

The following email was sent on March 29th from El Cerrito resident and NFABSD Research Chair, Danna Givot, to Council President Sean Elo-Rivera, members of his staff, Heidi Von Blum, Deputy Director of the Planning Department, San Diego Planning Department College Area Community Planners Nathen Causman and Shannon Mulderig, and District 9 community leaders.

March 29, 2022

Sean, Heidi, Nathen and Shannon:

I took the liberty of submitting the College Area Community Plan [Survey](#) released this week to a colleague with a Ph.D. who has spent 40 years professionally writing and conducting surveys, teaching others to write and evaluate surveys, authoring books about writing surveys, analyzing survey results, etc. He was kind enough to do an analysis of the College Area Community Plan online survey and share his thoughts with us.

I am sharing his professional observations (below) on the survey, its shortcomings and limitations, as well as a readability analysis he ran (attached) on two of the individual pages of the survey. All of the reviewer's comments are in bold italics below so they can be easily distinguished from what I have written. These comments were provided without compensation, so there was no incentive for the reviewer to reach a particular conclusion to earn a fee. The reviewer was exposed to the original plan presentation after viewing the survey so he would have some understanding of what it was he had been exposed to - after the fact.

The survey violates principles of good survey design in the following important ways. All have the potential to skew results and limit confidence in any obtained responses.

Task demands are too high for an average person who is unfamiliar with the kinds of plans and 3-D drawings presented.

Assumes that individuals possess the skills to interpret maps and related visuals such as aerial views. This assumption is quite doubtful given that those at the initial presentation of these materials were confused in spite of having the ability to have questions answered in real time.

Language is very dense and difficult. See two attached readability analyses of the text on the introductory page and "Overview of Focus Areas Page" These representative pages are generally rated as "difficult" or "extremely difficult" to read.

Only binary preference choices are allowed. This is very likely to skew results as it eliminates the response options of: "approaches are viewed the same (no preference)" and "neither approach is

preferred." Additionally, there is no way to distinguish individuals who select an option because it is "enthusiastically preferred" versus "this is the less evil alternative."

There are methodological problems that are likely to skew results and limit confidence in the outcome.

The survey can be taken multiple times by one individual.

Not all individuals in the sample universe received the survey.

Significant amounts of scrolling will discourage careful reading and response.

There is nothing on the homepage to promise confidentiality, which will discourage response and skew the results.

Demographic options do not allow disentangling numbers of years worked versus lived in the area.

The data is suspect because the survey asks the respondent to take the point of view of an expert. As a result, it is unclear whether the responses represent what one would expect an expert to say versus one's personal opinion.

The descriptions and visuals do not address any potential impacts of the proposed plans and, as a result, respondents are basing their responses on incomplete information.

The assessment of the survey speaks for itself. It will be unhelpful in evaluating what the College Area Community wants. The cover page that was online temporarily (perhaps it is still there from some links) "Pick Your Future" was/is totally inaccurate as the two choices provided may very well not be a future anyone in the College Area would pick for themselves or their community. Further, people from anywhere in the world can fill out this survey, so while College Area residents might be picking a plan for their community, anyone filling out the survey from outside the area will be picking OUR FUTURE COMMUNITY, not theirs.

I suspect you will persist with this survey, regardless of its shortcomings, probable skewed results and low confidence levels. Nonetheless, please be informed that the community is well aware of the poor quality of this survey, the fact that it was rushed to the field before the community had answers to the questions it raised about these two plans, and that the TWO PLANS YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO TEST DO NOT REFLECT THE VISIONS OR PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED BY THE COMMUNITY in its 2020 document. Basically, you are asking the community to pick its poison.

Neither of these plans PROTECTS THE INTEGRITY OF THE COMMUNITY'S SINGLE FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS, and that is what the community asked for. The community also asked you to MEET THE COMMUNITY'S FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS BY ADDING RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE DENSITY ALONG THE COMMUNITY'S MAJOR CORRIDORS AND AT THE THREE MAIN INTERSECTIONS (NODES). The Adequate Sites Inventory indicates there should be sufficient properties to accommodate these two community objectives.

The current 2050 population projections for the College Area do not justify the kind of density that these plans create. The community awaits the projected density (households, housing units and population) that each of these proposed plans would accommodate. We have been waiting for these numbers since 2/24/22. We look forward to receiving those answers, which Ms. Vonblum has now committed to providing.

Regards,
Danna Givot