
Advisory Committee Meeting #3

December 15, 2020

Summary Notes

Meeting Objectives

- Review community survey results
- Overview draft vision themes and guiding principles
- Discuss land use character areas
- Refine land uses, design character and public realm concepts in Breakout Rooms
- Report Back and Public Comments

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members

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

City Staff

Present: Suzi Merriam (CDD Director), Justin Meek (Principal Planner), Ivan Carmona (Associate Planner), Sarah Wilke (Assistant Planner), Carlos Landaverri (Housing Manager Community Development), and Elena Ortiz (Administrative Assistant II)

Consultant Team

- Matt Raimi, Simran Malhotra, and Kelsey Hubbard, Raimi + Associates

Summary Notes

Introduction and Welcome

Matt Raimi, Project Consultant, welcomed the Advisory Committee (AC) members and re-introduced the consultant team to the AC. 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. Attendance was taken for Advisory Committee members. Matt introduced the agenda for the meeting and provided a brief overview of the Specific Plan process and where we currently are at in the process.

Review of Community Survey Results and What we Have Heard so Far...

Kelsey Hubbard, project consultant, presented a high-level summary of the comprehensive community survey results. Kelsey detailed that the full survey summary deepens the analysis by separating out two additional cohorts of responses from the overall comprehensive results. The two cohorts are A. respondents who live in and around the downtown, and B. respondents who identify between the ages of 25-44 years old. Kelsey noted that the survey results echo and support the community input the consultant team has gathered to date. This is a strong sign that key strengths, issues, and opportunities have been identified and represent the community's desires and a strong pathway to move the project forward. A link to the full survey summary was provided in the chat and is posted on the project website. Additionally, the link is featured at the end of this document.

Simran, project consultant, followed with a presentation of a summary of what the consultant team has heard so far from other community engagement efforts – connecting this to the survey results and detailing that the survey reinforces a majority of what we have heard so far. Simran also reviewed strengths, key issues, and opportunities for the Downtown.

Draft Vision Themes and Guiding Principles

Following the community survey results and what we have heard so far summary, Simran presented the draft Vision Themes and Guiding Principles for the Downtown Specific Plan. She outlined that these Vision Themes and Guiding Principles were informed by community and

stakeholder input that has been received to date. These Vision Themes and Guiding Principles will affect the physical, social, and regulatory framework for the Downtown Specific Plan.

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 in the full Guiding Principles document):

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

The consultant team asked for the Advisory Committee and the community's input on these Vision Themes and Guiding Principles. Public comment will remain open until January 10th, 2021 at 11:59 PM. A link to provide comment on the Vision Themes and Guiding Principles was provided in the Zoom chat, as well as the document was sent out to all AC members prior to the meeting and additionally posted on the project website. A link to provide comment on the Vision Themes and Guiding Principles is featured at the end of this document.

Elements of a Successful Downtown

Simran presented elements that make a downtown successful and noted that many of these elements align with what the community has identified as what they would like to see in the downtown or how the downtown can improve. Elements that help make a downtown successful:

- Diversity of uses
- Community events and gathering spaces
- Adaptive reuse and new construction
- Pedestrian-orientated frontages – comfortable, shaded, walkable streetscapes, and public realm

Downtown Framework and Character Areas

Simran presented a refined downtown framework and character area map. The downtown framework was broken into character areas. There are six character areas:

- Historic Downtown Core
- Civic Core
- Commercial “Flex”
- Workspace/Industrial “Flex”
- “Flex” Neighborhood East
- “Flex” Neighborhood West

The following information was presented for each character area: key land use characteristics – area and buildings, public and private street frontages, opportunity sites, proposed land uses and urban design character. 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.

Comments/Questions from AC Members

- Everything we are seeing is very high level and AC members need time to dive deeper into the full material.
- Some documents are titled as “Plan” and people that may have not been involved in all the meetings may be confused by this.
- Curious, where mapping GIS data is coming from
 - Answer: Combination of City and County GIS information
- Is there an overlay of the train and rail trail map that can be shared while discussing this?
 - Answer: Unfortunately, no. However, information on the trail was provided so it could be taken into account.
- Does the guiding principle that speak to diversity include all different types of abilities and status such as age?
 - Answer: Yes, guiding principles answer these issues regarding age inclusivity.

- Are there any other communities you have worked in that we could draw lessons from and overlay in Watsonville?
 - Answer: Yes, however, Watsonville is unique in its own way and it is important that we treat it as such. Guiding Principles are comprehensive, desire to create vibrant downtown building on its historic fabric, other communities use notion that downtown is more than just a commercial corridor, other services and uses need to be incorporated.
- What do you mean by housing opportunities for all? What is the process for housing opportunities for all?
 - Answer: We are still in the visioning part of the process; it is too early to answer this question, but we will address this further along in the process.
- What do you mean by “culturally connected” community?
 - Answer: All community concerns are addressed (ensuring all cultures and communities that make up Watsonville are connected and can thrive)
- Suggesting clarifying culturally connected vs inclusive - terminology seems redundant.
- Principle speaking to downtown being inclusive for all connects to there being a variety of uses and experiences in the downtown that can meet the needs of all community members.
- Important to not underestimate infrastructure, from landscaping to having outdoor seating, to create atmosphere to draw people to the downtown.

Breakout Room Discussion

Meeting attendees were then assigned into breakout rooms where groups were given two character areas each to dive into and discuss in detail. Each breakout room had one facilitator 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. The following maps were provided for each character area: building footprints, aerial, existing land uses, public and private frontages, and opportunity sites.

The consultant team asked for specific feedback on whether the downtown framework and character areas are on the right track in terms of land use and existing character, to identify

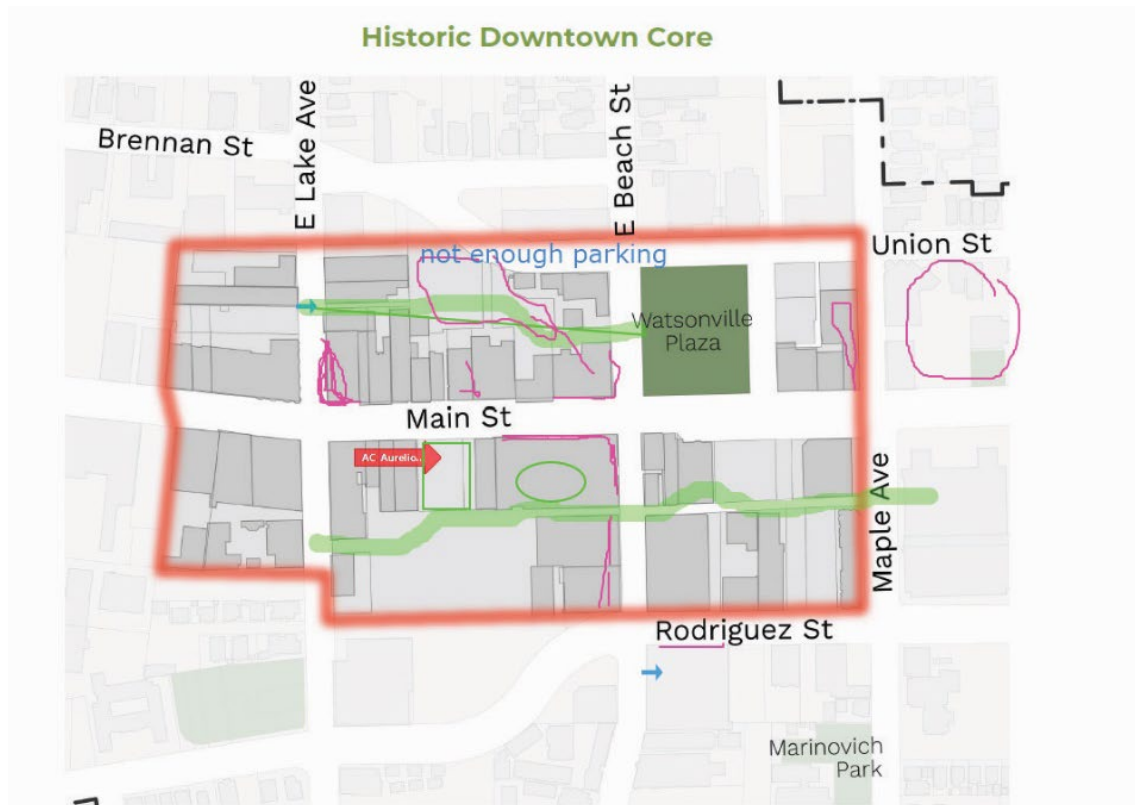
anything that may be missing regarding land use characteristics and potential opportunity sites, and review public realm recommendations and identify if there is anything attendees would change. The mapbook and worksheet provided is available publicly to capture additional comments until January 10th – it is located on the project website and a link is provided at the end of this document.

Breakout room discussions are summarized below:

AC Group 1: Historic Downtown Core and Civic Core

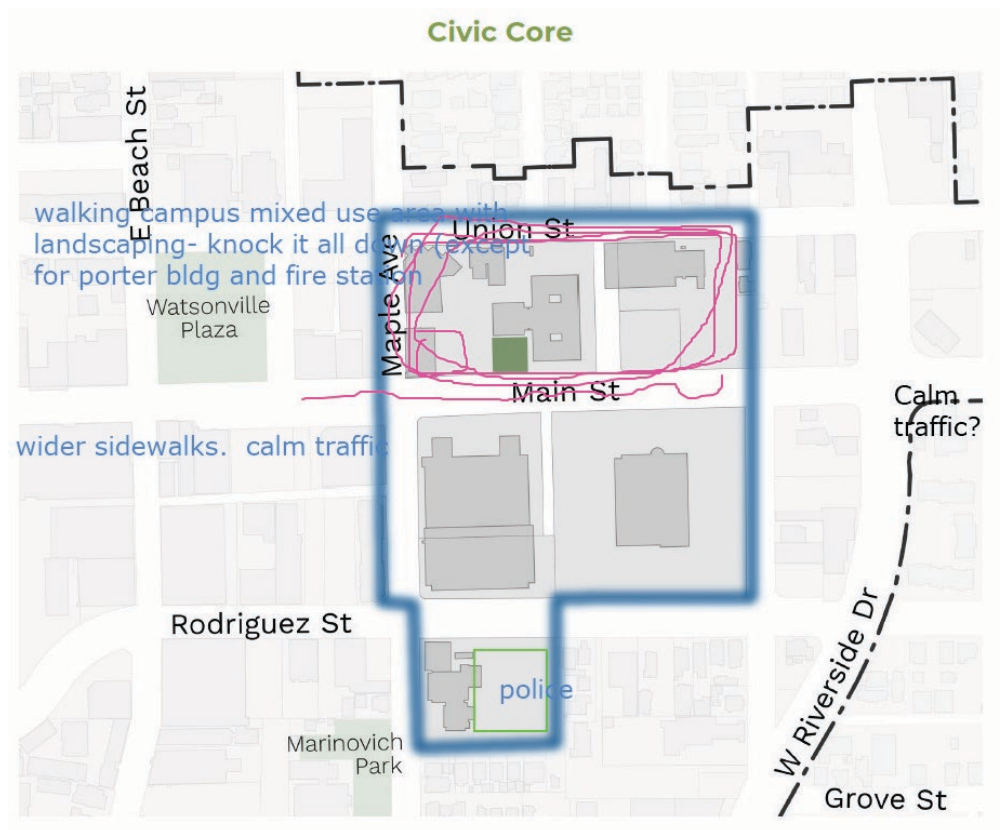
Group 1 identified the following in the Historic Downtown Core:

- Currently not enough parking on Union Street
- There is potential for pedestrian connections to be made on the backside of lots, in the middle of block, between East Beach Street and East Lake Avenue. This pathway would connect pedestrians from the Plaza to East Lake Avenue and provide a safer alternative than the current high-speed atmosphere and unfriendly pedestrian environment on Main Street.
- Another potential pedestrian connection could be made through the middle of the blocks and backside of the lots from Maple Avenue to East Lake Avenue.
- Strong public frontages would make a positive impact at the corner of East Beach Street and Main Street, West Beach Street and Main Street, and East Lake Avenue and Main Street.
- Opportunity for an incentive program that would incentivize people to maintain and upgrade storefronts. Would be great to also have an education program on how to make attractive storefront displays.



Group 1 identified the following in the Civic Core:

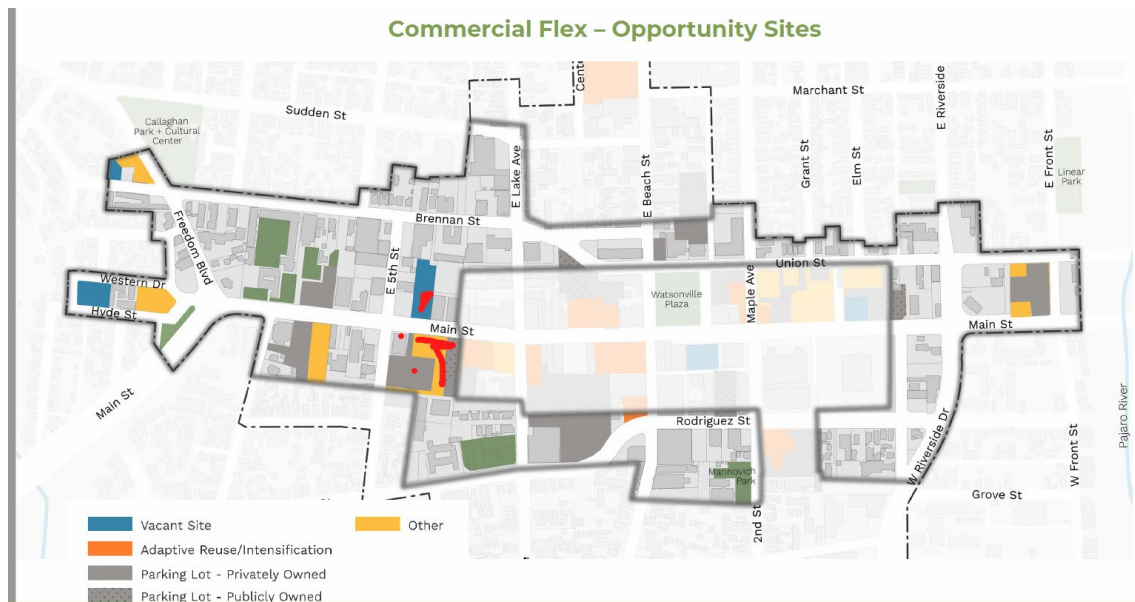
- Traffic needs to be calmed going into Main Street. Wider sidewalks would help calm traffic on Main Street, as well as the installation of a round-about at the intersection of W Riverside Dr and Main Street.
- Relocate the Police Station to share the Fire Station site.
- Create a walkable mixed-use campus feel with landscaping.
- City Hall block should be redeveloped with a new city hall complex and creating a walkable, campus feel.



AC Group 2: Commercial “Flex” and “Flex” Neighborhoods East

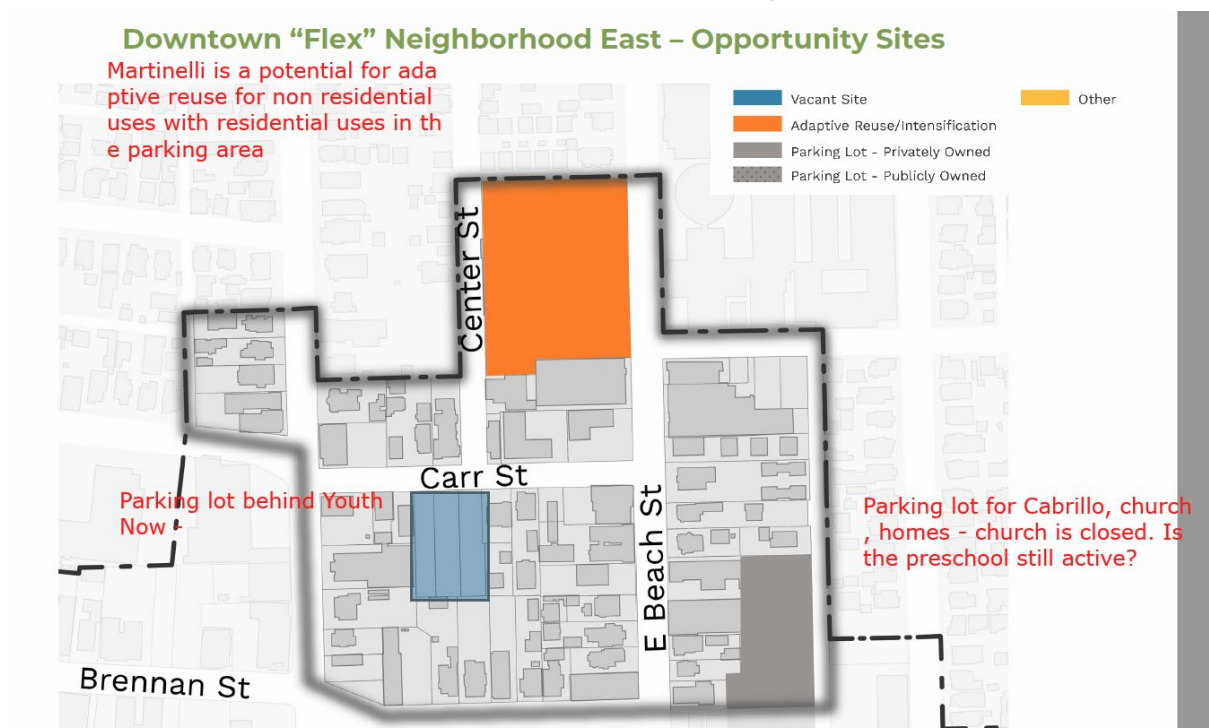
Group 2 identified the following in the Commercial “Flex” area:

- Parking is an issue in the commercial flex area. This group discussed parking alternatives. If parking is consolidated in parking lots, continue to provide close-by parking for handicapped individuals and seniors.



Group 2 identified the following in the “Flex” Neighborhood East area:

- Martinelli’s is a site for potential adaptive reuse for non-residential uses with residential uses in the parking lot area.
- Opportunity to reuse parking lot that currently serves as an off-peak parking lot for Cabrillo College, the church, and homes in the neighborhood.
- Parking lot behind Youth Now is also an opportunity site.

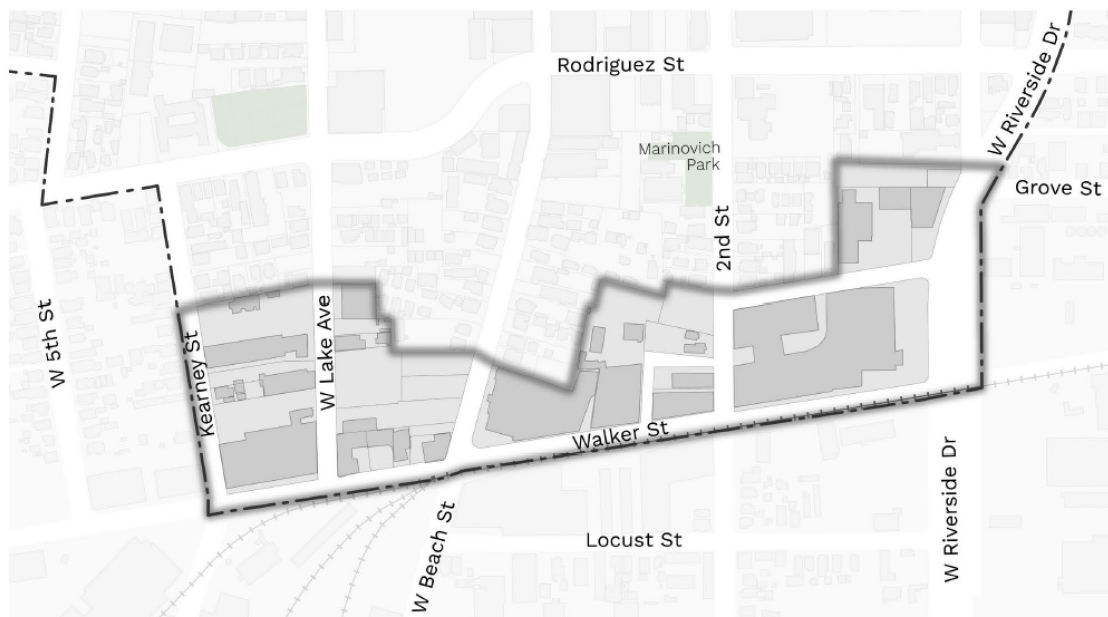


AC Group 3: Workspace/Industrial and “Flex Neighborhoods West

Group 3 identified the following in the Workplace Industrial “Flex” area:

- This area is a historic part of Watsonville – however, has a different character than the downtown core
- Walker Street is industrial in nature and the plan should build off of this character
- Question: If existing industrial uses were to be “phased out” where would they be relocated? Important to think about this when creating the plan
- Would be great to add some light industrial/live-work/flex space opportunities and character to the area to take advantage of young entrepreneurs in the area e.g., Westside of Santa Cruz
- This area has potential to connect with Cabrillo College and offer training/classes for specific industries. They could also offer construction management classes to meet the demand for potential rebuilding, especially in response to recent fires
 - Cabrillo is currently interested in expanding the number and breath of classes they offer so that students do not have to travel to the main campus for all classes.

Workplace Industrial Flex



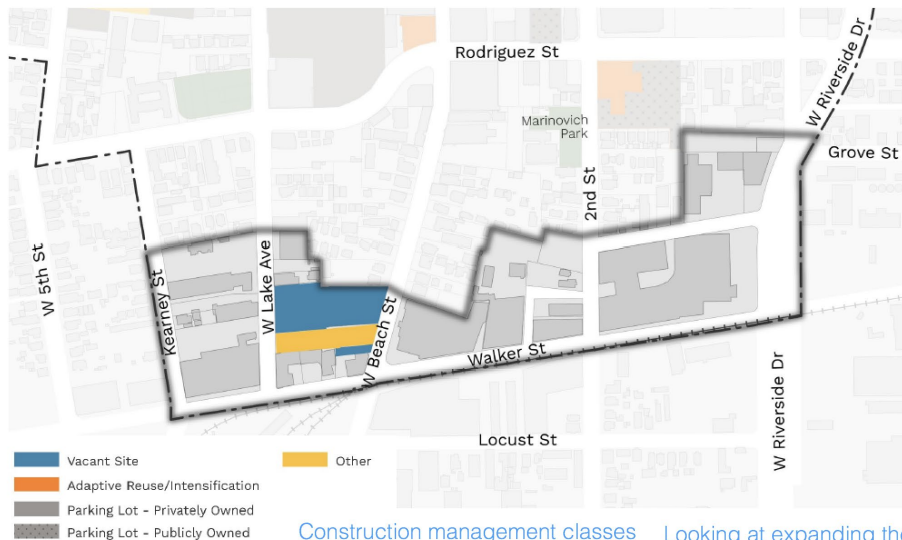
Historic (“core”) part of Watsonville.

Walker is industrial in nature.

Question about where some of these existing industrial uses would be relocated if “phased out”

Light industrial / live-work / flex space opportunities (e.g., Westside of Santa Cruz). Take advantage of young entrepreneurs.

Workplace Industrial Flex – Opportunity Sites

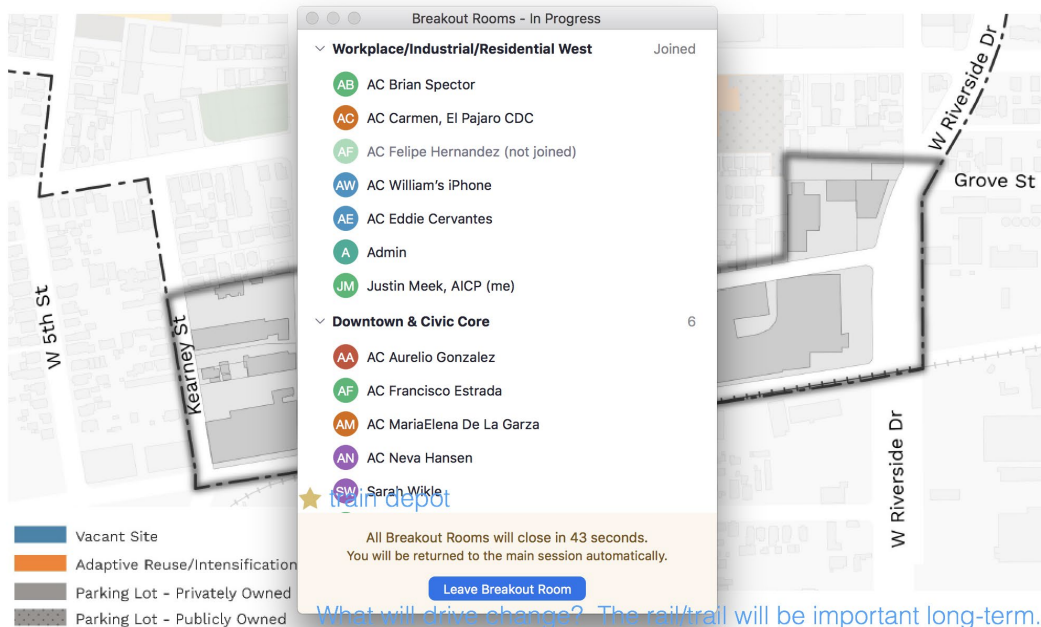


Cabrillo perspective: potential training / classes for specific industries.

Construction management classes to meet demand for potential rebuilding, especially in response to recent fires

Looking at expanding the number and breath of classes so that students do not have to travel to the main campus

Workplace Industrial Flex – Opportunity Sites



What will drive change? The rail/trail will be important long-term.

Other cities have revitalized industrial areas and rail service for supporting commuters and tourism

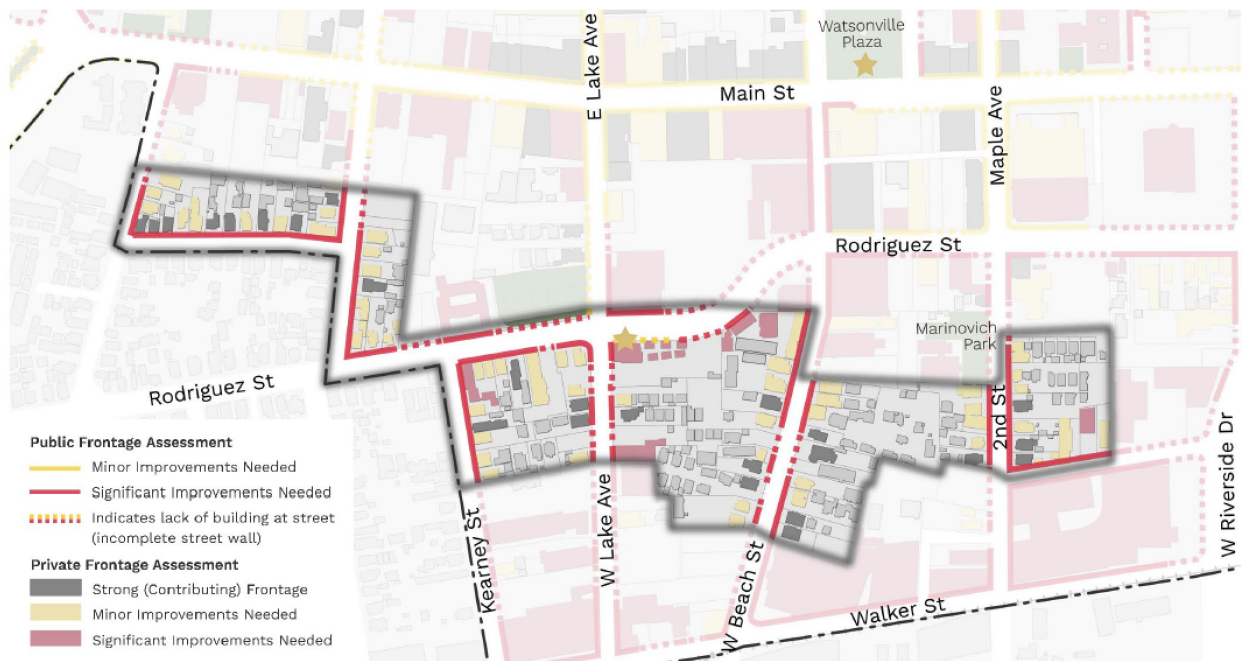
Other good examples to draw from but not necessarily copy

One good example may be the Westside SC Specific Plan which allows a mix of light industrial and residential uses.

Group 3 identified the following in the “Flex” Neighborhood West area:

- Important to think about what is going to drive change.
- The rail trail is going to be important to this area long-term.
- Suggest researching other cities that have revitalized industrial areas and rail service to support commuters and tourism
 - A potential example could be the Westside SC Specific Plan which allows flexibility – i.e., a mix of light industrial and residential uses.
- This area is “light density” for downtown area
- Parking is dictating the urban form in this area
- Important to think of a way to offset parking and costs
- Most properties in this area are occupied – not many vacant parcels

Downtown “Flex” Neighborhood West – Public and Private Frontages

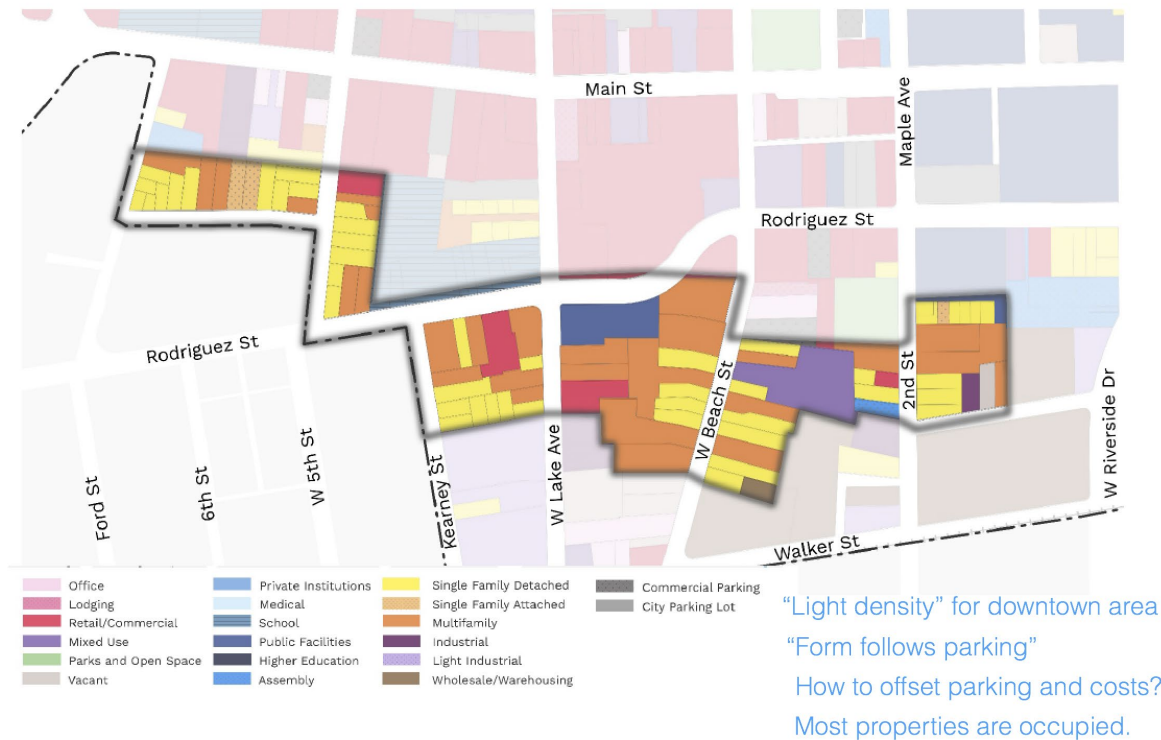


Infrastructure improvements important to infill development

Need comprehensive plan for entire downtown

Concern about focus on one area and taking away from other areas, such as Main St, which should be a priority given limited budget.

Downtown “Flex” Neighborhood West – Existing Land Uses

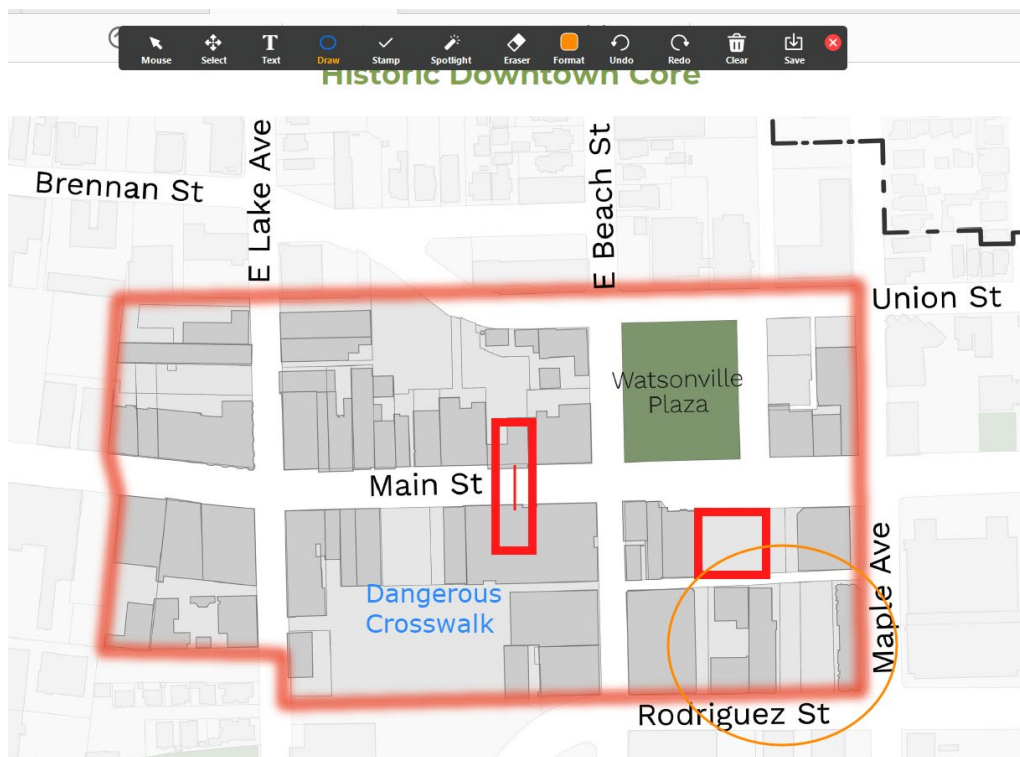


Public Attendees Group: All character areas on a high level (note this group was able to discuss and cover three of the six character areas)

The Public Attendees Group identified the following in the Historic Downtown Core:

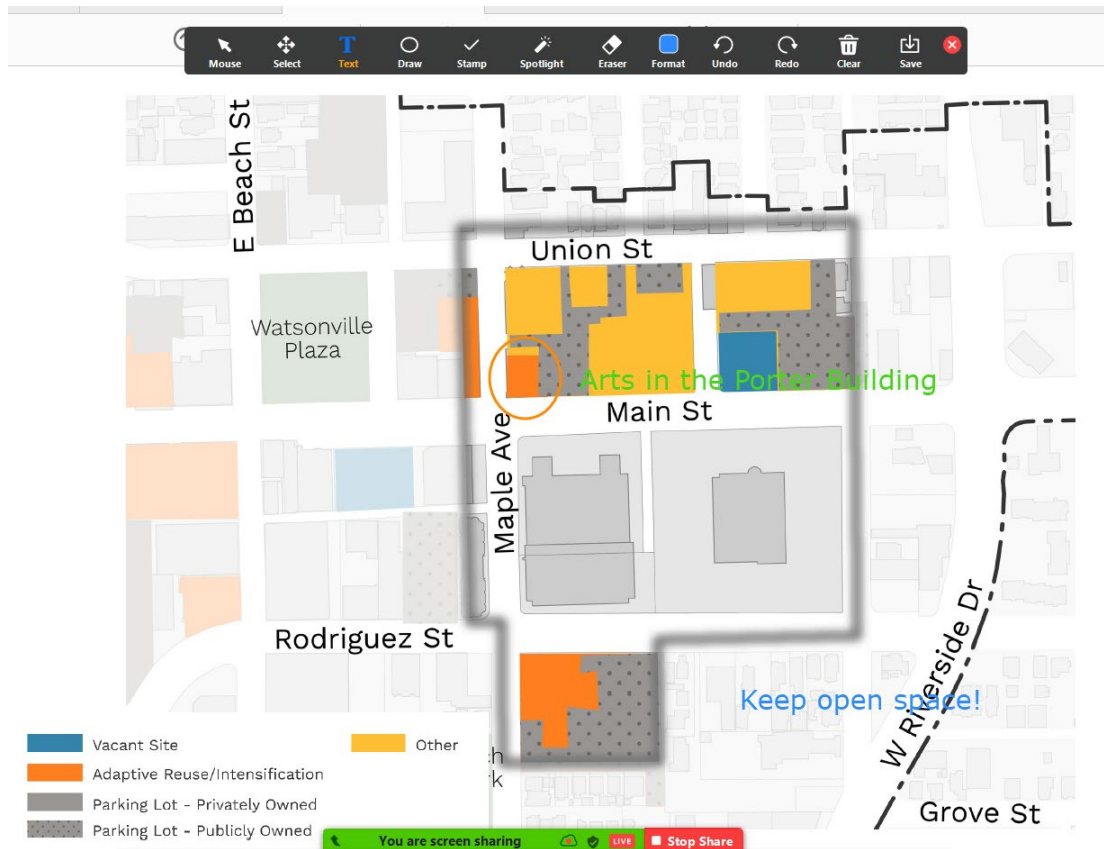
- There is a need for more useful things downtown other than restaurants. Watsonville does not need a new gourmet ghetto.
- Cabrillo College is going to expand in the future – need to think about potential locations for the campus to expand to.
- Experiential recreational facilities are needed in this area such as bowling or a pickle ball court. It is important for community health to offer a space for fun physical activities
- Would like to see a lot of new mixed used in this area. Single use is not serving the community at all hours.
- Interested in Caltrans constraints and limitations and what that means for Main Street in terms of changes.
- Farmer’s Market is nice but it does not highlight local produce. The Oxbow Market in Napa is a great market that highlights local produce really well.

- This area needs to be more walkable and pedestrian-friendly. The charter school moving into the Gottschalks building is going to bring a lot more foot traffic to the area and this area is currently not pedestrian-friendly.
- Need to separate pedestrians from cars. There is an unmarked crosswalk on Main Street that is very dangerous.
- Scooters, e-bikes, and other micro-mobility options will be coming to the downtown eventually. This would help motivate people to get out of their cars by providing mobility options.
- Before the earthquake, this area thrived. There were larger department stores and more retail options.
- Safety issue did not exist before the earthquake but now it certainly does.
- Need to think about what downtown is going to look like post-pandemic. Outdoor dining will likely increase and downtown will need the infrastructure for this – space, seating, and umbrellas.
- The green space across from the Plaza is connected to the Farmer's Market and also has been a space for artist pop-ups – would like to see this continue.



The Public Attendee Group identified the following in the Civic Core:

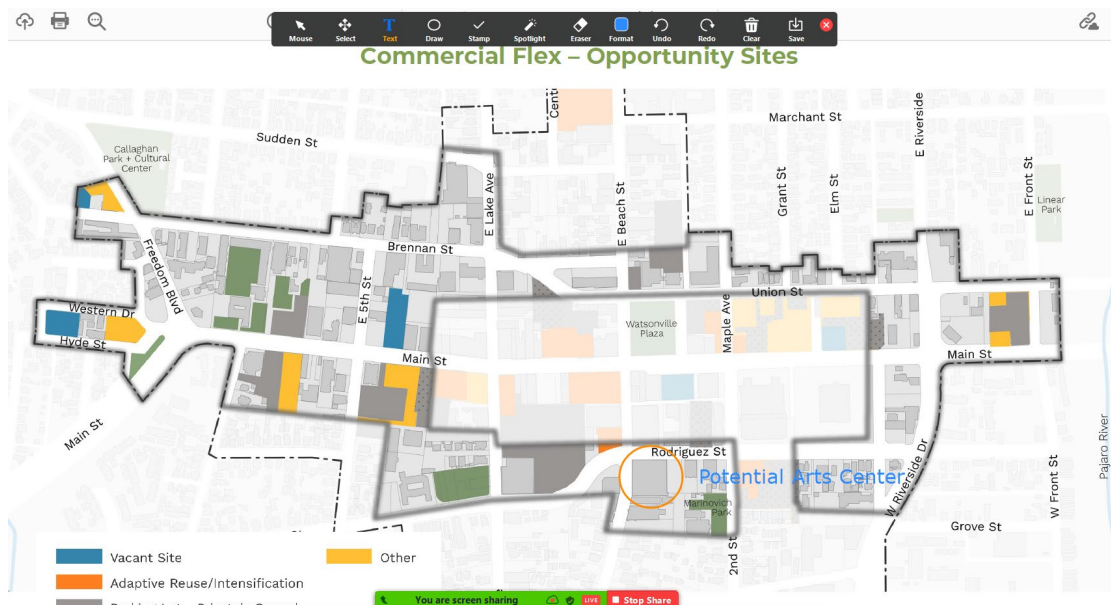
- Porter building on Main Street – City is selling it, and this is definitely an opportunity site
- Porter building could be a Watsonville arts center – this could solidify downtown and really center it.
- Many think that the owner of the Fox Theater is just going to sit on it, which does not help anything at all.
- PV arts trying to keep Watsonville character intact with the Porter Building. They are working with other organizations. Arts are involving all the community, seniors, youth. Wondering what the possibilities are to show support for PB Arts.
- Dangerous crosswalk on Main Street that needs to be addressed.



The Public Attendee Group identified the following in the Commercial “Flex” Area:

- Previously there was proposed interest for projects on Union – Affordable Housing, various retail, Sprouts – what happened to these?

- Market is of tremendous historic value to the community.
- Bus station and Metro – laws will change for housing and this will allow for a lot more infill. This is a highlight impacted area. Many multigenerational families living in the commercial flex area
- Telephones are all over the place and people cannot take strollers around. Not ADA compliant.
- Important to protect the small local businesses that currently exist in downtown.



Breakout Room Report Back

Following the breakout rooms, the group reconvened together and reported back on their conversation. These report backs are featured in the detailed character area discussions above.

Public Comments

Members of the public were given the opportunity to share any thoughts or comments. Several community members provided public comment.

- Is there a way to divert traffic off of Main Street? Would be best to slow down the entire Main Street corridor.
 - Answer: Potentially. Currently exploring options and opportunities

- Need to consider how slowing down traffic would also benefit businesses. Important to get the business community buy in on this,
- There needs to be more opportunities for kids in the downtown. Water play areas – fountains to run through – nature playgrounds, important to offer active play options for kids.
- Breweries would bring people to the downtown.
- Would love to see a community garden downtown.
- Is there any discussion of narrowing down Main Street? Is this being considered?
 - Answer: Yes, this is being considered. Caltrans currently owns the ROW of Main Street and the project team has been in discussions with them – exploring potential opportunities

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Simran closed the meeting, offering next steps and acknowledged that we will be addressing mobility options and land uses in more detail next meeting. This will include Main Street and Caltrans relationship, detailed land use alternatives, development standards, and addressing parking issues downtown. Simran also re-introduced the platform where the community can publicly comment on the draft Vision Themes and Guiding Principles.

Adjourned at 8:00 pm

Relevant Meeting Links

Project Website:

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

Meeting Presentation Slides:

- www.cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/15150/DWSP-AC-Mtg-3-Presentation-Slides-12-15-2020

Community Survey #1 Summary:

- www.cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/15109/Survey-1-Summary-12-08-20

Vision Themes and Guiding Principles Public Comment Link:

- www.raimi.konveio.com/dwsp_visionandguidingprinciples

Downtown Character Area Mapbook and Worksheet

- www.cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/15152/DWSP-AC-Mtg-3-worksheet-maps