

Advisory Committee Meeting #4

April 28, 2021

Summary Notes

Meeting Objectives

- Update the Advisory Committee on progress to date
- Review and receive feedback on the Character Areas and Opportunity Sites concepts
- Review and receive feedback on the proposed Street and Bicycle Network concepts

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members

- **Present:** Jane Barr, Gina Cole, Francisco Estrada, Felipe Hernandez, Sylvia Luna, Carmen Herrera Mansur, William Ow, Shaz Roth, Brian Spector, and Jenni Veitch-Olson
- **Absent:** Eduardo Cervantes, Maria Elena De la Garza, Aurelio Gonzalez, Neva Hansen, Sal Orozco, Ben Ow, Manuel Rodriguez, and Tony Scurich

City Staff

Suzi Merriam (CDD Director), Justin Meek (Principal Planner), Sarah Wilke (Assistant Planner), Carlos Landaverry (Housing Manager Community Development), and Elena Ortiz (Administrative Assistant II)

Consultant Team

- Simran Malhotra and Kelsey Hubbard, Raimi + Associates
- Peter VanderWal and Andrew Krizman, Sargent Town Planning
- Meghan Weir and Monique Ho, NelsonNygaard

Introduction and Welcome

Simran Malhotra, Project Consultant, welcomed the Advisory Committee (AC) members and re-introduced the consultant team and Suzi Merriam introduced City Staff who were in attendance. A brief

overview of zoom tools such as mute/unmute, raise hand, and live Spanish interpretation features were covered and a contact email was provided in case any attendees had technical issues. Roll call attendance was taken for Advisory Committee members. Simran followed with an overview of the meeting agenda, an overview of the Specific Plan process, where the team is currently at in the process, and what efforts the consultant team has completed since the last Advisory Committee Meeting in December 2020.

Final Vision Themes and Guiding Principles

Simran presented the revised Vision Themes and Guiding Principles which are now final for the project. The Vision Themes and Guiding Principles were updated based on the over 100 public comments that were received from December 15th, 2020 – January 10th, 2021. The final Vision Themes and Guiding Principles are as follows:

Vision Themes: Vitality, dignity, equity, preservation, safety, and innovation

Guiding Principles (note these are high-level guiding principles – there are further details following each high-level principle which can be viewed in the full Vision Themes and Guiding Principles are featured at the end of this document)

- Preserve key elements that make Downtown unique
- Establish a varied choice of uses and experiences for our diverse community
- Create housing opportunities for all
- Promote local economic prosperity
- Create a vibrant, safe, and active Downtown
- Foster a healthy, inclusive, and culturally connected community where all members can thrive
- Re-imagine and innovate mobility options and connections
- Incorporate sustainable design elements to improve community health

What Big Ideas We Have Heard So Far

Following the Vision Themes and Guiding Principles, Simran summarized the Big Ideas the consultant team has heard through community input to date. These big ideas are listed below:

- Retain Downtown’s **historic architecture and character**
- Build on and extend **Downtown’s walkable scale**
- **Activate Downtown** with new uses, special events and programming, and:
 - Provide **improvements to the public realm** – streetscape, public art, murals
 - **Re-imagine Main Street** right-of-way to address goals

- Provide **more housing choices** and maintain affordability
- Improve **bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety**
- Address **traffic speed and congestion concerns**

Downtown Character Areas and Opportunity Sites

Simran presented a refined downtown framework and character area map. The downtown framework has been divided into character areas - originally there were six character areas which were presented at the last Advisory Committee meeting. Through refinements there are now eight total character areas. They are listed below, and the new character areas are underlined. A full map of the character areas is featured at the end of this document.

- Historic Downtown Core
- Civic Core
- Gateway
- Commercial Flex
- Residential Flex
- Workspace/Industrial Flex
- East Neighborhood
- West Neighborhood

For each character area the key existing characteristics, placemaking priorities, and proposed land use and character were presented. Additionally, some character areas feature potential opportunity sites. These opportunity sites have the potential to spark catalytic development and new uses in the downtown. Brief high-level concepts were presented for each of the potential opportunity sites to illustrate the types of development that could occur on these sites. However, since many of these sites are privately owned, these concepts are only a preliminary idea of what could be built on these sites. This detailed information can be accessed in the full meeting presentation which is located on the project website and a link is provided at the end of this document.

Downtown Street Framework and Improvements

Peter VanderWal, project consultant, began this section by highlighting the importance of balancing priorities and tradeoffs that each street intervention and potential improvement brings. When balancing priorities, it is important to remember that streets have various users with various needs. There are

pedestrians, vehicles, bicyclists, business owners - all of whom share the same right-of-way but at times have conflicting priorities in terms of the way they would like to utilize the right-of-way.

Megan Weir, project consultant, provided an overview of the downtown existing street framework. This included the Main Street corridor, various regional connectors (Lake Avenue, Beach Street, Riverside Drive, Freedom Blvd), cross-town connectors (Union Street/Brennan Street, Rodriguez Street & Walker Street), and local neighborhood-serving streets and how they each relate to the connection and movement of users in the downtown.

Megan explained that a key multi-functioning street in the downtown is Caltrans State Route - 152 which runs along portions of Main Street, Lake Avenue, and Beach Street. Caltrans controls the portions of each street that SR- 152 runs through. Currently, Lake Avenue and Beach Street are part of a one-way couplet – the consultant team is exploring short- and long-term options on how to improve these streets as well as their potential conversion to two-way again. The benefits for the conversion for various users and to the public realm in the downtown was also discussed.

Existing, short, and long-term options were presented for the following streets along with the tradeoffs and benefits each option brings to the downtown and its various users. To view the existing, short, and long-term options, please see the full presentation at the end of this document.

- Main Street (SR-152 between Lake Avenue and Beach Street)
- East Beach Street (SR-152)
- East Lake Avenue (SR-152)
- Walker Street
- Various Neighborhood Streets including Brennan Street, Union Street, Maple Street, and 2nd Street

Bicycle Improvements

Following the street improvements, Megan presented the existing bicycle facilities and the proposed bicycle network improvements. An overview of the various types of bike facilities was provided and then maps of both existing facilities and proposed bicycle networks were presented to the group. These maps can be found at the end of this document, as well, as in the full meeting presentation.

Comments/Questions from AC Members

Following the presentation Simran asked the group if they had any questions on the presentation materials. Two questions/comments were raised by AC members.

- A reminder to not lose sight of the need to have cameras on the street lights.
- When will public comment be?
 - *Members of the public will stay in the main room as the AC breakout to into groups. There will also be formal public comment after we do report backs from breakout rooms.*

Breakout Room Discussion and Report Back

Meeting attendees were then assigned into breakout rooms where groups were instructed to dive into each character area and discuss the following in detail -

- Placemaking priorities:
 - Are these the right vision and priorities?
 - Are we missing anything?
- Opportunity sites
 - Do the concepts shown meet your vision for the Character Area?
 - Are there any opportunities we have missed?
- Street and Bicycle Network
 - Does the proposed street and bicycle network balance the desired priorities?
 - Are there other opportunities we should explore?

The AC members were in two breakout groups while the public attendees stayed in the Zoom main room. Each breakout room had one facilitator and one notetaker from the project team and all attendees were enabled to use the Zoom annotate tool to write comments and draw directly on the maps provided.

Following the breakout rooms, the group reconvened together and reported back on their conversation. Breakout room discussions are summarized in a high-level below:

AC Group 1:

- Support the idea of gateways into the downtown – a reference to Salinas’ new signage was offered and could be used as an example for Watsonville.

- Discussed the logistics of developing on publicly owned land vs. privately owned and what parking agreements may come with this.
- Would like to see roof terraces as another form of open space in the downtown.
- Plaza is a great gathering space – would like to see parklets as another form of open space that can improve the public realm.

AC Group 2:

- Agreed that Main Street should go through a road diet and acknowledged the complicated relationship that Caltrans has to this improvement.
- Important to not lose sight of Vision Zero – people coming downtown need a sense of security, regardless of what use or mode brings them to the downtown.
- Need to take into account what is already in the downtown and remember that there are a lot of privately owned businesses.
- A lot of support for the ideas that were presented, now interested in prioritizing and figuring out where to start first.
- Discussion of the types of housing that is needed in the downtown, especially when more people will be coming to the downtown.
- Important to consider how the City will address and work with the local community who is experiencing homelessness.

Public Attendees Group:

- Main concern that was discussed was Affordable Housing and what that actually means.
- Request for a formal training on housing from the City so that the community can better understand the legality behind housing, what the city has control over, what the council has control over, etc.
- Important to retain the local small business, such as The Bean. These businesses are vital to the downtown and community.
- More arts!!! Fox Theater, Porter Building, and Youth Center would be a great area to develop the arts and support local artists.
- Proposed the idea of adding parking behind Gottschalks with Affordable Housing above.
- Supports the ideas of pedestrian pathways/walkways that cross-cut blocks and make the pedestrian experience safer and at times faster in the downtown.

Public Comments

Members of the public were given the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or comments on the material presented thus far. Two community members provided public comment. These comments are summarized below:

- Would love to see the Porter Building become an Arts Center. The Fox Theater could become a live-theater for comedy, dance, and performance shows. Important to showcase the art and talent that currently exists in Watsonville. All of the presentation material looked really nice but main concern is that current residents may no longer be able to afford to live in Watsonville after this. Need to focus on the current residents, their income, and then find a balance so Watsonville can grow while current residents can stay. Would love to see more arts represented in the Downtown Specific Plan
- Excited about the street calming concepts and to slow traffic throughout the downtown. Also excited about the potential long-term concepts for Caltrans SR-152. By slowing these streets down it will be a great asset to the plaza and to the experience in downtown. Interested in the various housing types that were presented and support these diverse types of housing.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Simran closed the meeting, offering next steps and acknowledged that there will be a community workshop on May 6th. There will also be a second community survey released at the community workshop which will be open for about five weeks. Simran requested that AC members share the survey with their friends, family, and networks. The consultant team will be bringing back revised recommendations to the AC at some point this summer/fall. These recommendations will take into account all community input the consultant team has received to date – including the second community survey. A part of these recommendations will include a discussion on Affordable Housing and an Anti-Displacement Strategy.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:00 pm

Relevant Meeting Links

Project Website:

- www.cityofwatsonville.org/1626/Downtown-Specific-Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting #4 Full Presentation:

- www.cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/16051/DWSP-AC-Mtg-4-Presentation-Slides-4-28-2021

Advisory Committee Meeting #4 Facebook Live Recording

- www.facebook.com/watsonvillecity/videos/1166928660444245/

Community Survey #2 – English

- www.surveymonkey.com/r/DWSPSurvey2English

Community Survey #2 – Spanish

- www.surveymonkey.com/r/DWSPSurvey2Spanish

Final Vision Themes and Guiding Principles:

- www.cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/15529/Vision-Themes-and-Guidng-Principles