

WINDSOR, CA SDAT: OLD RED GOING GREEN

A SUSTAINABLE DESIGN ASSESSMENT TEAM FINAL REPORT

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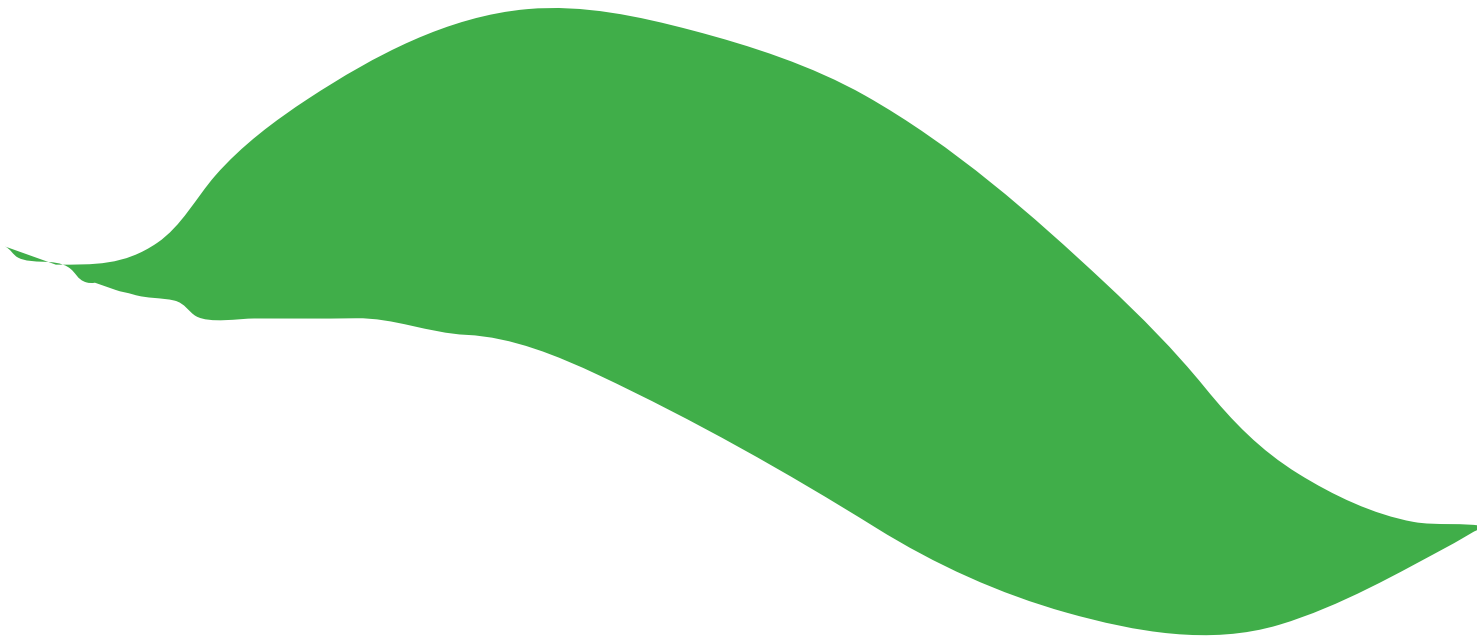
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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In January 2008, the community of Windsor, CA submitted a proposal to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) to assist its citizens in addressing key issues facing the community. The identified issues included land use planning, housing affordability, energy, transportation, and economic development opportunities.



The AIA accepted the proposal and, after a preliminary visit by a small group in June, 2008 the full team of SDAT members arrived in Windsor on August 11, 2008. For three days, the team members, working closely with local officials, community leaders, technical experts, and citizens, studied the community and its concerns. During those three days, the team came to understand the issues and used their expertise to frame a wide range of recommendations, which were presented to the community in a public meeting on August 13, 2008.

This report is a more detailed version of the background, findings, and recommenda-

tions that were presented to the community. Following a brief overview of the SDAT program and process, this report covers

- Connectivity & Land Use
- Mobility & Transportation
- Economic Development & Business Opportunity
- Energy & Green Resources
- Livability, Housing, & Neighborhoods

A closing section offers some thoughts on how the community can best move forward to address the range of issues and recommendations covered in the report.

WHAT IS THE SDAT PROGRAM?

The SDAT program is an interdisciplinary community assistance program that focuses on principles of sustainability. Launched in 2005, the program represents an exciting new chapter in the AIA's history of supporting communities with volunteer design expertise.

The SDAT program is modeled on the AIA's R/UDAT (Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team) program. While the R/UDAT program provides communities with specific design solutions, the SDAT program provides broad assessments to help frame future policies or design solutions in the context of sustainability and helps communities plan the first steps of implementation. The SDAT program is based on an understanding of design as a process that

- Is integrative, holistic, and visual
- Is central to achieving a sustainable relationship between humans, the natural environment, and the place
- Gives three-dimensional form to a culture and a place

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- Achieves balance between culture, environment, and economic systems.

The SDAT program is grounded in the AIA design assistance team values, which call for a multidisciplinary approach, objectivity of the participating team members, and broad public participation.

The key to SDAT success is diversity and participation; the process involves multiple disciplines and multiple stakeholders. The SDAT process includes not only the expert team but also government agencies and officials, private businesses, schools and students, community members, and other parties as appropriate.

On behalf of the Windsor SDAT Team and the American Institute of Architects, it is hoped this report will be a useful guide to the Windsor community as it charts its future for the coming years and for coming generations.



Sustainability envisions the enduring prosperity of all living things. Sustainable design creates communities and buildings that advance enduring public and environmental well-being. Finally, sustainable decisions are based not only on our generation, but at least seven generations to follow.

WINDSOR TODAY

Originally settled in the 1850's, Windsor remained a largely agricultural community until a housing boom in the 1980's transformed it into an inadvertent bedroom community. The town was incorporated in 1992, an act that was initiated by residents who were concerned by the rapid growth and wanted the authority to make planning decisions based on the overall welfare of the town. With the change in demographics came an inevitable evolution in their economic base



from primarily agricultural in nature to a more service based orientation. Despite a general economic growth, a large percentage of the residents of Windsor are forced to commute out of the community for employment.

Due to the freeway (Highway 101) running north and south, Windsor is essentially divided into two sections – East Windsor and West Windsor. East Windsor is located within the original town settlement area,

while West Windsor is where the “town center” is currently evolving. A newly developed Town Green has generated interest and development for this town core. Transecting Highway 101 is the Old Redwood Highway, known as “Old Red”. At its center is an awkward bulge, knuckle or knot (an inhospitable freeway underpass) – resulting in confusion, congestion and division. There are four distinct components, zones or districts within Windsor: the Northern Commercial District, the Southern Commercial District, the Old Downtown and Environs and the Eastern Business District.



The four mile stretch of Old Red is the town's spine and core. While it is referred to as “schizophrenic”, and lacks identity and focus as it grows and develops, it is a key component of Windsor. Understanding Old Red's historical context, identifying opportunities for nodes and clusters, creating gateways at each end, and investigating how the corridor becomes the foundation for the town as a whole and serves as a connector to the neighboring communities and region created the basis of the SDAT.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERALL ANALYSIS

The SDAT visit comprised of an intense three day charrette with a combination of public meetings and presentations, individual break-out sessions with community members and designated stakeholders, tours and visits to various focus areas within the community, and an extensive assessment of documentation provided by the town.

The team noted Windsor as a quiet and restful bedroom community with a “pastoral beauty” comprised of gentle hill-sides and a “beautiful green valley with sturdy oak trees.”

Particular assets of the town include:

- A caring and sensitive community
- A committed leadership
- A solid foundation of green initiatives
- An existing pedestrian scale
- A strong sense of family
- An abundance of pleasant open and public space
- An agricultural heritage and history

KEY FOCUS AREAS

Following the SDAT preliminary visit, five focus areas were determined as critical and core for the Windsor SDAT.

1. Connectivity (land use) – Creating strong connections between Windsor’s various nodes, districts, neighborhoods, and public spaces will have an inestimable effect upon all of the systems within the community. How can connecting the various nodes and districts create an environment that is more pedestrian and bicyclist friendly? How can residents

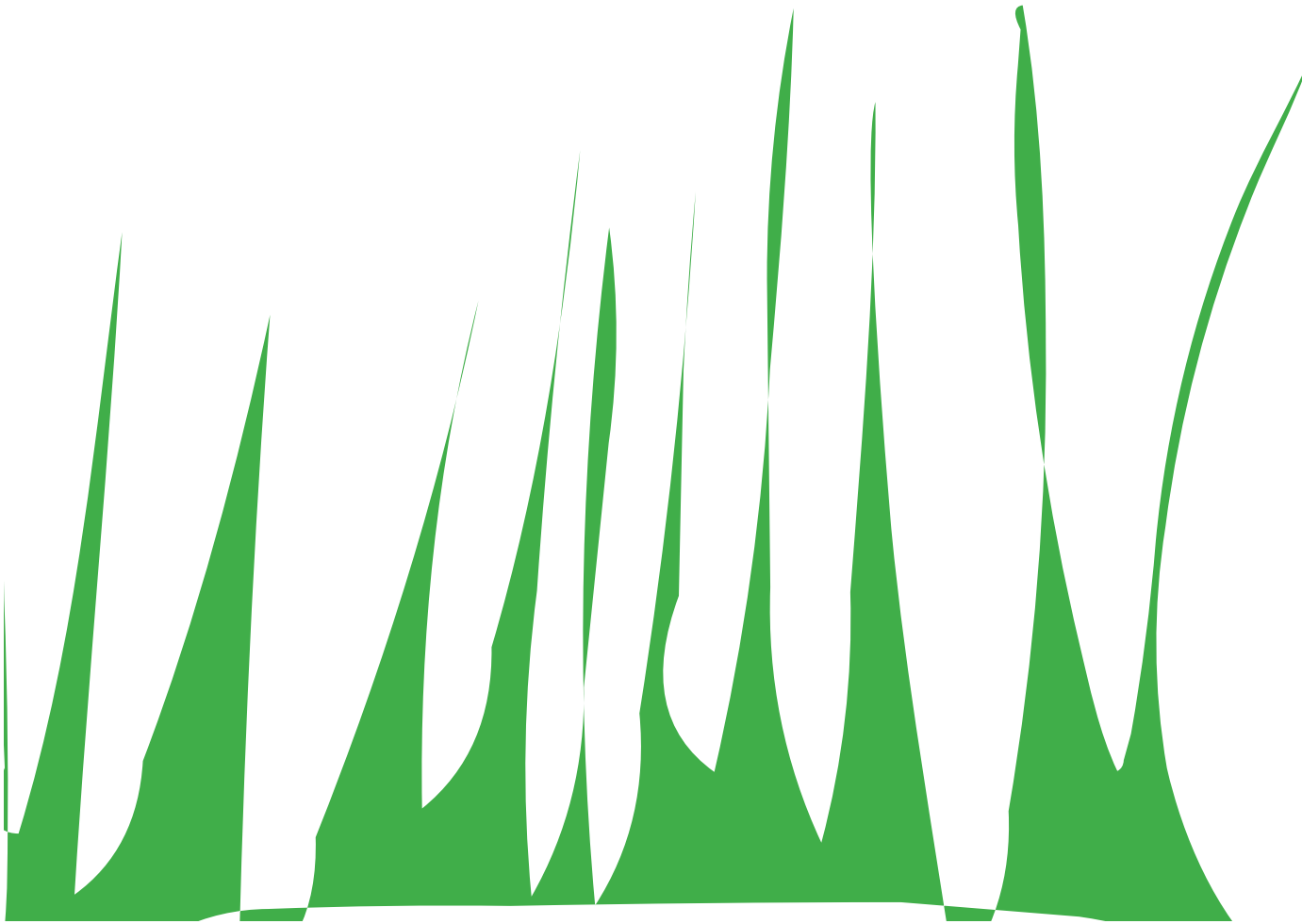
further capitalize on, access, and protect Windsor’s abundant natural resources? Are there any strategies to work around the Highway 101 barrier that would allow for alternative methods of connecting neighborhoods and nodes?

2. Mobility (transportation) – The resolution of Windsor’s transportation predicament, both within the community and in connecting to outlying areas, is crucial to the success of its future development. Like many towns, the community is bound to the automobile, but this cannot go on indefinitely. How can Windsor create a transit and pedestrian community with a diminished emphasis on vehicular dependence? How can pedestrian and bicycle traffic become safer and more enjoyable means of alternative transportation? What needs to happen to make mass transit a viable and attractive option for residents and visitors alike?
3. Economy (business opportunity) – In order to continue flourishing as a community, Windsor requires new business opportunities and commerce and business centers that are attractive to residents and tourists alike. How can the downtown area become a primary and attractive shopping destination? What are the key opportunities that will keep resident dollars within the community while also attracting visitors from outside of the community? How can the development process become easier and more streamlined in order to attract new business opportunities?
4. Energy (renewable energy and carbon neutrality) – Windsor has already made impressive strides in the area of energy efficiency, conservation and alterna-

- tive energy efforts. How can the town continue to encourage both the community as a whole as well as the individual members to embrace sustainable practices on an everyday basis? What are the primary opportunities for expanding the development of alternative energy sources? How can sustainable design be integrated into all future planning processes?
5. Livability (housing and neighborhoods) – Windsor is clearly an inviting and engaging town to live in, and residents are keen to protect the quality of life that drew them to the town in the first place. How can Windsor foster a stronger sense of community and create connections both within and between the various neighborhoods? Where are the gaps as well as the opportunities embodied within Windsor's current housing market and building stock? How can Windsor build upon and improve its already strong school system?

The following report summarizes each of these focus areas and attempts to provide strategies for how the Town of Windsor can address these elements in a more sustainable fashion.

ISSUE NO. 1: CONNECTIVITY & LAND USE



A CONNECTED WORLD

A key aspect of sustainability is the realization of one's connectivity to other people, species, communities, resources, etc. No civilization or individual can survive and endure without successfully exploiting their relationship with their geography, climate, and fellow community members. While human instinct often leads us to create physical and psychological boundaries that we hope will help us feel safer and more secure, by doing so we can interrupt potential ecological, economic and communal relationships that are beneficial to our overall well-being. As we come to understand the global impact of many of our actions and attitudes, we realize more that our connectivity reaches far beyond our daily activity and locale and that it is just as important to comprehend the effects of far-off influences as well as more intimate



relationships when seeking to enhance our "quality of life".

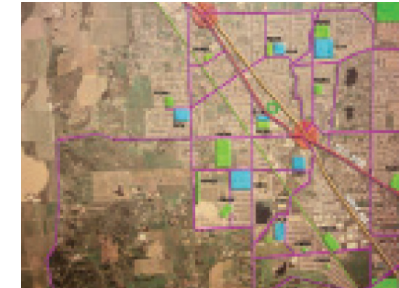
A CONNECTED LIFESTYLE

Connectivity can be experienced on various scales, from pedestrian and bicycle to motorized vehicles and aircraft (Figure 1). The Charles M. Schultz Sonoma County Airport and Windsor's general physical relationship to regional resources and rural amenities make it an attractive place to "plug-in" to small town life and the natural environ-

ment. However, contemporary technologies and living patterns coupled with historic community planning practices have all contributed to breaking some of the connections that tie people together. The "quality of life" issues that people often convey are centered on social connections to friends and gathering spots, family activities, shopping opportunities, and other aspects of a daily life (Figure 2). The parks and schools highlighted on the aerial photo indicate the need for pedestrian scale connectivity, throughout and beyond Windsor, to reinforce the family-oriented community for which Windsor is known and to take advantage of opportunities beyond Windsor proper.

STRENGTHS IN CONNECTIVITY

Several natural stream courses cross the man-made, vehicular corridors of Windsor. This provides opportunities for creek-side trails which can be inviting and safe routes for connecting residential neighborhoods, activity nodes, schools and parks across the community (Figure 3). The growth of Windsor is tied to its connection to the natural landscape of the region; minimal travel is required to experience recreation resources like Lake Sonoma or Riverfront Park. There are ample opportu-



ISSUE NO. 1: CONNECTIVITY & LAND USE

nities to enjoy views of the myriad natural resources present within Windsor. The hills, valleys, parks, wetlands, and open space extant within the urban growth boundary are jewels that should be protected and expanded upon.

OBSTACLES TO CONNECTIVITY

While natural terrain has historically served as a primary access barrier for people and animals, Windsor experiences many of the same man-made problems that plague communities across the nation. Highway 101 helps to make the Windsor area more regionally accessible for commuters who find it a desirable home base, but it also is a significant impediment to links between neighborhoods and community centers. Addressing this issue without significantly impacting commuter access would be difficult; however, finding alternative connections could mitigate its overall effects upon the community (Figure 4). To improve community connections, Windsor should join the surge of towns across the nation that are



rediscovering their waterways as linear parks. Some creek beds might serve as routes for accessways across the community, but the existing bridges and culverts may not be sufficient to allow crossings at current roadways (Figure 5). Governmental agency regulations and a typically inconsistent pattern of property ownership might also complicate patching together the lineal routes, but a determined community could prevail if the desire and will are present.

The existing trail, walk and bikeway opportunities provide inconsistent connections across the municipality. The pattern of walls and gates that were central to recent suburban planning patterns reflect discomfort and a prevailing insidious fear of people who are “not like us”. The official and unofficial physical and psychological barriers reflect insecurity across the municipality.

VISIONS OF COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

Windsor’s relatively recent incorporation was intended to stave off the negative effects of encroaching suburban sprawl from Santa Rosa while realizing a desire to become a special place in its own right. Incorporation may have been an important first step, but it is essential that citizens are clear about whether they intend to become a true community or simply a rest stop on a freeway. If the town intends to build a stronger sense of community connectivity, the following may help towards that goal:



ISSUE NO. 1: CONNECTIVITY & LAND USE

- Change attitudes of distrust or discomfort by strengthening relationships between neighborhoods and potential facility user groups
- Seek a culture of connectivity through common interest, activities, and aesthetics. This includes community-wide input into ordinances, civic events, etc.
- Create easier pedestrian access to schools and parks
- Provide varied access opportunities to medical facilities and commercial nodes
- Plan for more pedestrian and bicycle traffic throughout the community
- Slow vehicular traffic to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience
- Provide readable gateways and wayfinding means to the community
- Consider options for additional bike and pedestrian routes traversing Highway 101 (Figure 6).
- Strengthen bicycle and pedestrian connections to the airport
- Enhance connections with regional amenities (e.g. “wine country”, Lake Sonoma, etc.)
- Create vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian routes from the proposed SMART commuter rail to outlying community
- If possible, include pedestrian and bike opportunities as part of the SMART route.
- Conduct a visual assessment and create viewshed easements to retain natural and cultural amenities

- Evaluate how connectivity “leaks” and attracts opportunities to Windsor and seek to strengthen Windsor’s position in region; forge closer relationships to other communities
- Enhance opportunities for inter-generational connectivity through recreation, housing, jobs and retail activity
- Think “people friendly” in all planning.

Some of the above may already be in the works and the community may want to look at how any new goals impact existing plans.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

A friendly community overcomes obstacles to interaction because friends and family find ways to be with each other. Providing ample access and breaking down physical and psychological barriers between groups and individuals are key to the creation of community. Recognition of the economic and environmental ties to other communities, other countries and, even other continents can assure that Windsor is not an inaccessible island, but a key part of larger systems. While quick and easy access to one’s local amenities is important to our contemporary lifestyles; facilitating linkage throughout the Town of Windsor and surrounding area can encourage a broader sense of community, provide independence from vehicular transportation, increase a sense of security, and broaden market opportunities that will benefit all. Connecting our living spaces with a variety of commercial, civic, and recreation nodes increases opportunity to find common ground and meet the needs and interests of each other.

ISSUE NO. 2: MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION



TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT

A quick scan of the Town of Windsor's planning documents indicates that many of the barriers to improved and more sustainable transportation are well understood and have been for some time. The formation of a new downtown with a dense mix of land uses, integrated and connected by sidewalks, and with transit supportive amenities is a great example of how this understanding has been put into practice. New single-family housing and commercial developments - while remaining automobile-oriented - have also helped to implement a network of bicycle trails and better cluster community activities to support increased walking and transit service.



However, Windsor falls far short of a transit and pedestrian-oriented village such as the compact and walkable streetcar suburbs of the early 1900's. Even if the existing push by SMART supporters to convert an abandoned railroad right-of-way into a commuter rail and trail project is passed this November (which would no doubt be a monumental leap towards progress¹), significant barriers to a truly sustainable, multi-modal mobility network would remain. These include:

- Highway 101 as major barrier- This grade-separated highway connects Windsor to the rest of Sonoma County and the Bay Area, but does so at the expense of local circulation, thereby limiting the interconnectedness of trails and roadways, and "flooding" arterials with traffic at the limited (three) points of access.
- Poor sidewalk connectivity where it counts- While many residential areas have a connected system of sidewalks, several of the major arterial streets (such as Old Redwood Highway and Windsor Road) that lead to important pedestrian destinations do not (Figure 7).
- Overly wide roads and travel lanes- Most existing streets are out of scale with a pedestrian-friendly environment, having been (over)built and maintained using automobile-biased design standards and a narrow interpretation of traffic "safety" and pedestrian accommodation (Figure 8).
- Lingering sprawl in the land use pattern- Even with good land use planning, past development mistakes will need time to convert themselves to higher densities where appropriate to support transit (Figure 9).
- Heavy commuter vehicle traffic, including multiple school drop-offs- The high percentage of residents who work outside Windsor contributes to heavy peak commute periods, which seem to be artificially aggravated by parents driving to multiple schools in the morning and early afternoon.

All of these barriers contribute to increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita, which is one of the best measures of

¹ While there are several real issues of concern – service frequency, connections to other transit systems in Larkspur and other areas, freight sharing agreements – improving this corridor remains by far the most promising opportunity to provide a transit and non-motorized network that is truly regional in scope. "Perfect is the enemy of the good" as they say.

ISSUE NO. 2: MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION

how (un)sustainably a transportation network is functioning. Despite the presence of obstacles there are several reasons - besides good planning - why Windsor is well ahead of towns of comparable age and size in developing alternatives to the automobile. The fact that the entire town is flat, the weather is generally good, and everyone is essentially within a few miles of downtown are promising physical attributes that give biking and walking real growth potential. Windsor's location in Sonoma County, a national scenic and viticultural treasure, will help support the maintenance and development of regional trails and bikeways as well as transit/shuttle service where it might not otherwise make sense to provide (from a population density point of view) (Figure 10).

Perhaps most importantly, there seems to be civic and community leadership that truly "gets it" – that is, understands the various connections between transportation, the environment, and long-term economic competitiveness, as well as the critical role that good design must play in building support for solutions and visions that will ultimately require broader community support.

With this assessment in mind, below are several recommendations to help accelerate the path towards a "greener" transportation system, with a focus on the important role and opportunity that the Old Redwood Highway represents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use paint to re-allocate existing roadway space more efficiently and to visibly encourage bicycling and walking.

- A network of arterials "overbuilt" for the automobile is both a problem and an opportunity. In many instances, the same amount of traffic can be accommodated with narrower lanes and intersections, and in some cases removal of unnecessary turn pockets. This is valuable real estate! Rather than spending scarce public dollars to buy 1' or 2' from an adjacent property owner, look to re-stripe roadways when seeking to widen a sidewalk, install a bike lane, or build a median island (Figure 11).
- Research shows that 10' lanes are just as safe as 12' lanes, and in fact can improve safety by forcing motorists to reduce their speeds (nearly 7 mph according to one study²).
- For example, the current design of the concrete curb and gutter system throughout Windsor essentially narrows 4' and 5' bike lanes to 2-3' bike lanes by leaving a



² See http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/geometric/mitigationstrategies/chapter3/3_landewidth.htm

ISSUE NO. 2: MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION

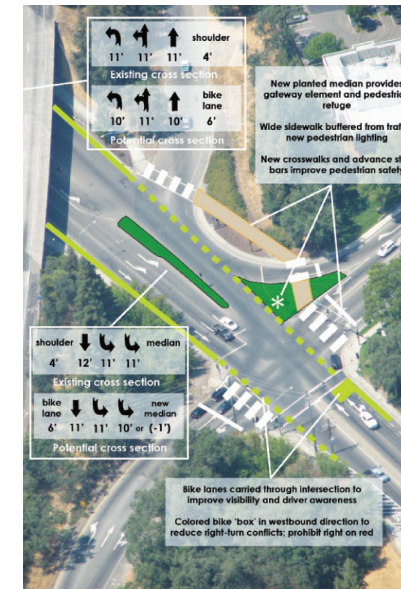


hazardous gap in the middle of them. Either change the town standard to mandate bike lanes that start from the end of the gutter instead of the face of the curb, or begin to use 6' bike lanes as the town standard. Either can be accomplished by simply narrowing existing general purpose lanes. Reduce the potential for conflict at intersections by providing:

- o Continued bicycle lane striping through intersections with heavy turning movements, either with dotted lines or "green bike lanes".
 - o Bicycle "boxes" to help cyclists advance in front of vehicles at complicated intersections, thus avoiding "right hooks" from turning vehicles and tail pipe exhaust, while generally improving their visibility to motorists.
 - o Wide crosswalks and advanced stop bars as standard procedure to keep intersection crossings accessible for pedestrians.
2. Take control of the most important intersection- As the biggest and most obvious barrier to community connectivity and east-west mobility, don't be discouraged

by state engineers and other skeptics who say that the intersection of Highway 101 with Old Redwood Highway and Lakewood Drive can't be improved. At the same time, don't bank on an improvement scheme that will cost tens of millions of dollars, take a decade or two to accomplish, and drain resources from other potentially worthy projects (like the trail underpass project just a little to the north).

- Utilizing the approach described in Recommendation #1, and by landscaping unused road space and installing some pedestrian lighting, the concept in the adjacent figure can probably be funded with one local grant and will have little or no significant reduction in vehicle capacity.
- The Complete Streets Act of 2007 (California Assembly Bill 1358) was recently passed by the state legislature and will require more aggressive accommodation of all modes when local municipalities and counties update the circulation element of their general plans. Together with other policy mandates to fully accommo-



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date all modes – such as Cal Trans Deputy Directive 64 (passed in 2001) and the MTC’s Regional Policy for the Accommodation of Non-Motorized Travelers (2006), this bill will be an important negotiating tool when working with Cal Trans on design and funding options for this interchange area.

3. Develop a series of greenways with separated bike lanes that link open spaces and shopping districts along Old Red (Figure 12).
 - Old Red’s ultrawide shoulders are a great opportunity to link community assets like Pleasant Oak neighborhood Park and Esposti Community Park with residential enclaves and other trails, and to physically separate the corridor’s bicycle lanes from fast moving traffic.
 - Bike facilities separated from traffic are typically preferred two to one over traditional bike lanes on busy arterials – a crucial factor in attracting less aggressive riders (such as females and children) who might not otherwise choose to ride.
 - Utilizing Old Red’s right-of-way for a greenway can be a faster and more cost-effective alternative to building sidewalks along the entire corridor, and will help to keep Old Red’s rural character in key locations.
 - Prohibit on-street parking except near downtown, and keep as a two lane roadway wherever possible to maintain space for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
 - Use roundabouts associated with new development to enhance the greenway concept, and link with trail improvements planned for Pool and Faught Creeks

4. Concentrate and improve transit along Old Red.
 - Until transit is consistent and reliable along Old Red, with buses every 15 minutes or less, it will not be an option for most people who own a car.
 - Work with Sonoma County Transit to restructure the Route 66 service to run exclusively along Old Red and supplement Route 60 service during the peak hours and on weekends.
 - Coordinate with new hotel and other tourism-related transportation shuttles to replace Route 66 as a local circulator within the community.
 - Move away from transit “pull outs” (Figure 13) in favor of in-lane transit stops.
 - Provides more comfortable ride with fewer swerves
 - Increases reliability by not forcing transit to wait to re-enter traffic
 - Allows for wider sidewalks at waiting areas, and is a visible way to showcase a policy of transit priority
 - Use special events to familiarize community members with transit alternatives.
 - July 4th and other summer events on the Town Green are wonderful opportunities to test strategies for getting people out of their cars and ensuring that transit won’t be a foreign concept when planning more routine trips.
5. Manage downtown parking
 - Begin to identify and prioritize different kinds of parking as a way of providing incentives for more sustainable transportation behavior.

- o Particularly with commuter rail, it will become increasingly important to actively manage downtown parking spaces and ensure that valuable on-street space is allocated efficiently
 - o Types of parking to consider: bicycle, scooters, disabled, zero emission vehicles, short-term retail parking, load zones, transit bus layover, carpool, long-term commuter parking, on-street vs. off-street parking.
 - o Remember, there are no great downtowns without a parking “problem”.
6. Use children’s behavior and school zone safety as an indicator of sustainable transportation.
- In 1969, half of all U.S. students walked or biked to school. Today, less than 15 percent do so. Meanwhile, child obesity and diabetes rates have shot through the roof as more sedentary lifestyles have become a way of life. In addition to allowing the next generations to make healthier mobility choices, transit and non-motorized alternatives will help foster more independence among older children and teens who otherwise depend on parents and their automobiles.
 - Establish a Safe Routes to School program that includes in-class education and incentives to walk and bike. Develop a “walking school bus” program and other techniques that engage parents to avoid the multiple daily vehicle drop-offs.

MOVING FORWARD

The past couple of years and the next several to come will almost certainly be remembered as a watershed moment in sustainable transportation. In 2008, California bills have been passed to limit greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020; prioritize land use and transportation planning to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT); and develop a “Complete Streets” law that mandates full accommodation of all modes of transportation – including biking and walking – with new transportation plans and projects. The combined effect of these pieces of legislation will not just allow the Town of Windsor to focus on “green” transportation: it will require the town to do so (Figure 14).

While good planning and strong policies are essential steps towards the path to sustainability, there really is no substitute for creative, well-thought, and fiscally-responsible design, particularly with so much competition for limited transportation funding and the reliance on private development to implement public improvements. Only through reasonable and inspiring design can the benefits of alternative transportation and the trade-offs of accepting vehicle congestion be articulated by civic leaders and understood by the community at large (Figure 15). Yes, sustainable design may ultimately ask citizens to accept a few extra minutes of travel time, a little extra walk from their parking space to their final destination, and/or to overcome the cultural stigma of riding a bike, but the alternative of continuing the status quo will leave the town a 20th century community struggling to be happy in a 21st century world. Windsor seems too well-positioned and ripe with opportunity to allow that to happen.

**ISSUE NO. 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY**



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

The signs of growth are most visible in the mornings and early evening. Along streets lined by a canopy of aged trees, residents are driving home. Windsor is a town known for its agricultural heritage, but the cars are representative of new rooftops, growth and the development of former farmland. Windsor has become what in common planning and economic development parlance is known as the often dreaded “bedroom community (Figures 16 & 17).” As defined by Urban Dictionary, a bedroom community is:

A suburban community/town with little to no major employment center(s) to call its own. People only seem to sleep there when they’re not working 80 Hrs./wk closer in to the city where the jobs are. The only commercial space is retail & services for the residents (banks, groceries, malls, etc.) Residents often choose bedroom communities because of affordability relative to living closer to the city, lower perceived crime, and schools with students that look just like their kids.

Often an incorporated city with its own municipal government and public services, the economic profile of a bedroom community is more about housing and retail sales than entertainment or industry. Employment opportunities for younger residents may be limited to low-wage service or retail jobs. Most residents of a bedroom community are employed in

larger cities or work in more developed suburbs nearby. Because the bedroom community collects few business taxes, residents are often forced to pay the brunt of the public operating budget in higher property or income taxes. This can lead municipalities scrambling to encourage commercial growth – often inappropriate – once an established residential base has been reached.

Fortunately, Windsor has many advantages not usually available to communities that fit within the “bedroom community” classification. It is strategically located with a regional airport that provides excellent access for both commercial and general aviation. For businesses and corporations looking for location opportunities, this is a big plus. The airport also enhances Windsor’s ability to capture more of the tourism market in Sonoma County.

Demographics also represent a huge economic opportunity for Windsor. Most communities are struggling with meeting the needs of an aging population, but Windsor has one of the youngest populations in the region. The Town’s residents largely represent citizens at the height of their earning power and consumer spending cycle. This demographic represents not



ISSUE NO. 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

only an opportunity for retail, but for encouraging entrepreneurship. Windsor has the potential for becoming a hot location for start up services and tech related businesses (Figures 18 & 19).

We are living in the experience economy. We are looking for something new, something exciting, something to entertain us. The fact that power centers and strip malls continue to be successful is because most of that shopping is necessity shopping rather than “Hey, I’m bored, let’s go Downtown” type shopping. Customers want to get their car close to the door of Wal-Mart or Home Depot, walk in the door and make their purchases (Figure 20). As anyone who has been to a big box store knows, they are not designed to be beautiful or entertaining.

Thus Downtown Windsor is an asset and represents business experience opportunity. Shopping districts hold a much greater meaning to communities beyond their fundamental role as places to exchange money for goods and services (Figure 21). With an innate need to meet and socialize, people naturally gather in business districts for a variety of both sanctioned and unsanctioned activities. The identity of a community can be caught up in shared experiences of the built environment. While Downtown Windsor has had its detractors, it is still a quality development and should be allowed to organically evolve as the Town Center for a new generation.

This is Windsor’s challenge: to maintain its identity as a family friendly community with the appropriate services and

amenities and direct its economic growth to meet the needs of that specific niche.

SWOT ANALYSIS

As part of the Windsor SDAT process, each group conducted an assessment of the Town’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, commonly referred to as a SWOT analysis. This process can be used as a framework to gather public input and to engage the public in thinking about the current economic condition and the economic opportunities for the future. The following table represents the results of the SWOT analysis in the economic section of the SDAT report.

The SWOT analysis asks four basic questions:

- What are the economic strengths of Windsor?
- What are the economic weaknesses of Windsor?
- What are the economic opportunities for Windsor?
- What are the threats and barriers to economic development and success in Windsor?

ISSUE NO. 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

STRENGTHS:

- Demographics
- Airport
- Wine Industry
- Agriculture
- Economic Strengths
- Community Values
- Commitment to alternative modes
- Gathering on Town Green
- Family Oriented
- Rural character

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Strategic location for corporate headquarters
- Recruit family-friendly activities and attractions
- Develop Old Redwood Highway family resort
- Create a wine center celebrating Sonoma County wineries
- "Brand" Windsor
- Encourage and support entrepreneurship
- Embrace local businesses: develop relationships with business owners and help each other grow and prosper.
- Expansion of arts and cultural offerings
- EcoTourism

WEAKNESSES:

- Perceived limited parking inventory
- Perception of retail instability
- Perception of difficult and costly development process
- Limited residential rentals
- Narrow retail mix
- Retail leakage
- Need for more jobs within Town limits

THREATS:

- Preserving the "feel" of the Old Redwood Highway
- Dependency on sales tax could negatively impact retail mix
- Loss of farmland to housing and vineyards
- Community values could drive business away
- Fee structure for development is too high
- Potential for downtown residents to negatively impact business downtown
- Potential for "cookie cutter" commercial and mixed use
- Potential to become nothing more than a parking lot for commuters once rail service is established



ISSUE NO. 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Accomplish these in the next 12 months in order to set the stage for future sustainable economic growth.

- 1. Rethink expectations and perceptions about retail and business-** Accept that retail is cyclical and that turnover is normal. Don't think of anchors as just big boxes or recognizable formula stores, but as attractions that draw traffic to a retail center. Powell's is an anchor for the downtown (Figure 22). So is the Town Green. Realize that parking is all about management, not inventory. There will NEVER be enough parking in the perceptions of some and remember that one of the core values of the community is to decrease dependency on the automobile.



- 2. Hire an ombudsman for the town to facilitate the development process-**

In some communities, this is called a "one stop shop", and one staff member facilitates the development process for the applicant. This is a very user friendly system and may be implemented utilizing existing staff. If you do create a position for this function, you might also consider it as "business liaison" for existing businesses. It is important for existing businesses to know

they have an advocate at Town Hall.

- 3. Actively pursue the relocation of the Children's Museum of the North Bay to Windsor-**

This is a perfect fit for your community brand and tourism efforts. Even though you have not yet formally developed your brand (that recommendation comes later), you do know that you are about families, children and tourism. With your strategic location you can make an offer to this attraction that they cannot refuse. Do not let this opportunity slip away! Secure active support from every aspect of the community from schools, social clubs, business organizations, industry, and government. Like they did for the SDAT, school children can draw visuals depicting the museum. Who could resist their efforts?



- 4. Work with local environmental groups to explore the possibilities for Eco-Tourism-** This region has all the assets necessary to capture tourists interested in bird watching, vineyard hikes, farm tours, honey,

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herbs, dairy and other sustainable agriculture practices. Work with local hotels to develop and market packages around these types of tours and activities.

MID-RANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

Accomplish these in the next 24 months and see real, physical changes in your community.

- 1. Curb retail leakage-** Retail leakage occurs when members of a community spend money outside that community or when money spent inside that community is transferred outside the community. In order to curb the steady seepage of consumer money out of Windsor, community members need the opportunity to satisfy their consumer needs by patronizing retail establishments located within the Town (Figure 23). A retail market analysis should be conducted to identify the existing gaps in Windsor's current retail market so that new retail opportunities that truly reflect the community's needs can be recognized and attracted.
- 2. Increase the availability of rental housing and office space.**
 - **Rental Housing-** A community with the demographics of Windsor needs more rental housing than is currently available in the community. Housing prices are high in the region and Windsor needs to find a way to encourage "starter" housing for young professionals and families. Nationally, this is not a great time to develop rental housing and in high priced land environments (such as northern California), it is even more chal-

lenging (Figure 24). But Windsor has sufficient housing inventory and with creative financing, conversion to rentals or "lease-purchase" is possible.

- **Office Space-** Downtown Windsor is a great mixed use project, but one component of the "mixed use" is notably absent: office space. Downtown employees contribute to the vitality and foot traffic in the district. Employees create expanded retail opportunities. In successful mixed use districts, office and professional service employees should occupy over 60% of the available square footage. Yes, it is true that retail follows rooftops, but Downtown Windsor needs more professional employees to enhance its vibrancy.

- 3. Develop a Marketing Plan for Economic Development-** In today's marketplace, a strong marketing plan can be a major influence to potential businesses in the site selection process. Windsor needs to develop a coordinated marketing effort that embodies the vision many of its residents and businesses have for both the present



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and future of the community. Initial concepts for the marketing plan require developing a brand for the community as a quaint, friendly, high quality family-focused community, which more residents and businesses choose to call home every day.

- Develop a “brand” for the community, identifying it as a high quality and family friendly community with ample room for commercial growth and an inviting business climate (Figure 25).
- Develop a Town Marketing Plan to coordinate complementary messages to key audiences.
 - Draw from stakeholder input received during creation of the Economic Development Strategy (currently in progress) as well as the SDAT process.



- Involve Town staff, the private sector, the Chamber of Commerce and citizen committees.
- Seek partnerships and grants to support implementation of the Marketing Plan.
- Use available media outlets in order to gain “free” marketing through the use of press releases and news stories which focus on quality of life, growth of residential and commercial sectors, local government innovation and willingness to partner

with private sector entities, and an inviting business climate.

- Reinforce the Town’s core strengths in marketing messages.
 - Name the infrastructures, facilities, services, telecommunications, cultural, landscape, and entertainment amenities Windsor has to offer as a Town and region.
 - Reinforce elements of quality of life and sustainable development in all strategies.

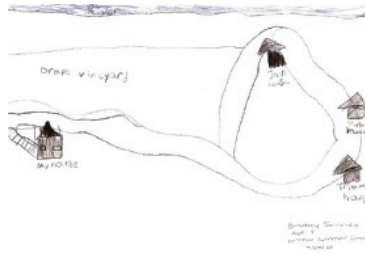
4. Capitalize on the tourism economy-

The demographics of Windsor, with its family friendly brand, do not necessarily fit the demographics of the typical wine country tourist. Most wine country tourists



don’t travel with their children and family centered activities and atmosphere are a big part of Windsor’s charm – and its identity. The community needs to develop tourism attractions that are directly targeted to reach families.

- Develop an attraction complementary to the Sonoma County Wine Country. Avoid the mindset of: “You’ve seen one vineyard, you’ve seen them all.” This statement could be sacrilege in Sonoma County, but Windsor has the opportunity to develop an attraction “beyond the vineyard.” This could
- be a discovery –type museum for families. It could offer adults hands on opportunities to experience the wine making process and feature activities for children to discover “fun” agriculture – like California’s Happy Cows. It could also



feature the broad agricultural history of the area and highlight the importance of food sources in a green economy. An adjacent retail shop could feature food products from the region. This could be a “family stop” for the wine tourist.

- Build a family-friendly roadside resort. To complement your new Sonoma County agricultural attraction, develop a family roadside resort evocative of the 50s and 60s. Build roadside cabins, or for something really different, use vintage Airstream trailers. Have a pool, a community center and a camp-like atmosphere (Figure 26). Offer wine country tours for the parents and daily supervised activities for the children. Make this fun and rather kitschy.

LONG-TERM AND ONGOING RECOMMENDATIONS

Incorporate these programs to ensure long term economic success for Windsor.

1. Develop and Implement a Business Incubator Program- The Town should promote industrial and commercial growth in Windsor through the development and implementation of a business incubator program. An incubator is a building, which can be divided into smaller units of space to be leased by small businesses. An incubator is also a program without

infrastructure in which participants avail themselves of business development services to assist in the growth of their start-up businesses. In addition to the space, incubators provide business development services for use by tenants and participants. These services should include, but are not limited to, financial consulting assistance, management and marketing assistance, business education and physical services such as personal computers, copiers, facsimile machines, conference rooms, labs, etc. Because of the shared services and efficient use of available space, costs are usually much less than for a small business operating independently. The incubator is not intended to be a permanent home for the new firm. After a period determined by the incubator’s policy, a tenant will move from the incubator, thereby making room available in the incubator for a new start-up firm.

- Identify and secure funding sources for the implementation of the program.
- Secure title on a facility for the program or a lease of a facility for the program for at least ten (10) years.
- Manage the physical development of the incubator facility.
- Furnish and equip the program and identify eligible tenants and participants.
- Market the program and secure eligible tenants and participants.
- Provide financial consulting, marketing and management assistance services or arrange for

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Bianca Orozco
Age: 6
Super Summer Camp
7/31/08

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the provision of these services for tenants and participants of the incubator.

- Set rental and service fees.
- Encourage the sharing of ideas between tenants and participants and otherwise aid tenants and participants in an innovative manner while they are within the incubator.
- Establish policies and criteria for the acceptance, graduation and termination of occupancy of tenants and participants to maximize the opportunity to succeed for the greatest number of tenants.

2. Establish and Apply Incentive Utilization Guidelines-

The Town should develop Incentive Utilization Guidelines to encourage new development and enhance existing businesses expansion plans. Business growth requires continued public and private investment and strategic use of existing capital resources. For Windsor to continue to grow, proactive public policies, targeted financial incentives and specific strategies are necessary to maximize potential. Assistance should be focused on areas that will most directly broaden Windsor's economic base. The use of financial incentives to entice certain companies to relocate and/or expand to another place is appropriate if the business brings an expanded customer base, new shoppers and/or a high degree of name recognition within the region. Common financial incentives are: assistance with relocation costs; waiving or discounting local permit fees; sponsoring public finance options for improvements; and/or granting partial property tax abatement. More specifically,

- Financial incentives should be targeted to those market niches in which the Town currently falls short of its fair share, such as office tenants (Figure 27).
- Tax and other financial incentives to attract and/or expand businesses should be evaluated on the amount of private investment and the number of new jobs created.
- The Town should consider directly tying the amount and duration of incentives in manufacturing and professional and technical services to the wage rates in order to maximize the benefit to the Town's income figures. When considering the use of financial incentives, it is important to publicize availability to the targeted industries. It is also important to keep the public well informed throughout the consideration process of the real cost and projected benefits of each potential project. Financial incentives have become the norm in the world of economic development and the judicious use of incentives will enable Windsor's economy to continue to grow and prosper.
- Identify funding sources for community enhancement projects that promote tourism, cultural activities, arts, entertainment, education, research, multipurpose facilities, libraries, mass transit and museums.
- Identify funding sources for job creation projects that promote business locations or expansions



ISSUE NO. 4: ENERGY & GREEN RESOURCES

ENERGY ASSESSMENT

Energy issues are a key element of any town planning. With the cost of conventional energy rising and technology advancing for alternative energy solutions, the integration of an energy plan is crucial. As Windsor identified in its application for the SDAT process, a key goal is to emphasize sustainable thinking and solutions. The town has already implemented many alternative energy solutions, particularly in the area of photovoltaic solar power. To maximize efficient use of energy and reduce dependency on traditional power resources, a twofold approach is suggested:

1. Reduce demand by encouraging and mandating high efficiency for homes and businesses.
2. Provide realistic alternatives for conventional energy production (Figure 28).

Connectivity and transportation are key elements to address reduced demand. Economy and livability encourage use of and provide opportunity for alternative energy applications. Sustainable use of energy revolves around the integration of all aspects of this analysis (Figure 29).

SWOT ANALYSIS

Due to the nature of this issue, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis completed during the review process was slightly altered and focused primarily on strength and opportunities. In the analysis a number of items surfaced. Some of these items are already addressed in the application.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES- ENERGY

STRENGTHS:

- Excellent potential for renewable and alternative energy
- Abundant sunshine- excellent solar power potential
- Excellent geothermal potential
- Existing green building mindset
- Strong community support and involvement
- Local government leadership

WEAKNESSES:

- PG&E- Net metering
- Limited local incentives for energy conversion
- Financing challenges for energy improvements
- Plan to reduce carbon footprint



Solar energy is a very strong resource for the Town of Windsor. Some PV systems are already installed throughout the city and additional plants, such as the current project at the Public Works Building, are already in motion. Windsor is clearly aware of this resource. Most challenges to maximizing implementation of the use of solar collectors, whether PV or water heating, are related to funding. Underused alternatives include Geothermal and Wind generators.

ISSUE NO. 4: ENERGY & GREEN RESOURCES

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are presented in four general categories:

- The Big Picture - Regional Resources
- Smaller Scale - Local Features
- What you can do- Individual Experience
- Recourses- Practices & Programs

Regional Resources

To minimize the impact of rising utility costs, Windsor has an excellent opportunity to incorporate alternative energy. Rather than importing energy from PG&E or another remote production site, a mixed portfolio energy plant in the center of the town should be considered. A possible site could be a portion of the Windsorland property located along Old Red. As evidenced by the national data maps, the opportunities for solar, geothermal and wind power are excellent (Figure 30).

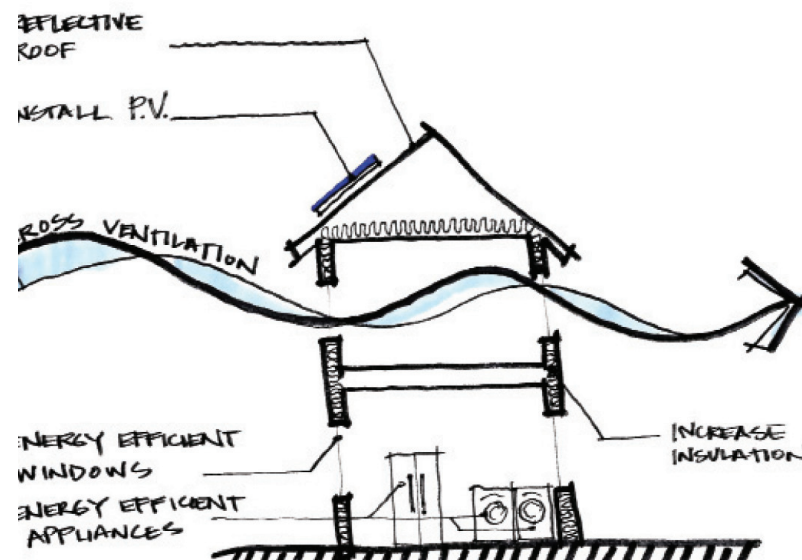
The suggested portfolio may include the following:

- Solar Concentration
- Photovoltaic
- Geothermal
- Wind
- LP gas
- Biomass

An alternative to a centralized local energy plant is the creation of a town-wide grid. Photovoltaic energy production supplemented by some wind turbines are the predominate resources for this solution. The energy grid will require a central collector that will store, distribute and circulate the energy. Every residence and business will serve as a particle of the larger grid and feed into the collector when overpro-

ducing based on its own consumption. Key to the success of this solution is the implementation of a funding plan to allow for all residents to install collectors on their property. Businesses should also be included in this endeavor.

The establishment of a local farm may also be extended into water conservation. With a growing demand for water coupled with reduced resources, Windsor has an opportunity to control and enhance the current availability of water to their residents. Water can also be integrated as part of the energy plant in the form of hydrogen. As hydrogen is not power producing, but rather a power storing and distributing method, the valuable resource, water, can serve the city on many levels. It is recommended that a comprehensive utility plan be developed.



Another opportunity to connect into a town-wide grid are integrated wind farms. Energy generating turbines would have to be selected for an appropriate windspeed. For example, for less than 12 mph winds a triple 10ft blade can produce an average of 3 kWh per day output. These turbines could be scattered throughout the town. A single turbine in combination with some solar panels would likely supply any single residence. Looking at the Old Red Corridor, there is an opportunity to locate turbines along Highway 101. The design of future developments between Old Red and 101 would have to be considered and addressed to maintain positive airflow.

Local Features

On a smaller scale, the development and implementation of local features can enable the community to further its understanding of sustainable practice and energy and water savings. These projects also allow residents to fully understand the cost involved in bringing varying features back to their home or business. A detailed cost and purchase list could be a part of the exhibit. Programs can serve as destinations for residents and visitors as well as educational opportunities for teenagers and adults alike (Figure 31).

Furthermore, these programs may be implemented town wide to reduce overall energy demand. Solar street lighting is a simple solution to include into the city's future budget in order to gradually replace the current lighting system. Solar poles could be installed at the new soccer fields. These features are not limited to the technical installation but rather present an opportunity for design integration. Involving the design community can showcase the integration of alterna-

tive energy concepts into gateways, shading devices or community centers. Some of these programs could include:

- Electric vehicle program
- Electric vehicle preferred parking and charging stations throughout town
- Solar street lighting (Figure 32)
- Solar pole lighting – eg. soccer fields
- Solar water heater
- Green roof
- Photovoltaic system
- Public /community pool
- Construction projects

As an example, the electric vehicle program noted above presents an excellent opportunity to showcase application of this resource. By connecting with available electric vehicle lease programs, the town, with matching local incentives, can further encourage the transition to environmentally preferable vehicles. Integrating preferred parking in the town center as well as at key structures, such as schools and government buildings, in combination with charging stations, will make the use of these vehicles very appealing to residents and visitors alike.

Individual Experience

On the individual scale, the Town of Windsor has an opportunity to improve on resident programs and awareness. There are currently a number of incentives and programs available, of which many residents are not aware. Involving the residents may be achieved through the above referenced demonstration projects and the creation of a sustainable office and officer. To further increase the level of energy and water savings

ISSUE NO. 4: ENERGY & GREEN RESOURCES

as well as improved indoor air quality and resource reduction, additional programs are encouraged. Purchasing guidelines and matched incentives or tax credits will guide residents to further improve their own environment while contributing to the overall goal of the Town of Windsor.

- Residential energy and utility upgrades
- Install PV systems
- Install Solar Water heaters
- Use reflective insulating exterior paint
- Upgrade Appliances to Energy Star
- Replace fixtures with low flow options
- Replace W.C. to dual flush
- Increase insulation
- Replace windows with energy efficient options
- Replace roof with high reflective material such as metal
- Consider cross ventilation by design
- Install geothermal energy system

Resources

The Town of Windsor is already aware of a number of energy saving methods and alternative energy sources. There are a number of incentives already available to the Town as well as the state. Windsor has a unique opportunity to push the envelope and truly take a leading role in the alternative energy market and become even more of a destination for national and international research.

To get the entire community involved in actively pursuing sustainable practices, the establishment of a sustainable resource center and a sustainable officer is suggested. During

the SDAT process, a weakness surfaced with regards to the sharing of available information between the Town and state agencies. By creating a go-to location and an available and accessible expert, the community will have a clear path to gather information and obtain assistance. Additionally, this office could locate and organize funding and other events to move Windsor into the leading position it envisions itself to be. Programs to be developed or expanded may include:

- Town supported residential upgrade programs
- Create best practice energy use guide
- Incentives for solar power system installation
- Solar power lease programs

Finally, Windsor may want to grow relationships with other green building and alternative energy organizations. Some are listed below:

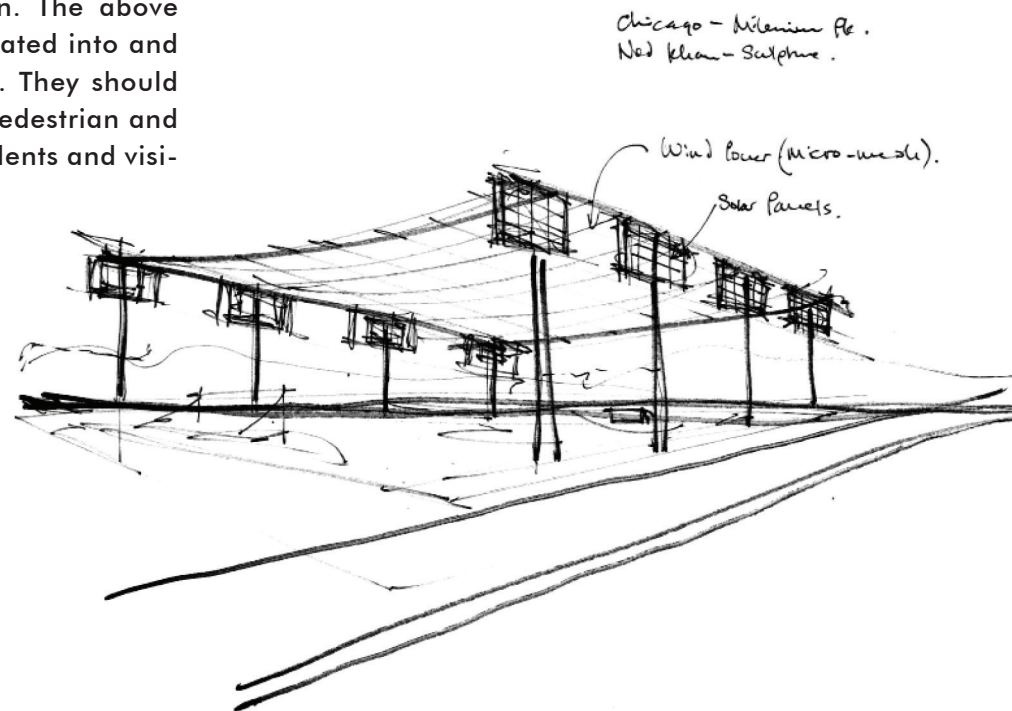
- Climate Smart Initiative (partner with PG&E)
- EPA - Energy Star & Water Sense
- US Green Building Council – LEED
- AIA Sustainability 2030
- Architecture 2030
- Built It Green – Green Points
- RE-Green – residential remodeling (www.regreenprogram.org)
- Smart growth (www.smarthgrowth.org / www.epa.gov/smartgrowth)
- Clinton Initiative
- Green Roofs (www.greenroofs.org)
- Sustainable Communities Network

MOVING FORWARD

Energy is a valuable resource. As such, it represents a business opportunity for the public and private sectors: from the virtual value of the energy created to the materials needed to produce it to the labor required to install it. By taking a leadership role as a town, Windsor can enable its government and residents to provide a service to itself as well as the region as the resource for alternative energy information, production and service.

Energy projects need to be enfolded into the general routine, presence, and development of the town. The above referenced display projects should be incorporated into and assist with the overall feel of the town center. They should be located in a manner to further encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic and provide destinations for residents and visitors alike.

Another suggestion to connect with economic issues is a suggested showcase or annual event that will highlight the progress of sustainable initiatives, present and planned, and make Windsor a destination for alternative and renewable energy research. This could take form in a conference or open air exhibit and, again, tie into the suggested demonstration projects.



ISSUE NO. 5: LIVABILITY, HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS



ISSUE NO. 5: LIVABILITY, HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

LIVABILITY DEFINITION

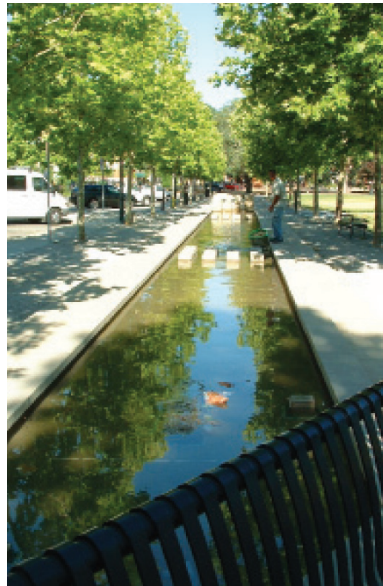
“Livability” encompasses several issues in a community. In short, it is those characteristics that make an area more than just a place to reside. Windsor has many enviable elements that contribute to its livability. During the team visit, the livability issues that emerged were neighborhoods, housing, connections, schools and amenities.

LIVABILITY ASSESSMENT

Strengths

Windsor enjoys a comfortable climate and natural beauty. The built environment is for the most part very well executed. The newer subdivisions show a variety of housing designs and for a certain price point, there are numerous choices. Windsor also has taken a strong stand in developing affordable housing for low income residents.

The town took the bold step in developing a downtown with a Town Green to create a central focal point for the community. On several occasions, the SDAT team was able to experience the green’s popularity firsthand. The design and programming aspect seem to be effective in bringing people together on a regular basis (Figure 33).



Despite some challenges (which will be outlined in a subsequent section), it was very clear from team discussions with Windsor citizens that the quality of education in the area is a point of pride.

Finally, an all-encompassing strength of Windsor is the overall civic atmosphere of the town. There is a very palpable positive “vibe” present within the town, and team members experienced this tangible town enthusiasm throughout the visit. People are very proud of Windsor, and are very active and vocal about its future and potential.

Weaknesses

Housing- There are two aspects to the current housing situation in Windsor. From a review of property values and online listings, it appears that there are many choices for higher income families. Conversely, there has been a strong effort to provide housing opportunities for low income families. However, there are very few options for middle income families. That means service industry employees, entry level professionals, etc. must travel from outside communities into Windsor for work.



ISSUE NO. 5: LIVABILITY, HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

This subsequently creates a bifurcated community of two extremes, which can lead to a number of community issues.

The second element of the housing situation is the current downturn in the market. Online listings show a very high number of houses on the market, a growing foreclosure rate, and a remarkably long selling period for those units currently on the market.

Neighborhood Connectivity & Cohesion- Much of Windsor's recent growth (1980's to the present) can be attributed to a collection of subdivisions. Individually, these are tastefully developed with nicely designed houses. However, the team heard several comments about the need to create a stronger sense of community at the neighborhood level. Not only was it observed that there is little interaction between subdivisions, but there is apparently little interaction within most developments as well (Figure 34).

Jobs- The team heard repeatedly that 75% of Windsor works outside of town. This puts several stresses on the community: there is the environmental stress of so many people in their cars leaving for someplace else every day and then returning; there are family stresses inherent with a pattern of parents away from the community and their children during the day; the consumption of time associated with the journey to and from work also limits the availability of volunteer time for things like youth sports, civic clubs and other activities that support and enhance a community.

The School System- The school system is a strong asset to Windsor; however, the current physical distribution of grade levels generates a great deal of stress for the town. The advantages of having all of the students progressing together as one cohort were consistently praised. But the transportation demands on families, especially those with children at different schools, were repeatedly cited as difficult (Figure 35). The traffic issue this system generates affects more than just the families in Windsor with school age children. It also impacts public safety. It was reported that traffic is so bad during the times parents are dropping off and picking up kids that public safety personnel must have alternative routes ready in case fire, police and other emergency services are needed.

Opportunities

There are two major opportunities that Windsor can use to its advantage, the first is the current downturn in the housing market. When housing markets are strong and there is a demand for rapid development, it is difficult to find the opportunity to evaluate the overall housing market. Although it is distressing for those facing foreclosure or the prolonged time to sell a house, Windsor can use this time of pause to have a thoughtful community discussion about the housing issue and develop strategies to encourage more housing opportunities for moderate incomes.

ISSUE NO. 5: LIVABILITY, HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Perhaps the greatest opportunity is having this discussion. It is very brave of a community to open itself up to evaluation. It is braver still to use recommendations as a starting point to move forward on many issues that will only enhance Windsor's overall livability.

Threats

The greatest threat to Windsor is inaction. City Halls all across the country have bookshelves filled with wonderfully prepared plans, beautiful designs and insightful reports that are doomed to remain on the shelf. There has already been a good bit of community investment in the issues addressed within this SDAT report. Now the hard work of finding the political will to move beyond talking about issues and towards developing and implementing strategies to address them must take place (Figure 36).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustaining the livability of a community doesn't just happen by accident. It requires keeping an eye on what is working, protecting the assets that make a community livable, and taking steps (sometimes bold ones) to work on what isn't.

- 1. Keep talking-** It was clear to the team that Windsor has an energetic, enthusiastic and engaged citizenry. Many towns would



love to have the level of involvement that Windsor experiences. This community is obviously determined and inventive. Any community that can create a new downtown clearly has the initiative to tackle tough issues (Figure 37).

- 2. Develop a Comprehensive Housing Strategy and create the mechanism to fund it-**
 - Address a broad range of housing price points.
 - Initiate a regional discussion on housing issues.
 - Investigate and remove barriers to mixed use and mixed income developments.
 - Encourage mixed income developments vs. focusing on low income housing units.
 - Look at using some of the 20% Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds for moderate income / work force housing.
 - A great resource in California is the city of San Jose, which has had a successful inclusionary housing program for several years.
- 3. Encourage / Sponsor Neighborhood Building Activities-** Windsor does an admirable job of programming activities for the town, especially at the Town Green. Similar activities should be encouraged at the neighborhood level to help build connections in and between subdivisions. A first step could involve sending a delegation of elected officials and neighborhood leaders to the annual Neighborhoods

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USA conference, which is the nation's only national conference dedicated specifically to neighborhood issues. Some suggestions from the public discussions during the team visit include:

- Block parties
- A mobile recreation unit (similar to a mobile library) (Figure 38)
- Community Gardens (Figure 39)
- Community Watch
- CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams)

- 4. Address the school issue directly-** It is abundantly clear that the school system is highly valued (Figure 40). It is also clear that the transportation issues caused by the current system are problematic for



families and the community at large (Figure 41). It seems there are two choices: either keep the current system and develop more creative ways of addressing the demand for parents to drive, or revert to a more traditional neighborhood school model. There are several existing programs that address the former, such as Walking School Bus and Safe Routes to School. If the latter option is deemed more favorable, Windsor should still focus on encouraging

walking and biking to school to reduce the impact on student drop-off and pick-up traffic.

- 5. Keep talking to teenagers** (Figure 42)-

One issue that emerged in discussions throughout the visit was drug use among middle and high school age students. Although this information is anecdotal, it is still disturbing. Several of

the Windsor's younger citizens cited the lack of acceptable activities for their age group. They also indicated the presence of problems at the skate park because of its lack of visibility; it creates an opportunity for drugs sales and use, thereby limiting its attractiveness and use.



RESOURCES

There are a number of existing resources that Windsor can draw upon to help tackle these issues:

American Planning Association www.planning.org

American Institute of Architects www.aia.org

Smart Growth America www.smartgrowthamerica.org

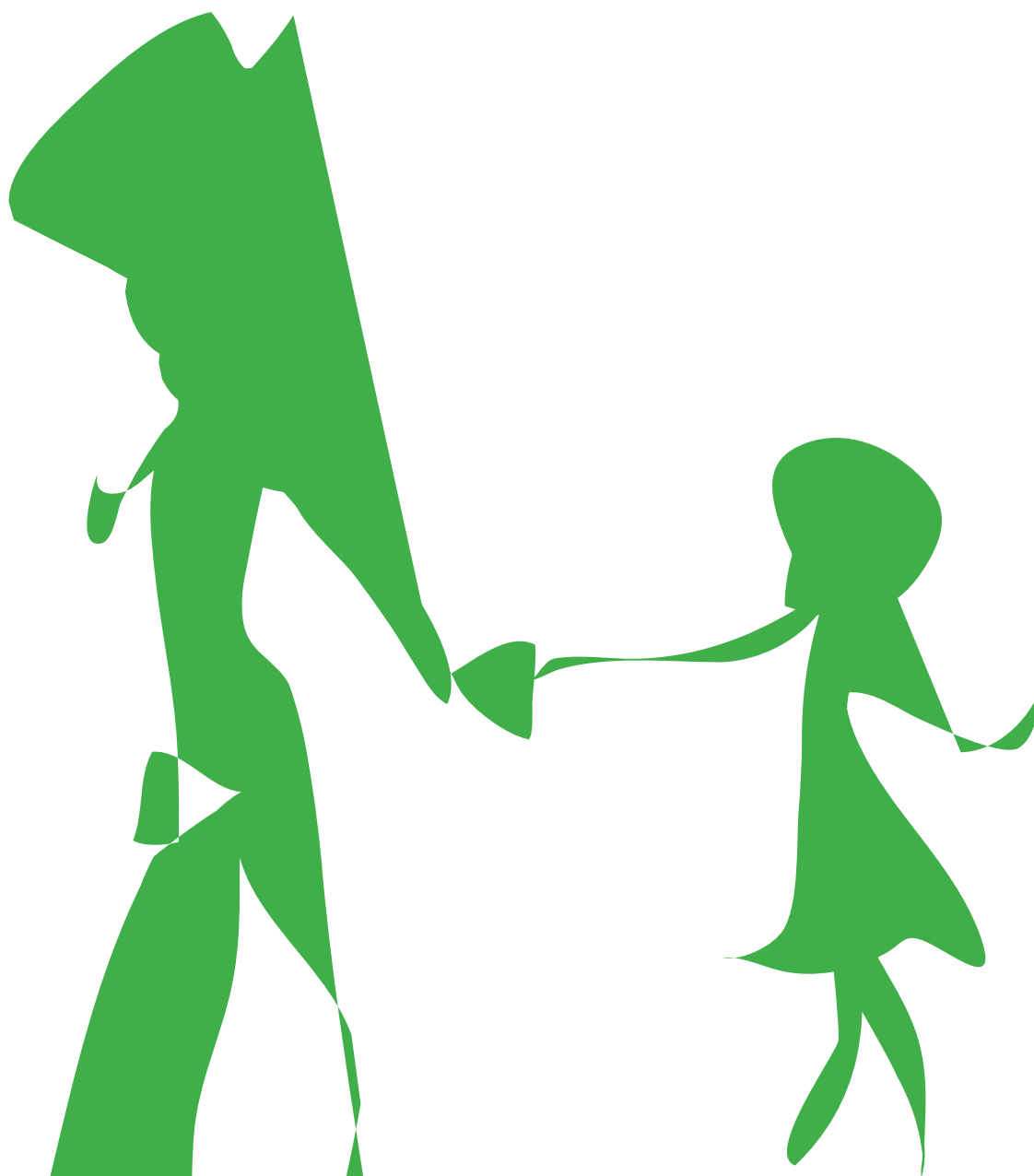
Neighborhoods USA www.NUSA.org

City of San Jose www.sanjoseca.gov

NeighborWorks America www.nw.org

Local Government Commission www.lgc.com

MOVING FORWARD



The SDAT process is one that engages the community to assess where it has been, where it is now, and where it is headed. The three-day charrette helped to reaffirm and reinforce the core values of the community as well as reengage its commitment and direction by suggesting a roadmap to sustainability as it moves forward. Four themes emerged through the SDAT discussions:

- Preserve the past and protect its resources
- Embrace and enhance both existing resources and future developments
- Recapture and regenerate
- Move from the ordinary into the extraordinary

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations summarize key points brought to the forefront by the interactive discussions and team evaluation. While they represent only a tiny fraction of the various opportunities Windsor has for future sustainable growth, they represent important steps that the team feels the community should undertake in both the short-term and long-term future.



Immediate Action

- Conduct a Windsor-specific market analysis
- Encourage neighborhood building activities at the neighborhood level
- Enhance community discussion
- Talk to the kids
- Install solar street lights
- Create sustainability office and officer
- Slow traffic – re-stripe roads, add texture to roadbeds, and modify speed limits

Short Term Action

- Improve, connect, and extend bike and pedestrian routes



MOVING FORWARD

- Enhance all “gateway” experiences
- Broaden pedestrian experiential elements
- Create new connections between and among destinations and neighborhoods
- Undertake a “Windsor Branding” process
- Focus efforts on moderate income price points
- Address commuting issues with schools
- Enact a PV lease program
- Create sustainable demonstration projects, both small and large

Long Term Actions

- Linear park development along Old Red
- Expand commuter rail to serve all day, every day (Figure 43)
- Create an alternative energy farm
- Improve sustainable incentives and local tax credits
- Encourage mixed income and mixed use development
- Conduct a visual assessment of region and cultural easements
- Embrace and support local businesses
- Celebrate Windsor and all that it means

The work of the SDAT represents a snapshot in time – it is by no means the end, nor is it the beginning. Windsor is well on its way to a sustainable future through its committed community and dedicated leadership. Like the town’s symbolic oak, Windsor has a strong, sturdy, and enduring posture, but is equally dependent on the synthesis of local resources for continued support and sustenance.

The SDAT Team commends the Town of Windsor and its efforts to date, and looks forward to meeting and monitoring its progress as it begins to “walk the walk” and charts its path on the sustainable journey ahead.



NEXT STEPS

Keep the full community involved: Continue to seek all voices to participate in the processes of decision making. Many people from many different backgrounds participated in the SDAT process, but it was noted that others will not come out to public meetings. Find ways to reach out and engage more of the community for input and acceptance of the sustainability principles ultimately made part of the town's overall plan (Figure 44).

Focus on Long Term Sustainability: Think beyond today to see the Windsor of future generations, not just the immediate needs of today.

Use the AIA for SDAT Follow up: The AIA staff and team leader of the SDAT are available for follow up support in the form of phone calls, additional information if available, and a follow up visit in Fall of 2009. Take advantage of these resources to help leverage and move forward the good work that has been started here.

Web sites: www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS075265

Email: sdatt@aia.org

Address: The American Institute of Architects
Center for Communities by Design
1735 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292





www.aia.org

Sustainable Design Assessment Team

Appendix A
Drawings, Photographs and
Sketches

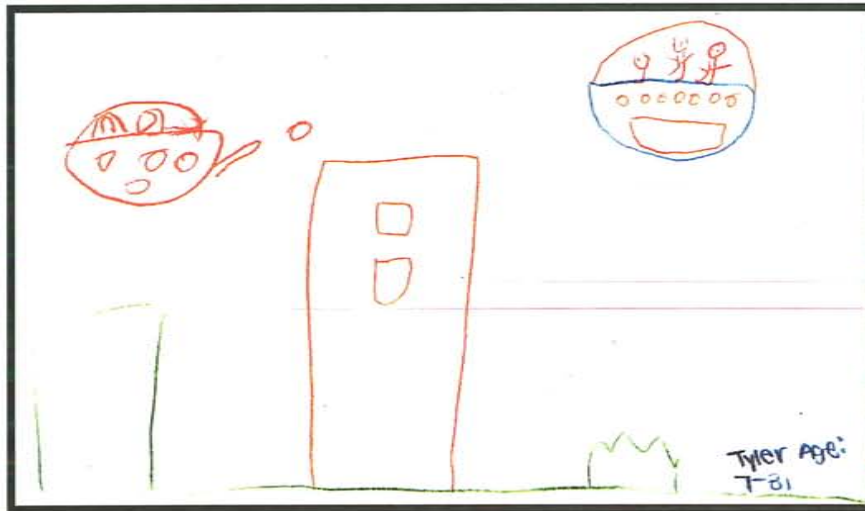


Figure 1



Figure 2

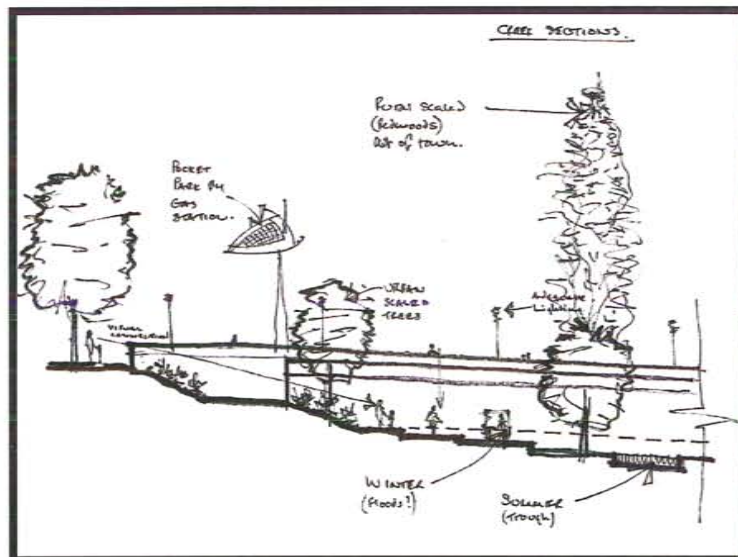


Figure 3

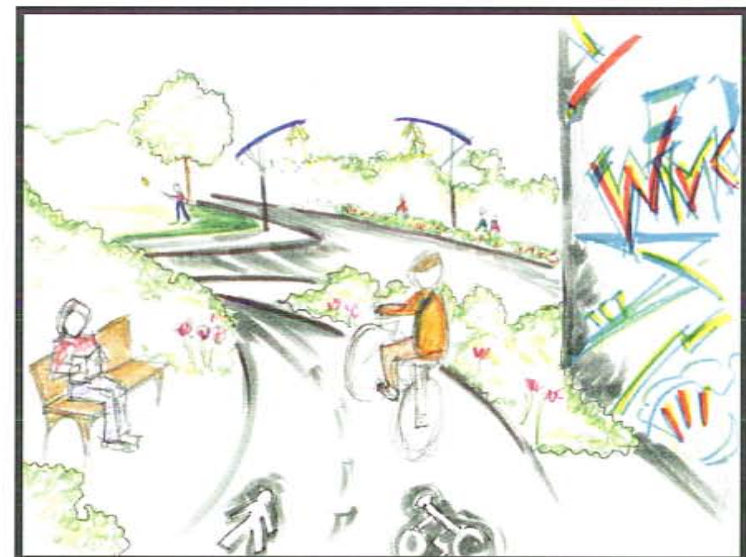


Figure 4

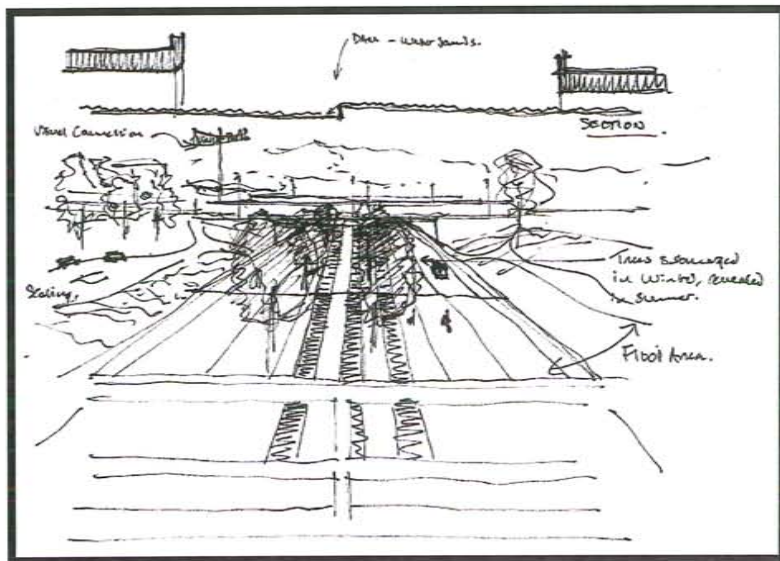


Figure 5

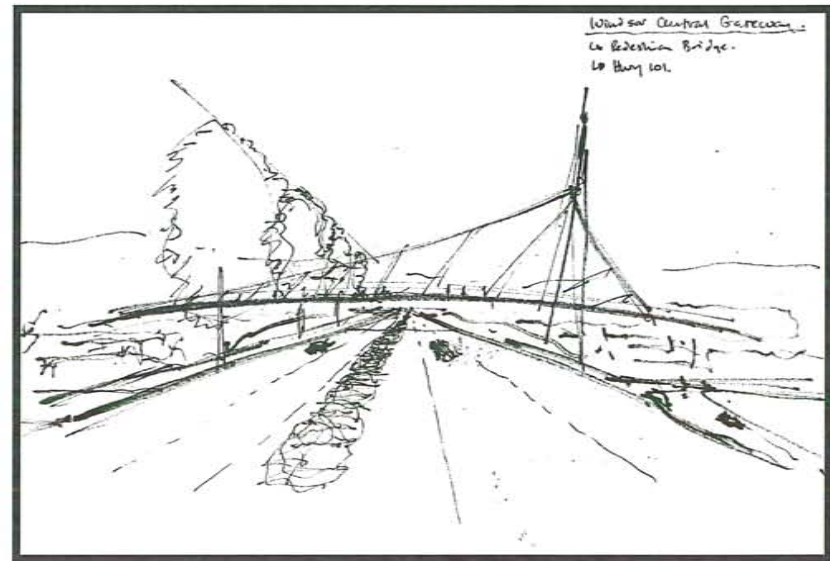


Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

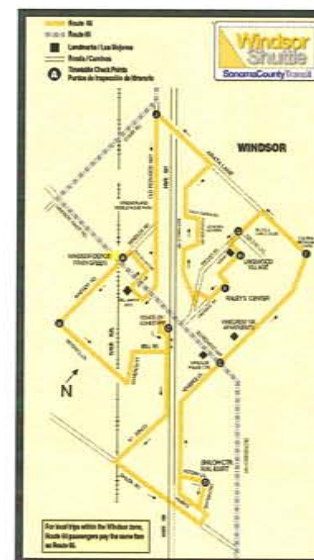


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

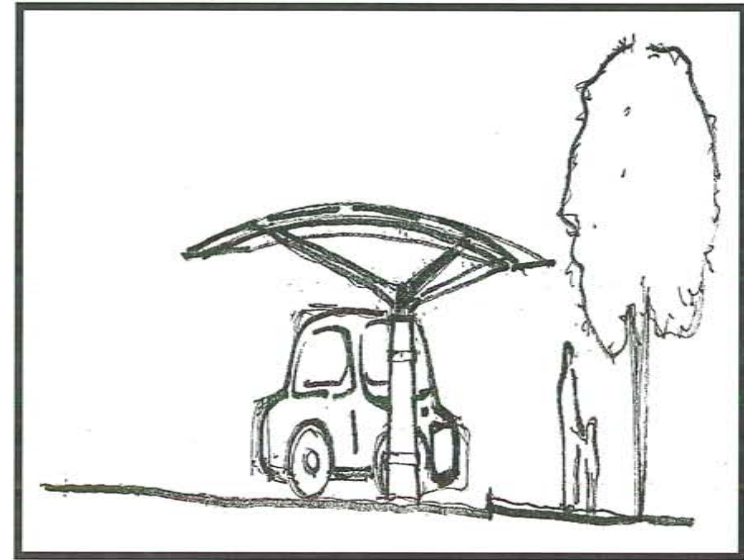


Figure 14



Figure 15

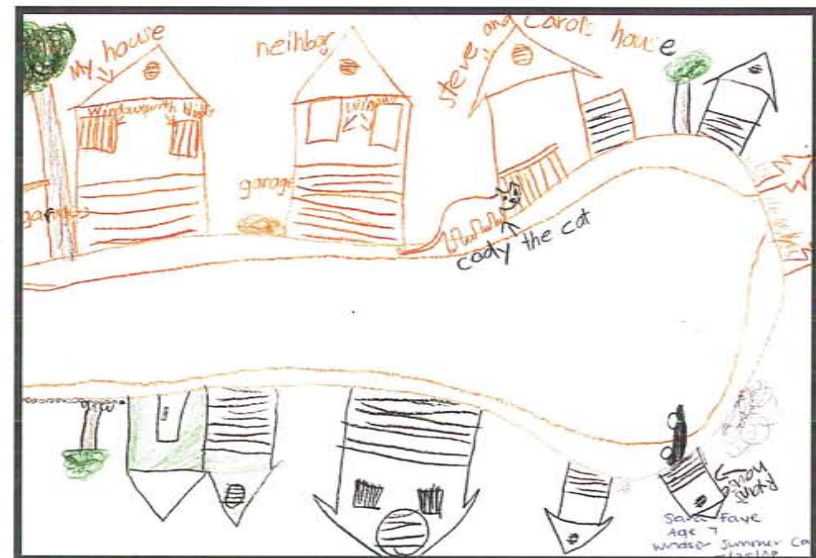


Figure 16

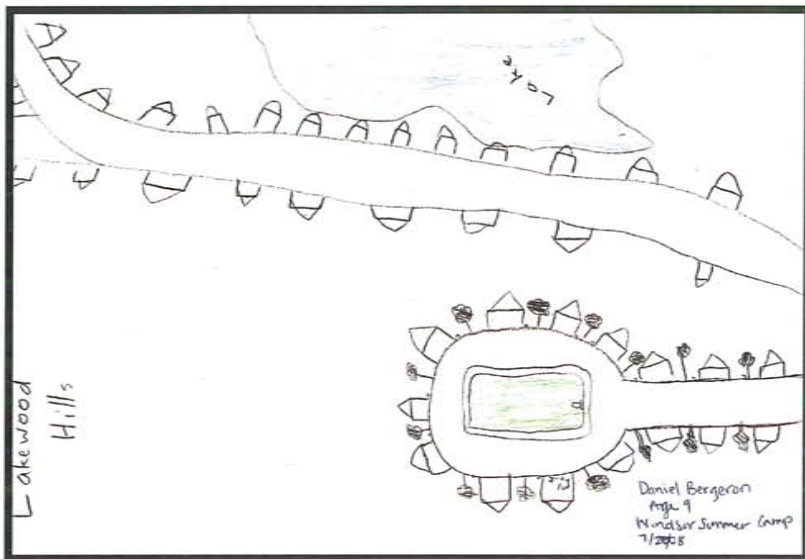


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

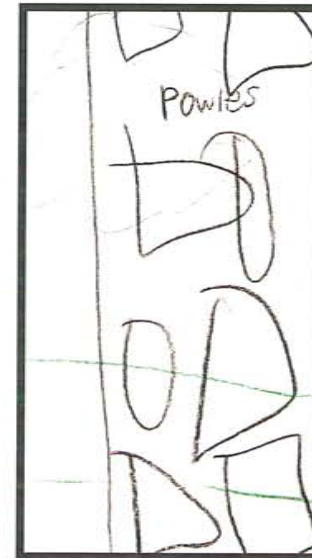


Figure 22

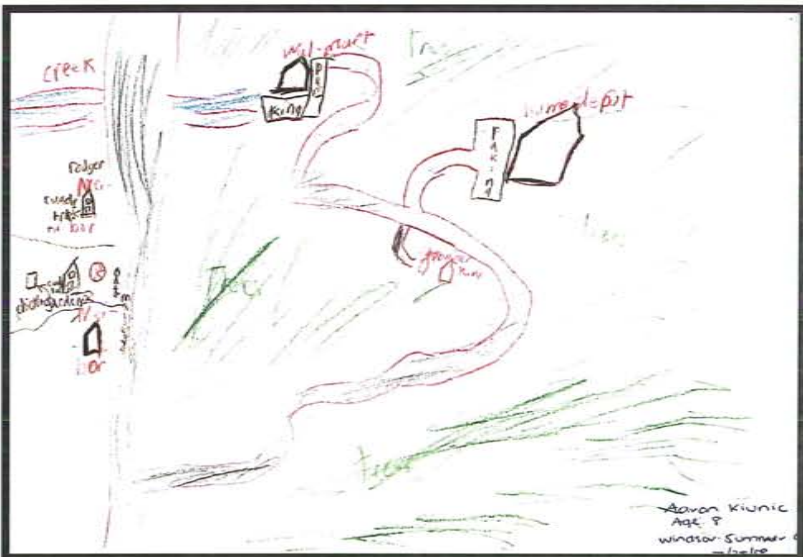


Figure 23

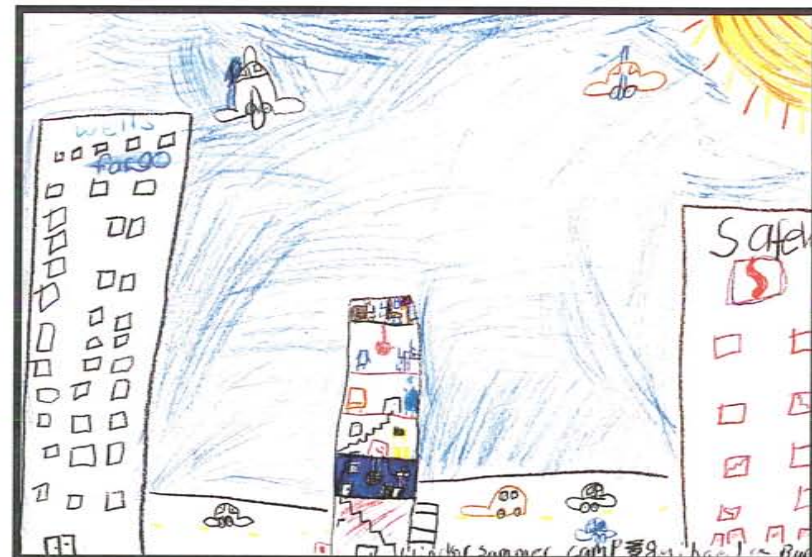


Figure 24

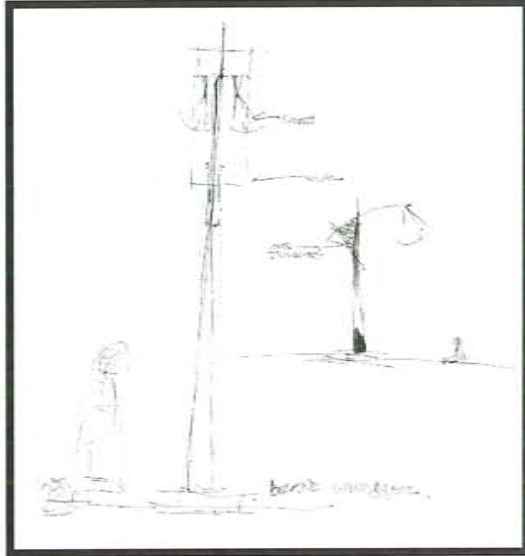


Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27

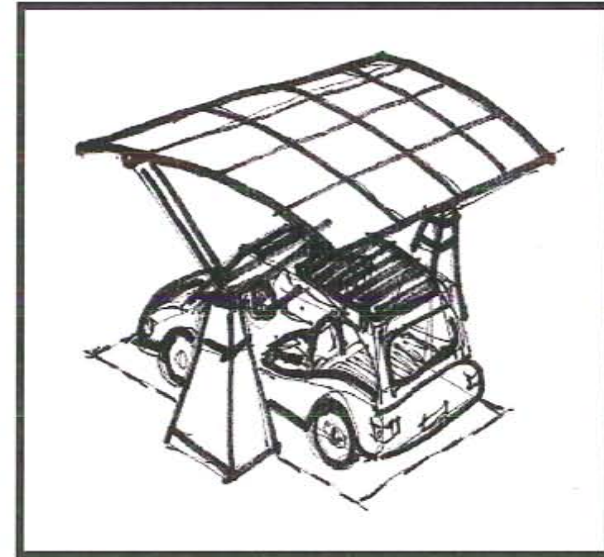


Figure 28



Figure 29

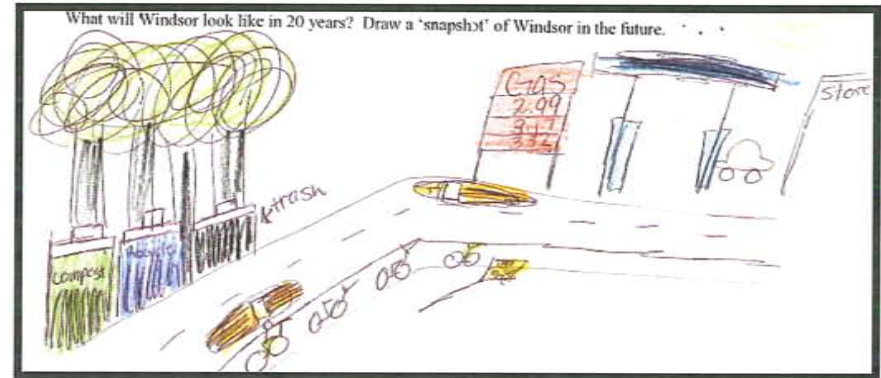


Figure 30

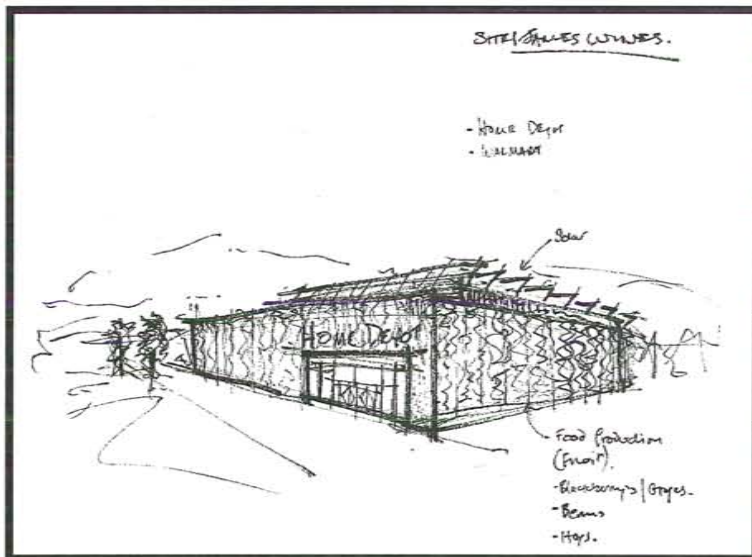


Figure 31

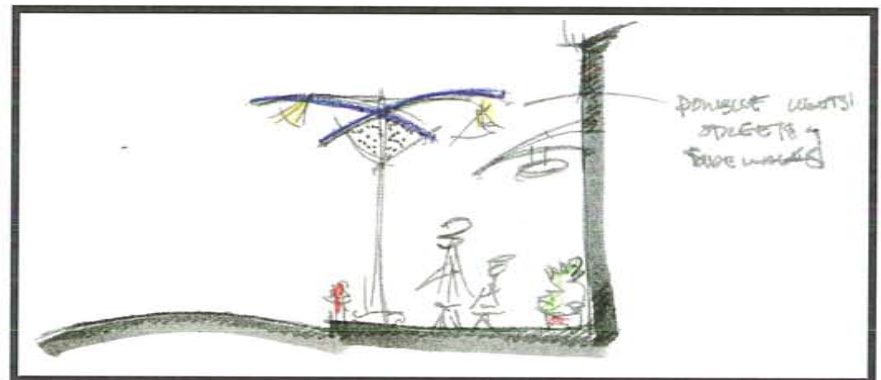


Figure 32

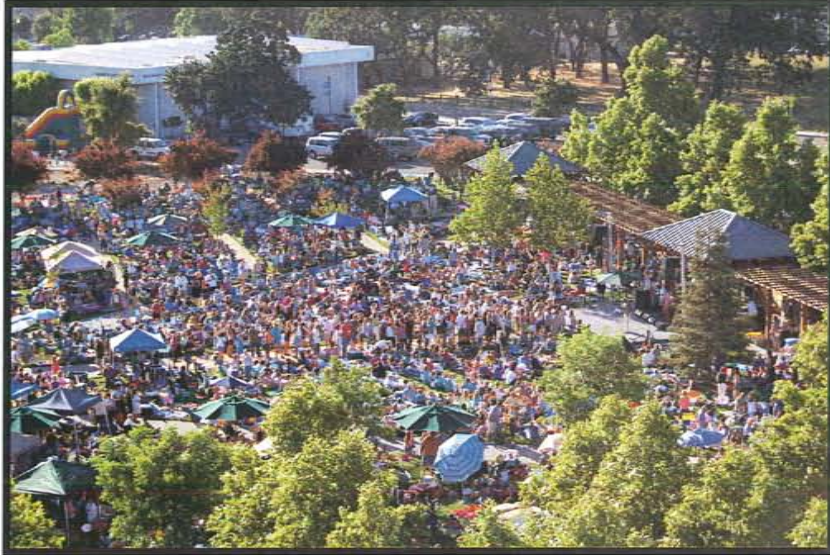


Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44