

Carmel Looking Forward – Future of Our Town – Panel January 30, 2020



Panelists

- Moderator – **Tom Parks** – CRA Board member
- **Michael DeLapa** – Executive Director LandWatch Monterey County – Applying climate change challenges to our discussions.
- **Karyl Hall** – Carmel Historic Resources Board member – Adding how new designs and demolition of small cottages impacts the look of our town.
- **Neal Kruse** – Home designer since 1975 – Defending Carmel’s village character
- **Stephanie Locke** – Carmel Planning Commissioner – Offering insights on new building and remodeling.

Topics and Q&A

1. **Global Tourism:** Carmel is at risk. What can be done? What makes Carmel a magnet for visitors? What do we offer that is truly unique to those who visit? Are we being chauvinistic, village-proud? Evidence?
 - a. Neal – How do we maintain and keep the good stuff. Unique shops are why we come here. Increasing store front rental rates attracts big name brands and decreases smaller businesses.
 - b. Karyl – A French women stopped her and asked what makes Carmel interesting. She replied, “Have you seen the rest of America?”
 - c. Michael – Emphasized that locations such as Paris, Venice, Big Sur (long waits at Bixby Bridge +) are impacted by Global Tourism. He is unsure if Carmel is faced with the same impact as Big Sur.
 - d. Stephanie – Carmel sees over-tourism at specific times and events such as Car Week and ATT Pro Am. Their inconveniences create challenges. We should explore “Eco Tourism” focus with Bike Routes and more. At Car Week 2019 our Carmel Police learned a Social Media lesson and now uses barriers selectively to redirect/prevent bad driver behaviors in off hours of officially sponsored/hosted event times. We must be tolerant.
 - e. Neal – Working directly with the founders of our sponsored events (Tues-Thurs) reinforces the goal of having the “average person” see these wonderful cars up close. Keep this in mind with any potential changes.

2. **Carmel: Workforce Housing**, can we offer shelter for those who work in our town? E-commerce has dramatically reduced local retail sales. Could a rezoning of the fringe commercial district in favor of residential development be a possible solution to the State's housing mandates for density intensification?
- Karyl – The new Auxillary Dwelling Unit (ADU) law and the trend for mixed-use commercial buildings with upstairs apartments helps.
 - Neal – The state is taking over all zoning. It will no longer be locally ruled. This will increase site coverage – eventually every house can have two ADUs, including converting garages. Parking should not be a gating factor.
 - Michael – This action is critical to decreasing greenhouse gas/carbon use/emissions controls. Must have local low-cost housing. Greenhouse gas problems is existential problem – soon nothing else will matter. We must increase residential density now. 2,300 commuters drive into Carmel today and we must decrease this. He is not fearful of ADUs or up-zoning. Short Term Rentals (STRs) can be converted to ADUs with policy changes. LandWatch is very committed to addressing housing challenges.
 - Stephanie – Can't afford to live here (although she has in the past) – ADUs are small – can't house a family (usually 800 SF). She believes in subsidizing (through taxes and incentives) for low cost housing access.
 - Karyl – We are facing a big challenge and we don't fully understand the impact. We must walk more. We should also have less use of remote house cleaners, gardeners, etc. Mixed use is a real plus.
3. **Second homeowners** don't vote here, don't support local economy or participate in local government. Should there be a fee or tax on empty houses? Will we have a voter base that will support our local government? Can we remain an independent city or is annexation a possibility in the future?
- Karyl – Local control is best. I don't see a way to "police" potential no-use windows. There are under 3,000 voters today...how do we engage with the non-residents?
 - Stephanie – When houses turn over, which is happening now, the tax base increases. I see the new home owners being more and more engaged.
 - Michael – If you want to reduce greenhouse gasses think of driving economic incentives for vacant homes. There are cities like Vancouver and Berkeley that have vacancy taxes. Cities can change policies to address ADUs.
 - Neal – In 1994, a consultant said that he had worked with a Florida coastal city similar to Carmel and that he told them he had never seen a solution to the types of problems we are now facing. Locals no longer have a voice because not enough full-time voters. Pacific Grove has the same problems. Carmel is very visible and well known now. We should all engage with the CRA leadership to help lead and address this challenge.
4. **Architecture**: The nature of design. What to preserve? The character of the village, both commercial and residential.
- Karyl – I am finalizing a paper on our town's architecture because many are being destroyed with bigger, less Carmel-looking homes replacing them. New owners

many times don't know the requirements and need to maintain charm and what makes our village a destination. I am proposing adding to the current Level 1 historic designation of which there are approximately 300, with a new Level 2 designation. Contact me if you want to comment on early version of this document. It will get broader circulation in the coming months.

- b. Neal – Was surprised and saddened that the Dolores & 5th project plans were approved with modern steel & glass. This should not have been given the look and feel that is critical to our Village.

5. How will Carmel, and the world, deal with the inevitable **climate change** which is here and now? How to adapt?

- a. Michael – Global assessments and reports continue. Of course, we can expect hotter and dryer weather and more precipitation in unpredictable patterns and more coastal flooding. We are losing 1 foot of beach per year. There will be more fires like. LandWatch maintains a list of vegetation and trees that can help address climate changes in our Mediterranean climate. This climate crisis *will* impact our children and grandchildren. So, how do we mitigate impact? Sea walls, of course – but they won't stop rising oceans and are prohibitively expensive. What are alternatives? Move buildings back from the water's edge and more.
- b. Stephanie – We must look at sustainable efforts and must have the right ones for the future. A non-potable water source is available here for watering trees. Locals must adopt local trees in public property near their houses to keep them healthy and maintained.
- c. Neal – We need a future committee. What will be the impact of self-driving cars? Should we convert parking spaces into gardens?
- d. Karyl – One of the challenges in Carmel is that it is very hilly. Why don't we use golf carts in Carmel?
- e. Michael – We need more bike paths. Even older folks ride bikes globally. Electric bikes are viable for other generations and hilly terrains. We must make biking easier and prioritize for bikes/walking. Regarding electric bikes, maybe we could provide incentives for these?

Open Q&A

- a. Audience – Can we have more lights at night around town for safety and walking? Stephanie – dark skies are a real attraction – we can look at the stars, and use flashlights and cell phones where needed. There is also lighting at all crosswalks.
- b. Audience – Sidewalks are a disaster causing tripping and other dangerous problems. Need more uniformity to sidewalks. Stephanie – We do need an approach including branches at eye level that must be kept trimmed.
- c. Audience – Pine Cone has great real estate ads – but are promoting buying adjacent spots for “compounds.” Karyl – Said her upcoming paper will address Level 2 requirements and would reward for keeping dual lots separate.
- d. Neal – Talked about proposals in the 2016 Committee Report for Post Office Plaza at Dolores & 5th. The plaza would be for locals to socialize and would have been in part of today's P.O. parking lot. For those that don't know, the 2016 Committee was

headed by Neal in 1991 and studied what Carmel would look like in 2016. It is a fascinating report.

- e. Nicole (lighting consultant) – For neighborhood lighting there are solutions to provide downward path-lights, that only turn on when someone passes.
- f. Audience – We are just not aware of the seriousness of Global Warming/Climate Change. Karyl – Says I’m a pessimist on this because folks need convenience. Personally, she thinks we are doomed...but we should keep trying. Michael – When speaking to CSUMB won’t say we are doomed. We need *radical hope*. We now have Greta Thunberg, Sunrise and more activists driving change. We must be optimistic and we can get there from here. LandWatch says we can act. If you want to learn more just hang out with young people. We need their vision and their energy. We need to follow them.
- g. Audience – Pacific Grove just did total smoking & vaping ban and Carmel missed the opportunity to be first. Stephanie – Butt cans are a good start and this should be a City Council item.
- h. Audience – Age diversity – How do we make it more welcoming? Related to housing costs of course. In South Los Angeles the ADU’s are causing problems with infrastructure. Stephanie – In Monterey County an average family can only afford \$2K/month so eliminates most Carmel options for locals. Michael – Ban STRs, add incentives for more mixed use and give preference (taxes). California State has effectively banned single unit lots in California and other locations have regulated this as well. We must think different and must provide local affordable housing.
- i. Audience – How can we achieve low cost rental rates? Can the city regulate it? Michael – Supply and demand will eventually drive cost lower. Neal – UCLA professor is proposing to eliminate home ownership — a radical thought.
- j. Audience – Do we have natural gas restrictions in Carmel? Michael – This may happen, but not in our current plans
- k. Audience comment – For walking at night for safety what you wear has bearing. You must wear reflective strips or light colors.
- l. Audience – Compromise solution is exterior lighting so you can see the city but only until a certain time. After that, all lights go off.

Tom Parks – Ends Panel with reinforcing “Radical Hope” and a Thank You for attending.

Following the talk there was socializing with free wine from the CRA hosts. There was a lot of exchange between attendees and the panelists and everyone stayed longer than usual.