

TRAYER URBAN DESIGN PLAN

MICHAEL COSTA

In the fall quarter of 2006, the third-year Community Design Lab received a grant from the Tulare County to develop an urban design plan for Traver, CA. Michael Costa participated in that studio and writes about the class collaborative efforts and the resulting project.

Michael Costa is a third-year student (BCRP program) and participated in the Traver community design studio.

In the summer of 2006, Cal Poly faculty members Vicente del Rio and Umut Toker, were hired by the County of Tulare to do a series of community workshops towards the Traver Participatory Concept Plan.¹ This process revealed the community expectations and defined a vision and recommendations for future development. The relationship with the community and the County of Tulare's Community Development and Redevelopment Division continued through the fall quarter when instructor Vicente del Rio's undergraduate class Community Design Lab (CRP 341) went further from that initial process and produced an urban design plan for Traver.

¹ See the article "Traver Urban Design Plan" by V. del Rio and U. Toker in this issue of FOCUS.

The Traver Urban Design Plan developed a physical design-oriented vision to help the community to orient and manage growth and development. The making of the plan was a collaborative effort by the class, and it encompassed gathering, analyzing and utilizing information obtained from several sources including field visits and consultations with the Tulare County. The class created a firm foundation to support the development of the proposals, providing Traver with an array of physical solutions and design guidelines. With the right planning tools and design concepts, Traver can play a significant role in the region and establish itself as a community of high environmental and aesthetical quality.

Traver Urban Design Plan

The vision of the Traver Urban Design Plan is to promote opportunities for both social and economic development within an environment that respects the community's unique cultural and agricultural heritage. The class research and planning efforts are a true representation of the community expectations and needs for its future prosperity. Along with information gathered from the workshops held during the summer, in analyzing Traver's present conditions the class concentrated on studying the community's natural elements, current land use and circulation patterns, existing community services and infrastructure, cultural and social services, and local and regional market profile analyses. These studies revealed Traver's physical, social and marketable attributes that would allow or hinder the development process. Some of the community's major development challenges are the lack of suitable services and infrastructure currently provided, together with the impact of the 100-year flood plain that currently encompasses nearly all of present-day Traver as well as a large portion of land designated for future expansion. The study of both local and regional markets showed that Traver's location along Highway 99 is ideal for new residential, commercial and industrial growth within the region.

Figure 1

A group photo of the students during one of the visits to Traver.





Figure 2
Students in their final presentation to the community at the Traver elementary school.

The class identified other specific constraints within the community, such as the noise from the railroad and Foster Farms, truck traffic through the community, and the necessity to upgrade current infrastructure and service facilities. Among the opportunities that would support development are the existing agricultural and open space both in and around the community, plenty of areas with potential for infill development, the close proximity and easy access to and from the highway, and the proximity of larger cities such as Kingsburg and Fresno.

After researching several case studies to further generate ideas for the plan, with the results of both the analysis of existing conditions and the summer participatory workshops, the class identified an appropriate Vision to guide Traver's development: "Traver will be a proud, diverse

and unique community in the Central Valley where existing social and cultural heritage is integrated with future growth through the promotion of opportunities for social development and interaction in an aesthetically pleasing environment."

This vision guided the class in developing four goals reaching for vitality and land use, accessibility and circulation, aesthetic character, and street and landscaping, as well as the objectives, and the design concepts in order to obtain them. The process allowed the class to go to the next step and design a plan that could illustrate how and where Traver would grow in the future. The products of these initial phases were presented by the students to the community in a meeting at Traver Elementary School on Saturday Oct. 28, 2006. The community reaction and comments were then incorporated into the final proposals by the class.

With the overall urban design concept plan adapted to accommodate the community comments, the class began developing proposals for specific areas of Traver. The class was subdivided into four teams and each of them concentrated on one of the areas and developed proposals in congruence with the overall urban design plan. Each section of development established a program for specific uses,

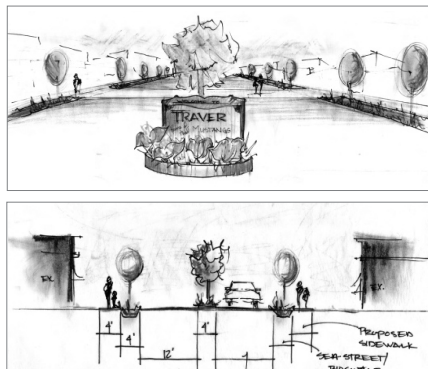


Figure 3
Details of mixed-use and residential development proposed on both sides of the railroad, a section of main street, and a before-after comparison of a commercial building on that street.



land measurements and projected population that new development would contribute to that specific area of land. Following the detailed site plans and programs, each team further illustrated what the development would look like on their portion of land with site plans, elevations, cross sections, basic architectural typologies, and computer generated images using SketchUp, including animation.

The proposals for Traver support growth in expanding the existing community area into 171 acres of new residential, commercial, industrial, open space/recreational, and civic uses, and projects an addition to the population of around 2,331 people. The Traver Urban Design Plan will assure that development responds to community needs and expectations, and that growth fits into the existing physical, social and cultural patterns while enhancing the community.

Concluding Remarks

The plan was revealed to the community on Saturday Dec.16, 2006, at a luncheon organized by community leader and principal of the elementary school George Nord, and Tulare County planner Frank Ruiz. The students gave a very professional presentation utilizing Powerpoint and films of the computer animations, while displaying several posters on the wall showing the different phases of the design process and the final solutions. The deliverables were an 80-page report and a data DVD containing all the material, including all posters and computer models. The Traver community and the County of Tulare were very happy with the results of the study and the final plan, which will certainly assist them in planning public investment and in promoting local physical and social development.

Note: The class:
 Instructor: V. del Rio
 Angel Lozano
 Aram Ovsepian
 Charles (Max) Wong
 Corbin Johnson
 Courtney Kettman
 David Grim
 Dan Cermak
 Devin Denman
 Douglas McIntyre
 Dustin Emery
 Edwin Scales
 Eric Ward
 James Fisher
 James Paulding
 Jennifer Gau
 Jiriah O'Malley
 Maricel Chavez
 Matthew Korn
 Michael Costa
 Michael Gregg
 Ranamatreya Waterfall

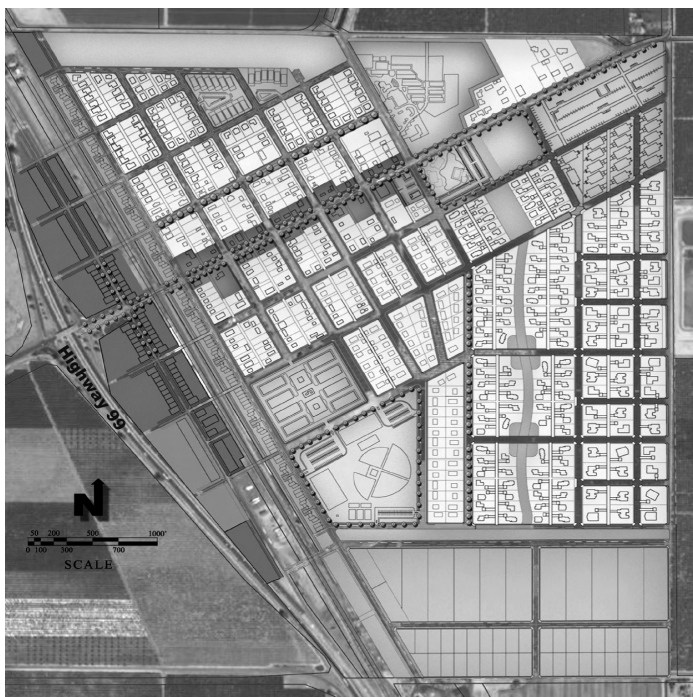


Figure 4
 The final land-use and site plan for Traver showing the existing development and the proposed growth.

Figure 5
 A partial view of the computer model showing the expanded school (above), the proposed park to buffer flood from the canal (left), and new housing.

