

Community Leader Interview Summary

During the first two weeks of March the project team interviewed community leaders from various local organizations and institutions as an initial engagement activity for the King Road Complete Street Plan as part of the Visioning and Needs Phase. Participants were asked for their insights on how they experience travelling along King Road, what their vision is for mobility, safety, and community building, and what are the key opportunities for improving the way people move through and on the corridor.

Interview Process

Six group interviews and one Spanish interview were hosted and are listed in the first column of the table below. Identified groups and community leaders received an invitation to participate via email, with a follow-up phone call and email. Participants who were interested in attending but unavailable were provided with alternative group interview times or coordinated directly with City staff to schedule time to interview. Those interviewed included:

Interview	Organization	Name(s)
Advocacy Groups	Ride ESSJ (Eastside San Jose)	Justin Triano
	Silicon Valley Bike Coalition (SVBC)	Diana Crumedy
	Silicon Valley Independent Living Center (SVILC)	Christine Fitzgerald
Business Groups	Alum Rock Santa Clara St Business Association	Connie Alvarez
	Prosperity Lab	Mimi Hernandez
Schools	ACE Empower Academy	Denisse Garcia
	Apollo High School	Yovi Murillo
	KIPP Prize	Autumn Zangrilli
	Overfelt High School	Vito Chiala
Northern Neighborhood Associations	Plata Arroyo	Danny Garza
	Community Advocate	Bobby Gonzalez
Southern Neighborhood Associations	Brahms/Edgeview	Andres Solomonoff
	District 8 Roundtable	Janet Holt
	Tropicana Lanai	Victoria Partida
	West Evergreen	Khanh Nguyen
Spanish Interview	Valley Palms	Marilu Zepeda, Rita Birrueta
Community-Based Organizations	Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, Eastside Neighborhood Center	Jon Pedigo
	LUNA (Latinos United for a New America)	Italia Salvaje
	School of Arts and Culture	Melissa Canela, Esther Young
	Si Se Puede Collective	Gabriel Hernandez

In addition to the participants listed above, community members invited to participate included:

- Business Groups: Berryessa Flea Market Association, East Santa Clara St Business Association, Latino Business Foundation, Latinx Business Council of SV, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Silicon Valley, Silicon Valley Vietnamese American Chamber of Commerce
- Schools: Alpha High School, San Antonio Elementary School, Anthony Dorsa Elementary School, Cesar Chavez Elementary School, Rocketship Los Sueños
- Neighborhood Associations: Berryessa Citizens Advisory Council, El Rancho Verde, Mayfair NAC, District 5 United, Las Mariposas HOA, Meadowview/Leyva
- Community-Based Organizations: SOMOS Mayfair, Veggielution, ICAN, AACI, Vietnamese American Roundtable, Sacred Heart Community Service, LEAD Filipino.

The project team will reach out to these groups again throughout the program to ensure their perspectives are heard. As a result of these interviews, additional key community leader groups and individuals were identified and are listed later in this summary.

Group interviews were facilitated as 2-hour sessions via Zoom and included a brief presentation at the beginning to provide community leaders with important background on the project. In addition to presenting the guiding questions in the following session, community leaders were taken on a virtual tour of the King Road corridor using Google Maps Street View to provide an opportunity to share location-specific comments and feedback.

Interview Questions

Participants were presented with questions about how they experienced travelling along King Road and were encouraged to speak about the topics they felt were most important to guide the King Road Complete Street Plan. The prompting questions included:

Vision

1. What is your vision for King Road in terms of mobility, safety, and community building?

Assets

2. What do you love about the King Road?
3. What are the key opportunities for improving the way people move through or on the corridor?

Challenges

4. What specific safety concerns do you have as a pedestrian or bicyclist? Any specific areas or locations?
5. What barriers or challenges do commuters, pedestrians, and bicyclists face on King Road?
6. What limits people from relying on transit as a regular mode of transportation along King Road?

Improvements/Ideas

7. What kind of streetscape improvements (lighting, trees, placemaking amenities) would you like to see?

Community Engagement

8. What are the varying cultural values or ethics to consider when discussing mobility improvements on King Road?
9. How would you recommend engaging with King Road's diverse communities?

Key Themes

The following key themes emerged from the interviews as shared ideas and pressing points. While presented as statements, these reflect the consolidated perspectives of community leaders to keep each participant's feedback anonymous. Location-specific notes from the interviews were summarized in aggregate using the notetaking tool MURAL and included on page 9 of this summary.

Perceptions of King Road and Traffic Calming

- **Protecting pedestrians, bicyclists, scooters, and motorcyclists is a priority.** Although drivers' routes and daily lives should not be disrupted, car culture should not be prioritized.
 - Drivers treat King Road and some adjacent streets like a freeway and drive extremely fast.
 - Currently King Road is not a welcoming or safe environment for pedestrians or bicyclists.
- **Walking, biking, and taking transit are vital transportation means for Eastside residents.**
 - Older students walk and bike to school daily. More parents may allow their students to walk or bike to school if there was safer infrastructure; however, public, and personal safety of students is also a concern.
 - Seniors walk and take transit to destinations along the corridor daily.
 - Leasing, owning, and maintaining cars are expensive.
 - Immigrants and undocumented residents may be unable to get a license.
- **The community has learned to accept a car-oriented King Road.** Envisioning a corridor where cars travel at the speed limit and follow traffic laws may be challenging for community members to picture as they are engaged in the project.
- **Community members have been disappointed when formal requests for traffic calming measures have not been installed** at locations in the Eastside where pedestrian fatalities have occurred.
- **There is a need for driver education around bike lanes and infrastructure.** San Jose's city culture is car-centric and cars are not expected to respect bicyclists like you seen in other cities.

Addressing Driver Behaviors and Safety

- **Design King Road as a boulevard rather than a throughway** where drivers will not expect to speed through.
 - Where possible, alter King Road with curves and winding spaces helps to naturally slow down traffic rather than providing an unimpeded corridor
 - Street designs that slow down cars near pedestrian crossings and bike lane merges are needed, such as implementing 90-degree right turns in place of ramped solutions like near the HWY 680 on and off ramps.
 - Consider installing Botts' dots in the street to slow people down.
- **Cut-through traffic on nearby residential streets needs to be addressed in conjunction with improvements to King Road.** Currently there are cut-through traffic challenges reported on Sunset, Waverly and Pensacola, and Havana/Middlefield/Scotty/Terilyn/Story.
- **Enhance and add new traffic signage** to inform drivers of where the street narrowing, lanes merging, and legal turns can be made.
- **Address school pick-up and drop-off locations to mitigate traffic congestion** and driver frustration (No right turn request from Everglade onto King to allow for left turns into KIPP).

- **Better maintain roads and storm drains.** As heavy rains and atmospheric rivers become a more regular part of San Jose’s rainy season, long-lasting solutions are needed to address potholes and overflowing storm drains which distract drivers.

Safety and Accessibility for Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Students

- **King Road corridor should be walkable and bikeable** throughout the corridor and people should feel safe and comfortable when walking and biking.
 - **Sidewalks should be widened and ADA compliant.** Light poles, fire hydrants, and trees in the sidewalk need to be addressed to improve accessibility for residents using wheelchairs and strollers.
 - **Bike lanes should be protected and raised to sidewalk level.** Currently bike lanes are narrow, overlap with the curb gutter, and are blocked by parked cars and buses. Downtown San Jose, Mission Blvd in Hayward, Mowry, and Paseo Padre in Fremont were referenced as protected bike lanes examples to consider.
- **Add more crosswalks across King Road and enhance crosswalks at major intersections, major destinations, and especially at known pathways to schools.**
 - Crosswalk enhancements should include raised crosswalks, bulb-outs, bright striping and painting, and correcting crosswalks that are not perfectly perpendicular.
 - Crosswalks and ramps should be designed with stamped concrete to provide better access and safety to blind and low vision residents, and/or designed with colors to enhance the cultural identity of the corridor.
 - The King/San Antonio intersection was referenced as a good example for crosswalks and pedestrian safety.
 - More crosswalks and enhanced crosswalks are needed Plata Arroyo, King/Ocala intersection, King/McKee intersection, King/Las Plumas intersection, near ACE Empower, between San Antonio and Alum Rock.
- **Prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists and students in intersection signals.**
 - The timing of crosswalks needs to consider senior communities and students living nearby that may require more time to cross the street.
 - Consider diagonal crosswalks at intersections with high pedestrian and bicyclist usage.
 - Dutch-style bike crossings like at the San Antonio and King intersection force bicyclists to wait two light cycles.
- **Improve pedestrian-level street lighting in various sections of King Road** to ensure residents feel safe and can be seen walking or biking in the early morning or evening.
- **Address trash and recycling bins and yard waste piles obstructing bike lanes.** Because the City does not use yard waste bins, stray branches and debris also end up in the road and can be dangerous for bicyclists.
- **Place intuitive and convenient bike storage along the corridor** to encourage biking and prevent theft. The lockers at Mexican Heritage Plaza are underutilized because they are not in the right location and were reported not user-friendly.

Re-Envisioning Eastside Public Transit

- **Introduce a regular shuttle or tram or circulator transit service** to provide residents with an alternative to using personal vehicles when travelling to frequented Eastside destinations,

workplaces, and regional bus stops that are short driving distances apart. There is currently no public transit option that provides easy access around and within the Eastside.

- A recommended route is White Rd, Alum, Rock, King Rd, Story Rd.
- This would help take cars off the road and reduce traffic on the weekends when local residents are running errands and visiting Eastside destinations.
- Similar shuttle and tram examples in Denver, Seattle, and Emeryville
- **Explore shared car options** on the Eastside to provide alternatives that reduce the number of personal vehicles.
- **Incentivize residents to take public transit** by mitigating the high cost of fares and by improving transit vehicles movement through traffic.
- **Regularly clean and maintain bus stops and buses.**
- **Ensure that every bus stop is comfortable and accessible.** Bus stops should include benches, shade structures, and infrastructure that works with ADA bus ramps.

Parking

- **Parking is a sensitive and emotionally charged topic for the Eastside community.** Eastside is high-density and single-family units are often home to 2-3 generations of a family which limits available parking. The lack of parking impacts small businesses whose customers may choose to go to a competitor that has better parking availability.
- **The project team should expect pushback from the community about removing parking spaces** and it will be important to frame loss of parking as a tradeoff for better access to reliable public transit and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as a tradeoff for safer streets for children.
- **Relocate street parking to where it is needed most.** Add parking near multi-family housing and maximize street parking with perpendicular parking near frequented destinations such as near businesses, Plata Arroyo Park, and Emma Prusch Park. Remove street parking where it is underutilized such as on the East side of the street between Beverly and Plata Arroyo.
- **Removing commercial parking impacts residential parking availability.** There was an influx of parking in the side streets along Alum Rock when Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) removed 200 parking spots from Alum Rock.
- **Red curbs should be painted on street corners** to prevent cars from parking and creating blind spots for cars making right turns off King Road. (King/Beverly) Red curbs should also be painted on the sides of driveways, especially shopping centers, to remove blind spots so cars can safely merge into traffic on King Road.
- **Curb management and loading zones are needed to improve the flow of traffic** which stalls when customers double park to visit businesses operated out of private residences.

Community Identity

- **King Road should be a distinguished destination with beautiful artwork and installations that honor and uplift the Eastside's community culture, pride, identity, and history.** Efforts should beautify concrete and cement on the Eastside and create visual friction that attracts attention and slows down drivers.
 - All beautification efforts need to be relevant to local cultures including the Mexican and Vietnamese communities who live in Eastside.

- Public artwork and installations could include murals, streetlight banners to celebrate neighborhood identity, posters, and imagery at bus stops (refer to Alum Rock bus stops), light installations where lighting is needed (under HWY 680), brightly painted and decorated crosswalks (refer to Oakland Chinatown)
- History honoring elements could include Eastside agriculture and fruit stands, families displaced, and neighborhoods divided by the construction of HWYs 680 and 101, Cesar Chavez and other community leaders, redlining – how communities of color were pushed from downtown to Eastside marshland, annual Women’s March at Mexican Heritage Plaza, low riders, honking under HWY 680 overpass to indicate you are from Eastside
- **Street vendors and small businesses are key to the culture and life on the Eastside.**
 - Designate areas for street vendors to set up their business and have access to trash cans, tables, hook-ups, and restrooms. Refer to Mitote Food Park in Santa Rosa.
 - Formalize pop-ups during the holidays that sell food and treats to ensure safety and dignity without commercializing or detracting from community authenticity.
- **Develop nodes with plazas and gathering places in busy areas along King Road**, alongside widened sidewalks and raised bike lanes, to provide opportunities for community members to come together.
- **Install more street furniture and benches along the corridor.** There are long distances on King Road where there are no benches for seniors and other residents to rest.

Greenspaces and Nature

- **Create connections between sidewalks and bike lanes to parks and creek trails** (provide access to Lower Silver Creek Trail and Coyote Creek Trail).
- **Landscape traffic calming infrastructure** such as roundabouts, islands, and medians with native and drought tolerant plants and trees to add greenery to the Eastside.
- **Plant more native trees along King Road** to mitigate heat, expand the Eastside’s lacking tree canopy, encourage active transportation, and benefit residents physical and mental health.
 - Select native trees that do not shed debris or lift the sidewalk.
 - Address where trees were removed by VTA during BRT construction.
 - Explore if the City can provide care to street trees or provide better education to property owners to care for trees.
- **Construct new parks and green spaces near schools** where students can safely gather after school. Currently students gather unsupervised at nearby shopping centers which have been sites for illegal activity and fights.

Strategic Coordination and Planning

- **Coordinate the King Road Complete Street Plan with nearby street improvement plans** including the projects taking place on Tully Road and Story Road.
- **Consider Phasing to delineate immediate/quick results** (infrastructure and programmatic), while still addressing longer issues
- **Plan how future development and potential population growth will impact traffic on the Eastside.** Consider the impacts of expanding Eastridge Mall and redeveloping the Reid-Hillview property once the airport closes.

- **Encourage commercial zoning in areas along King Road that are not developed** and are not near existing shopping centers. Close amenities will help encourage nearby residents to consider walking and biking.

Engagement and Notification Recommendations

- **Impacted businesses need to be notified throughout the engagement process and should be included in construction mitigation planning.**
 - The Alum Rock Santa Clara Street Business Association is active, the Story Road Business Association has been inactive but may be reconvening soon, and other businesses need to be engaged with door-to-door noticing and outreach.
 - Alum Rock businesses are still dealing with the trauma that happened 7 years ago with VTA and BRT. Poor communication, construction delays, and piles of debris and materials negatively impacted businesses for months.
- **Local community-based organizations should be engaged and compensated to the extent possible to lead outreach to the community** because they are trusted messengers for Eastside residents and can help reach more people and perspectives.
- **The King Road Complete Street Plan should be framed more broadly to maximize interest and engagement.** This project is not just about improving King Road but will improve the community and make it safer for residents.
 - It is important to differentiate why this plan is different, why the community should trust this planning process, and how the City will ensure that input is integrated into the plan.
 - Eastside is experiencing outreach fatigue and the project team should expect pushback from asking residents to complete another survey.
 - There is distrust in planning projects where community outreach was conducted but not reflected in the preferred design.
- **Outreach needs to be conducted on buses and at bus stops** to ensure transit riders are engaged in this process.
- **Notifications via door-to-door flyers and mailers are most effective for reaching residents.** Notifications should be simple with easy-to-understand messaging and pictures.
 - Leverage communication networks of neighborhood associations, school districts
 - Consider billboard announcements on King Road to engage corridor users.

Additional Recommendations

- **Incorporate personal safety** as part of safe walks to school efforts to ensure parents and guardians feel safe allowing their students to walk and bike to school. Simply improving street and traffic infrastructure is not sufficient to address safety concerns.
- **Dedicate Traffic Enforcement Unit presence along King Road** to deter speeding and unsafe driving.
- **Make the Alum Rock/Santa Clara St overpass across HWY 101 safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.**
- **Consider massive infrastructure investments** such as double decker streets to separate bikers and pedestrians from cars or tunneling Capitol Expressway from HWY 101 to HWY 680 to provide more open space to communities.

- Make current greenspaces such as Emma Prusch Park and Rancho del Pueblo Golf Course more accessible or welcoming to pedestrians and bicyclists. These spaces are designed for cars to enter and do not have paths for pedestrians or bicyclists to access.
- Improve drainage at Emma Prusch Park so the park is not closed for long periods of time to recover from flooding.

Community Leaders and Groups to Engage

Interview participants identified the following community groups and leaders to connect with during the engagement process:

- Project HIRED – nonprofit that provides training and support for people with disabilities
- Vista Center for Blind and Visually impaired
- Groups that work with deaf and hard of hearing community – Christine Fitzgerald with SVILC may have additional recommendations
- Guadalupe from Somos Mayfair
- Owners of La Placita (Dennis and Jenny Fong)

Engagement Opportunities

Interview participants suggested the following opportunities to connect with community members during the engagement process:

- Silicon Valley Bike Coalition has an email list
- Prosperity Lab provides food safety trainings to street vendors and could host a discussion
- Freshmen students at Overfelt High School must complete a neighborhood project as part of the Ethnic Studies course and there could be an opportunity for the King Road Complete Street Plan to partner with a teacher
- KIPP and ACE Empower have parent leader teams who are also involved with the local neighborhood associations
- Veggielution hosts food distribution events and may be able to partner with flyer distribution
- Events
 - Local Mexica New Year celebrations, held annually in March
 - School of Arts and Culture events
 - Tropicana Lanai Neighborhood Association hosts an annual bike event
 - Neighborhood Dumpster Days, National Night Out, Viva Parks Movie Nights

Location-Specific Comments

During the interviews, location-specific comments were documented using the notetaking tool MURAL. These comments are summarized in aggregate in the map below.

