station for patrons and employees. It was noted that there could be potential to align with Chariot or another such service.

Traffic

- Some stakeholders agreed that traffic seems to be manageable at the moment, while others stated that congestion was the number one issue, especially along Serramonte Boulevard.
- Many stakeholders agreed that taking away one lane in either direction to accommodate a center turn lane on Serramonte Boulevard could alleviate congestion. Another suggestion to this end was to allow for right turns only out of businesses.
- Some stakeholders raised the concern that additional crosswalks along Serramonte Boulevard would impede the flow of traffic.
- The Collins Avenue and Serramonte Boulevard intersection (at Junipero Serra Boulevard) was seen by most as a problematic, unsafe intersection. Suggestions for improvements included the following:
 - Traveling westward along Collins should be right turn only onto Serramonte.

- For those turning left onto Collins from Serramonte, a flashing yield sign would help alert drivers that they must yield to eastbound traffic coming from Serramonte.
- In addition to other loading and unloading locations in the study area, car haulers use Collins Avenue to load and unload vehicles and it should be kept this way by giving specific instructions to car hauler operations. However, Collins Avenue gets tight as a result of these operations and traffic can pile up. If parts of Collins were widened or improved in some other manner for car haulers, auto dealers would benefit.
- Several stakeholders advocated for a stop light at El Camino and Collins; the number of screeching brakes heard all day is astounding.
- Speeding is an issue along both Corridors. Collins Avenue in particular would benefit from more prominent speed limit signs or speed humps to discourage speeding, especially at the curve located on the east section of the roadway.

Parking Requirements

- Collins Avenue is in need of parking regulations that would prohibit parking between 2am and 5am, as some vehicles are parked there for weeks.
 - Permits could be issued for trucks loaded up overnight that will leave in the morning, as drivers are being ticketed.
- There are not enough parking spaces for other businesses because local car dealers are using Collins Avenue as their personal parking lot. Preference was expressed that more parking on the north side of Collin's Avenue would be more beneficial than a sidewalk.

Off-Street Parking

- There is not enough off-street parking to accommodate demand; employees park very far away from their place of work.
- Some businesses' parking lots are underutilized (Kohl's and Christy Vaults mentioned); Kohl's has parking agreements with some businesses already.
- A public parking structure would be useful – it would increase business. Opportunity sites include the following:
 - Kohl's site
 - The backside of the Serra shopping center behind Aaron Brothers
 - Vacant lot on Collins near the flower shop

On-Street Parking

- Not enough on-street parking along the Corridors; Collins Avenue is over-parked as a result.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholders were asked about prospects for growth and economic development, and how public investments in the Corridors could help businesses remain competitive and relevant. Several stakeholders highlighted that better interstate signage would help attract business. Auto-dealer representatives and some retail representatives reported that their utilization of their respective properties weren't likely to change much with the arrival and adoption of evolving technologies such as autonomous vehicles.

- The word needs to be put out there more about Auto Row and other stores – retail sales peaked last year and have slightly dropped since. Better interstate signage could help attract more traffic to the area. Similarly, coordination with Caltrans is required to trim the trees blocking the Target sign and Serra Center.
- An Auto Row association might help increase regional visibility of Colma auto dealers.
- Dealerships feel they may need more space once autonomous vehicles take off since they would essentially become fleet managers. Two dealers indicated that their companies have predicted that between now and 2030, automated features in cars will improve, and that fleets would not become fully autonomous until 2030.
- Target is unsure about the change in their property utilization given the arrival of new business ventures including a collaboration with Shipt, a same day home delivery service, though it is predicted that physical infrastructure needs will not grow as Target stores transition from traditional big box stores to a mixture of brick and mortar retail and online shopping fulfillment center. Target indicated that they may be requesting a separate entrance on the south end of the store, with a corresponding curb pick-up lane for customers picking up ordered merchandise.

STREETSCAPE

Stakeholders were asked what streetscape improvements and amenities they would like to see along the Corridors. Some stakeholders suggested improvements to lighting, while others believed it wasn't an issue. Most stakeholders shared a desire to add aesthetic elements in order to make the Corridors more attractive.

Lighting

- Midnight/2am lighting turns off at the dealerships. Coordination for timing could be useful.
- Auto dealerships are the main source of light, so when they go off it is very dark overall.
- Lighting on Collins is fine according to some, and very dark according to others. The overgrowth of trees was said to worsen this.

Aesthetics/Beautification

- Light posts that are aligned and visually pleasing when you look down Serramonte.
- More greenery would be nice, but not if it would take up space on the roadway.

- Palm trees were a divisive topic.
- Urban progressive – the opposite of suburban – a modern look.
- More trashcans are needed to get rid of the problem of trash on streets.
- Large cement structure with “Colma” written on it using greenery – but this would need to be maintained.
- Brick sidewalk or roadway elements instead of concrete.
- Some stakeholders wondered whether beautifying the space would generate more foot traffic, given that their impression that it’s mostly employees who walk around.
- The word needs to be put out there more about Auto Row and other stores – retail sales peaked last year and have slightly dropped since. Need to attract more traffic to the area, which could be accomplished through an increase in freeway signage, billboards, and electric signs.
- Opportunity area for signage on south side of Serramonte Boulevard along Junipero Serra Boulevard (1500 Collins Avenue).

Appendix A: Stakeholder Interview Questions

Challenges and Opportunities

1. What's working well on Serramonte Boulevard and Collins Avenue today?
2. What do you think are the greatest challenges facing these Corridors today?
3. What are your biggest operational or logistical challenges?
4. What is your vision/ what are your priorities for how these Corridors should develop or change over the next 20 years? What do you think will be the key challenges along the Corridors in that time period?

Transportation and Parking

1. Where would you say the majority of your employees and patrons are coming from?
2. Where do your employees park?
3. Where or how do you take delivery of vehicles?
4. There is limited space on the roadway to accommodate different features and modes of travel: vehicle/truck travel lanes, sidewalks, bicycles, parking, medians, turn lanes, and landscaping. Is the space allocated appropriately now? What changes would you like to see?
5. Where do you consider to be the most problematic "hot spots" within our study area? Think about safety (for people driving and on foot), congestion, and similar concerns. Show us on the map.
6. What types of streetscape improvements would you like to see along the Corridor? Think about elements that would contribute to the creation of a unique identity along the Corridor such as gateway elements, lighting, landscaping, street furniture etc.
7. What improvements are needed to improve connections to the Corridor from the surrounding area?
8. Are your property/ business's parking and loading needs currently being met?

Economic Development

1. What is the current status of the regional auto sales market, and what are the major challenges that Colma auto dealers face to remain competitive in the coming years?
2. Where do you see your industry heading or evolving over the next 5 or 10 years?
3. Given the realities of the competitive market, what is a realistic percentage that overall auto sales in Colma could increase over the next 10 years, under favorable circumstances?

4. Thinking about the range of factors, including evolving technologies, such as autonomous cars, car sharing services, etc., and how those changes may affect traditional car dealers, how do dealers expect their local operations to change over time?
5. How will these changes affect the utilization of your property?
6. Given answers to prior question, what kinds of things can Colma do to help local auto dealers remain competitive and relevant?
 - a. Short term – next 1 to 5 years
 - b. Longer term – 6 years and beyond
7. What kinds of public improvements will generate the best return on investment in terms of supporting increased auto sales [or, for non-auto oriented businesses, general sales] over time?

Lighting

1. Do we need to coordinate lighting along the two Corridors better? Are lights kept on all night?

Wrap-up

1. Do you have any other ideas or concerns that we haven't asked about?

Appendix B: Stakeholders Interviewed

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Anthony Caprini	Precision Autobody
Arash Haidari	Subaru/Volkswagen
Bob Christiansen	Christy Vaults
Catherine Hughes	Serra Center
Dustin Chase	Lucky Chances
James Carlson	Home of Peace
John Saddi	Target
Lou Hanhan	Precision Autobody
Sohail Tabar	Ford
Tony Uccelli	480 Collins Avenue
Victor Hung	Vivana Fair

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