

Highway 12 Comprehensive Corridor Economic Analysis

Task #5

ArchiLOGIX
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Prepared for the Solano Transportation Authority



By the Solano Economic Development Corporation



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*"A year from now you will wish you had started today."
- Karen Lamb*

Successful community planning is an iterative process that requires and benefits from an engaged and informed public to provide a feedback loop that is reality-based. Dr. Fountain's economic analysis has been instrumental in establishing a baseline understanding of what is and what could be for communities along the Highway 12 corridor in light of possible improvements to the route.

ArchiLOGIX working with Metro-Quest designed and implemented outreach events, questionnaires and online surveys for data collection and analysis to gain insight into preferences related to the potential Highway 12 improvements. Additionally, the team participated in several presentations and workshops over time both to solicit input and to discuss the findings of the research. The following three steps summarize our work.

1. DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

ArchiLOGIX reviewed various General Plans of cities along the Highway 12 corridor to establish a working knowledge of the vision, priorities and regulations of the communities vis-a-vis their relationship to Highway 12.

In addition to the jurisdictional perspective, individual input was highly desired. To reach as many Highway 12 corridor residents and users as possible, ArchiLOGIX used tools provided by Metroquest to establish and launch an online survey site in February of 2012. This site allowed participants to provide valuable feedback to the project team.

In order to encourage as much participation in the survey as possible, the team engaged in an outreach effort and presentations to organizations and stakeholder representatives along the corridor, such as: the Solano Transportation Authority, the Highway 12 Association, Solano EDC Advisory Committee, Travis Air Force Base, Rio Vista Chamber of Commerce, Rio Vista Business Alliance, and a number of interested individuals along the corridor.

Over the seven month period that the survey was active online there were over 500 visits to the site. Although these participants all provided a certain level of information it was important that we were able to use data that clearly could be benchmarked to corridor users, businesses or residents. In order to qualify this information, the team focused on those participants that provided residency or business location data. This analysis provided 176 reliable survey results and a high degree of relevant information that could be used in understanding the communities concerns and priorities.

The first area of the survey was a listing of 12 Community Priorities and allowed users to rank these priorities from highest to lowest value. This gave the project team a good sense of how participants viewed these important elements of community development and livability. The results of those rankings in order of priority are:

- 1 Town-oriented activities
- 2 Farm-to-market agriculture
- 3 New Delta hub
- 4 Highway serving activities

- 5 Manufacturing
- 6 Water-based recreation
- 7 Residential development
- 8 Military support
- 9 Energy production
- 10 Lodging
- 11 New farming techniques
- 12 Environmental studies

The second area of the survey was an attempt to get feedback from the participants on how they viewed the current condition of the Highway 12 corridor. The results of this question allowed the team to assess the satisfaction of the regular users of the highway. The survey results for this question are listed below:

Adequate	34 (19%)
Excellent	5 (3%)
Somewhat Above Adequate	8 (5%)
Somewhat Inadequate	80 (45%)
Very Inadequate	49 (28%)

A clear majority of over **70%** of respondents felt that the current condition of the highway was either somewhat or very inadequate. **65%** of these respondents are frequent users of the corridor making multiple trips on either a daily or weekly basis and therefore are very familiar with the conditions.

Multiple Trips Daily	41 (23%)
Several Trips per Week	73 (42%)
Occasional	27 (15%)
Several Trips per Month	35 (20%)

2. INSIGHTS FROM RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE:

In addition to understanding the regional issues, the STA embarked on a case study examination of impacts and potential benefits to a local community along the corridor. Specifically, Rio Vista (which may experience re-routing of Highway 12 from its downtown) expressed an interest in further consideration to address their concerns about impacts to their economic stability.

The consultant team developed a three-item questionnaire, distributed broadly by the Solano Economic Development Corporation and others, to which fifteen (15) citizens responded. The questions were:

1. What are your top priorities for the development of the corridor and Rio Vista?
2. If the economy expands, what improvements / amenities / investments do you think Rio Vista and/or the State should consider first?
3. Other comments or observations?

All responses were constructive, and 80% indicated their interest in being notified of future community meetings or workshops. Citizens shared love for their community, a willingness to embrace change, an eagerness to maximize existing elements that have inherent value, a desire to develop in ways that support job growth, and an interest in creating ways to use this changed condition (rerouting of Highway 12) to their community's benefit.

Recommendations from the community included:

1. Relocation of Highway 12 to causeway with a new bridge;
2. Repurposing of existing Highway 12 corridor as city street with slower traffic, widened street, landscaping, lighting, and effective signage directing traffic to downtown;
3. Creation of an industrial park;
4. Creation of a business park;
5. Adoption of clear policy and permitting practices by the city to facilitate business location and job creation;
6. Relocation of industrial business from waterfront to industrial park;
7. Improvement of ingress / egress to service transports of large loads and improve safety;
8. Development of waterfront as recreational destination for locals, families, visitors - with hotels, restaurants, attractive retail, recreation;
9. Attitude of appreciation for investors, including developers and business owners, independent or chain (retail, restaurants, movie theaters);
10. Development of medical services, including medical center, nursing care, assisted living facilities.

The growing interest to articulate and ultimately realize a new vision for their community launched further discussion about how to collaborate and activate in order to make meaningful change. The conversation evolved into enthusiastic discussion about effective community engagement, planning and development.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. USEFUL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

The goal of a structured community engagement process is to build consensus among stakeholders and decision-makers at each milestone, generating buy-in to a shared vision and serious interest in public improvements to connectivity, mobility, livability and sustainability, and stimulating private and public development projects that support the city's economy and quality of life.

The overall scope of work involves data collection, inventory and assessment of existing conditions, development of alternative plans, policy analysis and modification - with community input and feedback looping throughout.

Visioning, community planning and the eventual implementation work best when the stakeholders - individuals, businesses, nonprofits, property owners, trade organizations and the like - and the governing agencies and officials embrace a team approach to respectful and productive dialogue that builds understanding and unveils opportunity. Many successful communities find that a point of consensus - when folks generally all agree - is too high a goal. Instead, a point of "informed consent" at which time individuals agree not to obstruct progress, is a worthy decision point. Regardless, there is agreement that, to move forward, compromise will be required of all.

VISIONING

A community's vision for itself matters. Otherwise, as the Cheshire cat opined in Alice in Wonderland: if it doesn't matter where you want to go, then it doesn't matter how you get there. People DO care. Identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) is an example of a useful starting-gate exercise to flesh out everyone's issues and begin to lay out helpful tools and building blocks. Interestingly, elements that are a double-edged sword can be used to best advantage, for example, and what seems overwhelming might be revealed to be the best rallying point for a town.

Valuable professional resources exist to serve communities with their visioning. One example is the **American Institute of Architect's Regional / Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT)** program which has helped more than 140 communities since 1967. R/UDATS have addressed a wide variety of community issues, including urban growth and land use, inner-city neighborhoods, downtowns, environmental issues, waterfront development, and commercial revitalization. More than 500 professionals representing over 40 disciplines have donated more than \$3.5 million in services as members of R/UDAT teams. Each team is tailored to suit the needs and interests of a community, and members volunteer their time and expertise for the 4 day intensive, dynamic, high-level dialogue with a broad base of stakeholders to produce community visions, action plans and recommendations. Ultimately what makes them special is their multi-disciplinary expertise, their enhanced objectivity and the public participation.

PLANNING

Useful planning is contextual, is anticipatory and flexible, reveals opportunity, celebrates what works, introduces complimentary elements and uses, prioritizes incremental change, and is reality-based. Community planning is comprehensive and often includes a full menu of considerations including, but not limited to, the following.

1. "Bone structure"
 - Vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian circulation
 - Street grid hierarchy
 - Pedestrian realm
 - Utilities / infrastructure capacity
2. Community Development
 - Existing and proposed land uses (repurpose and intensification)
 - Catalytic sites / linkages
 - Natural features and recreational amenities
3. Economic impacts
 - Future investment (public and private)
 - Jobs and reinvestment
 - Market conditions
 - Funding sources
 - Brand development
4. Social value "a full service community"
 - Meeting and balancing the needs of all stakeholders

The outcome of a community planning process is a guiding document reinforced by governing policy that maps out the expected and desired outcomes for future development and change around which the community will rally and investors will invest.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation requires discipline and determined leadership and management . . . Balancing competing priorities, managing short-term and long-term projects, maximizing market conditions, working with what “is”, prioritizing a work plan, aligning resources, maintaining local character, keeping everyone informed.

If most effective, the previous process of engagement has built understanding, respect, caring, and trust and has moved people past a limiting attitude of entitlement to a freeing sense of empowerment. A pitfall of many is poor management of expectations. It is critical to have a clear understanding of the capacity of individual stakeholders - be they persons, business or organizations - to problem-solve and to contribute resources. Misplaced expectations often result in poor performance, unrealized plans and breakdowns in trust and partnerships.

Ideally the community embraces a shared sense of opportunity and responsibility in which all members including citizens, private business and property owners, nonprofit organizations and public agencies all recognize their role in implementing the vision. Public / private partnerships are not a trend; they are the foundation for our future. They require and magnify the best of everyone, and are the key to getting things done

*"The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one."
- Mark Twain*