

Conversations with Alumni Spotlight on Dave Javid

Master of Science in City and Regional Planning, Cal Poly, 2004

FOCUS: *What was your major in college and why did you decide to become a planner and to apply for CRP's MCRP program?*

I received a B.A. in Urban Studies and Planning with a Minor in Visual Arts from U.C. San Diego. I have always wanted to be a planner, since I was young. I took a detour into the corporate world working for the corporate offices of Williams-Sonoma and GAP, Inc. where I learned invaluable project management skills while I worked for their new store construction departments. From there I went to a summer program at Harvard to get reintroduced and entrenched into the planning world and confirmed that I wanted to go back to school to get my Masters and jump into what I always wanted to do. It was definitely the right decision.



[Downtown Transit Corridors Plan and EIR, San Bruno, CA](#)

I led visioning and planning process in collaboration with the City of San Bruno to prepare a Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Downtown San Bruno and the key corridors that lead to it. We developed strategies around multi-modal, high-density mixed-use development and walkable streetscape designs to capitalize on the close proximity of the San Bruno Bart and future Caltrain stations (Figure 1). The plan was integrated with the Grand Boulevard Initiative, an effort to increase the performance, safety and aesthetics of the El Camino Real Corridor of which this project is adjacent.

[Downtown Specific Plan and EIR, Napa, CA](#)

For the Downtown Napa Specific Plan I managed a multi-disciplinary team to craft a comprehensive Specific Plan and EIR. We developed an outreach strategy that involved various community engagement opportunities including walking tours, workshops, charrettes, online surveys, and stakeholder, focus group, and steering committee meetings. I led the team and collaborative efforts to establish the Plan's goals of fostering a more inclusive and vibrant environment in Downtown Napa while developing detailed policies, design guidelines, and development standards to steer future improvements (Figure 2).

[North Fair Oaks Community Plan and EIR, Redwood City, CA](#)

As Project Manager I led the team to develop a community plan which emphasized sustainable and health and wellness principles (Figure 3). We worked with the community, including multi-lingual, youth and senior groups, to formulate goals and policies for land use, housing, health and wellness, parks and recreation, circulation, and infrastructure improvements for the North Fair Oaks neighborhood in San Mateo County. The Health and Wellness principles included access to healthy food, healthcare, viable transit options, and recreational opportunities.

[Meridian Strategic Plan and EIR, Elk Grove, CA](#)

I was responsible for managing the project and preparing a tailored outreach strategy to establish a vision for the Meridian area, which encompasses 1,200 acres of currently vacant land

FOCUS: *Which was your first planning job? Can you talk a bit about your professional career?*

My first true planning job was working as an environmental planning intern for Rincon Consultants in San Luis Obispo. I had a couple other related jobs working for architecture firms in San Diego and Los Angeles, but that was my first full exposure to planning. Since then I have worked for a range of multi-disciplinary planning firms including RRM in SLO and up in the Bay Area as Senior Planner, for MIG in Berkley and PMC (now Michael Baker, Inc.) in Oakland as a Project Manager, and most recently as a Principal Planner + Urban Designer for the M-Group in the Bay Area.

FOCUS: *What were the highpoints and most interesting projects of your career?*

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to work on a wide range of projects over the years from vision plans, corridor and specific plans to farther reaching policy documents. A common thread amongst these projects is that most have been deeply rooted in inclusive urban design and community engagement strategies. A few of them stand out:

See FOCUS 11 (2014) Spotlight Section for an article on the M-Group by its principal CRP Alumnus Geoff Bradley.

in the city of Elk Grove. The process included engaging a range of property owners, stakeholders and community members through interactive workshops and an online community forum. Land use alternatives and a preferred plan were developed working collaboratively with City staff and the community to spur sustainable development in the area. The project culminated into a Strategic Plan that includes hybrid form-based development standards and design guidelines, comprehensive transportation and infrastructure studies and an EIR.

Model Sustainability Toolkit, County of San Gabriel, CA

I helped develop a toolkit to provide framework to address energy efficiency and sustainability through zoning regulations for 27 cities participating in the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Energy Efficiency Climate Action Plan project. The toolkit is a guide to help summarize existing sustainable provisions adopted by the cities and to identify gaps along with any recommendations to add other mandatory and/or voluntary sustainable provisions in the cities' development codes. The toolkit is focused on specific components of sustainable planning and green building programs, including CALGreen building code provisions and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles. A diverse collection of regulations were grouped into four key categories—Energy Conservation and Green Building; Urban Form and Community Character; Community Health and Wellness; and Alternative/Renewable Energy.

Fort Bragg Georgia-Pacific Mill Site Specific Plan and EIR, Fort Bragg, CA

As the Deputy Project Manager and Urban Designer on the Mill Site Specific Plan project, I managed this planning effort to develop a guiding Specific Plan document for a former 415-acre lumber mill site stretching nearly the entire coastline of the City of Fort Bragg. The planning process included comprehensive outreach and coordination with state agencies and the Mill Site Coordinating Committee to reach a cohesive vision for the future of the site and a plan to implement that vision.

FOCUS: *What is your current job? What are your primary responsibilities, and what type of work do you get involved with?*

I am a Principal Planner and Urban Designer with M-Group, and lead our Urban Design, Policy Planning, and Community Engagement service areas. A short summary of my work flow goes like:

- Research and seek out new potential projects, prepare comprehensive proposals in response to Request for Proposals/Qualifications (RFP/RFQ) and lead a team through competitive interview process typically with jurisdictions across the Bay Area.
- Manage a range of projects through the planning process by being the conduit between the consultant team and the client, to keep projects on schedule and budget.



Figure 1: Short and long term visions for a mixed-use high-density corridor in San Bruno connecting to BART and Caltrans stations. 2009.

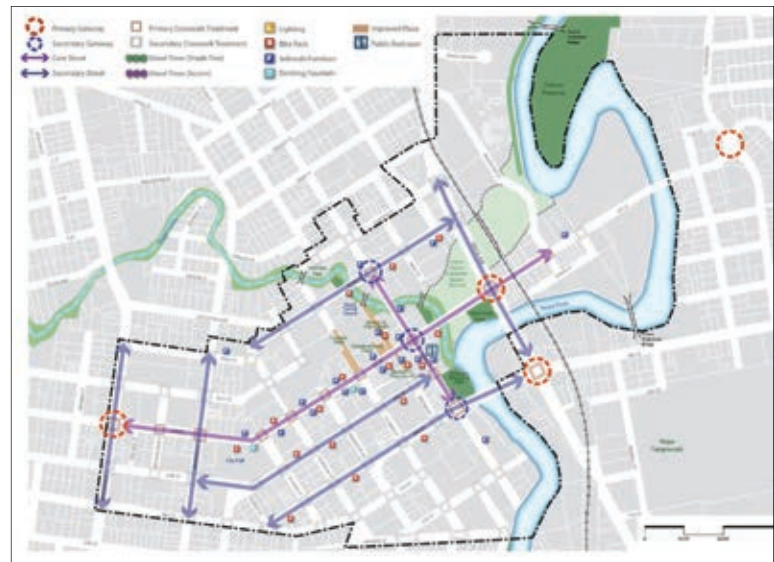


Figure 2: Downtown Napa Specific Plan. 2010.

The type of projects include housing elements, targeted general plan and zoning code updates, citywide and residential guidelines, community engagement plans, and corridor and specific plans.

- Prepare policy and urban design plans and facilitate meetings and workshops.

FOCUS: *Can you describe a couple of projects that got you excited at the M-Group? What are you working in now?*

Over the past couple years I have worked on many multi-faceted projects. Most recently I worked on a targeted outreach effort and just started a corridor planning project that I am particularly excited about.

San Mateo Downtown Engagement, San Mateo, CA

I led an extremely rewarding effort that implemented a full suite of outreach tools geared at reaching a wide cross-section of the community to foster input about Downtown San Mateo. The “Engage Downtown San Mateo” project included hosting focused discussions with local stakeholders and decision-makers and “pop-up” workshops at popular local venues to meet directly with community members and actively engage participants on subjects impacting the Downtown area. In addition, we implemented a series of lectures and focused discussions featuring professionals across a range of topics (including socio-demographic trends, public urban spaces, transit-oriented development principles, and parking strategies) to establish a common planning vocabulary in an informal setting.

We also developed a project website (www.engagedowntownsanmateo.org) to host information on upcoming events, summarize previous workshops, and provide link to the city’s existing social media outlets including an interactive MindMixer platform. Information gathered from “Engage Downtown San Mateo” project was synthesized into as Assets and Opportunities Report that serve as the foundation for the upcoming Downtown Specific Plan Update.

El Camino Real Corridor Specific Plan, Sunnyvale, CA

The El Camino Real Corridor Specific Plan project is aimed at defining the stretch of El Camino Real in Sunnyvale by identifying the characteristics of focused nodes of activity. We are working closely with the city and a full suite of consultants including traffic engineers and circulation planners, economists, civil engineers, housing specialists, and environmental planners. I’m playing my typical role as project manager weaving together the direction from the city and a range of stakeholders and decision makers and the consultant team’s recommendations, to meet the community’s vision.

FOCUS: *How did your education reflect in your work? Do you feel that what you learned at Cal Poly prepared you well for professional practice?*

My education at Cal Poly gave me a solid start into my career, reaffirming that I was in the right field. The most important skills I learned at Cal Poly was how to collaborate with colleagues while striving for consensus.

FOCUS: *What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the MCRP program?*

The strength of the program is the range of backgrounds that are attracted to the profession, including the professors that come from interesting fields and perspectives. With my interest in the design profession, I would have liked to see more of an emphasis on or collaboration with the impressive design school at Cal Poly. I also think there is a great opportunity to continue to expose students to sustainable planning practices. The few sustainable planning courses I took at Cal Poly inspired me to pursue my accreditation in LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

FOCUS: *What was the most challenging aspect of moving from the MCRP program to professional practice?*

As is true with any transition from school to the working world, having hands on practical experience is a key factor that helps smooth the transition. I encourage more direct access

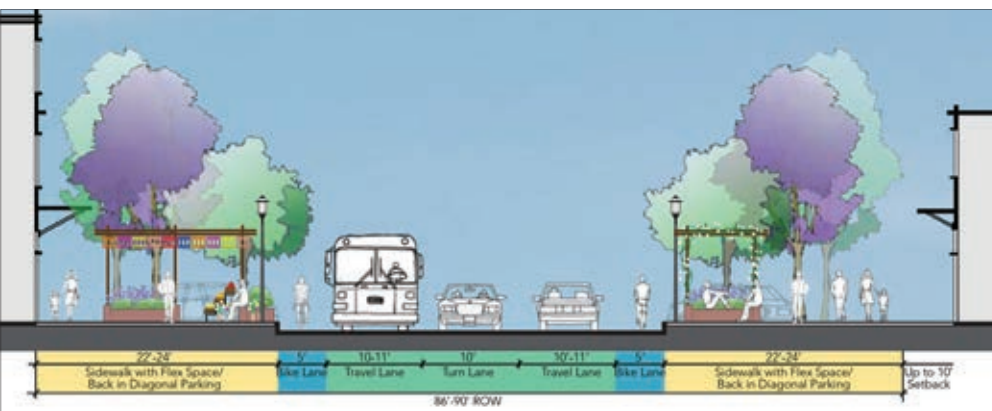
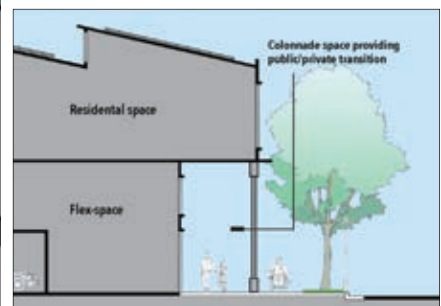


Figure 3 a & b: North Fair Oaks Community Plan, Redwood, CA. Design Guidelines. 2011.



to practice while in the MCRP program to build the necessary experience and networking opportunities.

FOCUS: *What are the critical knowledge areas for planners entering the field? (e.g. land use law, research methods, zoning, housing finance, CEQA, etc.)*

Depending on the type of job a planner chooses (e.g., as a planner at city/county doing development review or long range planning, or private consultant) tasks and knowledge base vary. Areas that are probably most important to stay recent on include environmental and zoning laws that are ever-changing. Beyond the book smarts a critical skill set that is often overlooked is the ability to communicate effectively, both in written form and most importantly verbally. The ability to facilitate meetings and workshops and to develop outreach tools that provide avenues for others to engage in the planning process are critical skills for any planner to gain a comfort level with.

FOCUS: *What are the critical skills/tools for planners entering the field? (e.g. GIS, computer-based design, statistics, surveying, presentation, writing, etc.)*

A basic understanding of design related tools is an important tool to have in the toolbox. In particular a massing or modeling tool like Sketch-up is a user-friendly platform that all planners should be familiar with.

FOCUS: *What do you see as planning's big challenges over the next 5-10 years, and what does Cal Poly need to teach students so that they may successfully engage these challenges?*

There is an interesting convergence between aging communities and the millennial movement that is supporting the need for a diversity of housing opportunities and supporting job and services in close knit transit accessible environments. This supports everything we're taught and want to design for as planners right? If only it were that easy. The challenge is getting everyone to the table and speaking the same language. Recognizing this trend and as I noted earlier, the ability to effectively communicate and the confidence to lead discussions are very important skills that every planner should have. Knowing the right questions to ask and as importantly the ability to genuinely listen and engage individuals with a range of perspectives in respectful and thoughtful dialogue is important in an effort to reach a common goal.

FOCUS: *Any famous last words?*

There's typically more than one road that leads to the where you think you're headed, don't be afraid to get it "wrong", there's something to be learned around every corner, if you're persistent you'll make it to the "desired" destination.