

Joint Community Workshop #3 & Advisory Committee Meeting #8

June 30, 2022

Summary Notes

Meeting Objectives

- Planning Process to Date
- Draft Specific Plan:
 - Organization
 - Key Recommendations
- Discussion
- Next Steps
- Raffle

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members

- **Present (6):** Aurelio Gonzalez, Gina Cole, Sylvia Luna, Shaz Roth, Brian Spector, and Felipe Hernandez
- **Absent (12):** Eduardo Cervantes, Maria Elena De la Garza, Francisco (Paco) Estrada-Councilmember, Sal Orozco, Andrew Ow, Ben Ow, Manuel Rodriguez, Neva Hansen, Carmen Herrera Mansur, Jenni Veitch-Olson, Jane Barr, and Tony Scurich

City Staff

Suzi Merriam (CDD Director), Justin Meek (Principal Planner), Maria Esther Rodriguez (City Engineer / Assistant Public Works Director), Celia Castro (Permit Technician), Elena Ortiz (Administrative Analyst), and Angelica Jauregui (Interpreter)

Consultant Team

- Simran Malhotra and Jasmine Williams, Raimi + Associates

Total Meeting Attendees

- 39

Introduction and Welcome

Simran Malhotra, Project Consultant, welcomed the Advisory Committee (AC) members and began by providing a brief overview of zoom tools such as mute/unmute, raise hand, and live Spanish interpretation features. She also mentioned that the meeting was being recorded and live streamed on Facebook in addition to sharing a contact email in case any attendees had technical issues during the meeting. Roll call was not taken on the call; however, the project team recorded meeting attendance.

Simran introduced the consultant team and City Staff and Justin Meek, City of Watsonville (City) Principal Planner, who followed by explaining that the Plan was out for public review. He explained that the public review period was an opportunity for the public to be guided through the plan while also establishing an opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions. He shared that the plan was on an online portal for public review and comment:

- DWSP Chapters 1-4: <https://bit.ly/3l7krpf>
- DWSP Chapters 5-8: <https://bit.ly/3ywxzRE>

Specific Plan Context

Simran followed the Introduction with information on the Specific Plan Context. She reminded attendees of the agenda, purpose and components of a Specific Plan, a review of the Specific Plan Area, an overview of the planning process, and a breakdown of the community engagement efforts made throughout the entire project.

Specific Plan Overview

Jasmine Williams, Project Consultant, kicked off the discussion about the Plan's contents by providing a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the Plan structure. They highlighted that all chapters and appendices were available for public review with the exceptions of Chapter 9: Implementation, which was still in progress because the project team was working on costing and fiscal impacts. They specified that the remaining chapter would be incorporated into the plan soon.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Jasmine continued by explaining that the Chapter 1: Introduction included existing conditions, the plan organization, as well as the plan objectives, which they individually highlighted during their presentation.

Chapter 2: Vision, Goals & Policies

Jasmine transitioned into an explanation of Chapter 2: Vision, Goals, and Policies. They highlighted that the goals and policies outlined in this section set forth the framework for realizing the vision for Downtown Watsonville, while also serving as guidelines for decision making and providing direction. Jasmine reminded the audience that the vision themes and guiding principles were developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and community input over the course of the project. Each of the guiding principles highlighted by Jasmine have set implementation strategies associated with them while the Specific Plan goals have specific policies associated with each of them. They followed by listing each of the goal topics (e.g., Land Use, Urban Design, Affordable Housing & Housing Production, Anti-Displacement, Historic Preservation, Economic Development, Mobility and Parking, Transit, and Infrastructure) and explained that the goals and policies demonstrate the intentions for development, redevelopment, conservation, and growth of the Downtown. Jasmine closed out their presentation by

detailing two sets of goals and policies which were focused on the topics of anti-displacement strategies and mobility and parking.

Questions from AC Members & Public

Concluding Jasmine's presentation, Simran opened the floor for questions and the following questions/comments were raised by AC members and the public.

- Is it possible to change the delineation of Downtown Specific Plan Area boundary line?
 - *The boundary was set early in the planning process and will not change at this late stage of the project.*
- It would be helpful if the Specific Plan document could give the city direction on what it's looking for. Particularly with restaurants, because Watsonville lacks a food culture and there are gaps in places to eat.

Chapter 3: Design Framework

Simran began her presentation of Chapter 3: Design Framework by sharing a detailed design framework map which highlights seven (7) key components:

1. Celebration of History
2. Focus on the Historic Core
3. Prioritization of The Pedestrian Experience (e.g., road diets, parklets, etc.)
4. Catalyzing Development with Opportunity Sites
5. Activating Ground Floor Uses
6. Streetscape Improvements
7. Wayfinding and Gateways

Simran continued by reminding the audience of the eight (8) distinct character areas that define the Plan Area (i.e., Downtown Core, Civic Core, Gateway, Commercial Flex, Residential Flex, Workspace / Industrial, East Neighborhood, West Neighborhood). Simran described each of the character areas in detail by explaining their locations, and associated placemaking priorities. For four (4) of the character areas, Simran provided an explanation of the proposed opportunities site which included the Mansion House Block, Gottschalks Block, City Hall/Civic Campus & U.S. Postal Service, Fire Department, Main and 5th Street Infill, and the Beach/Lake Industrial Site. For each of the opportunity sites, Simran provided details on the proposed land uses, streetscape enhancements, pedestrian connections, open spaces, and transitions into adjacent neighborhoods.

Questions from AC Members & Public

Following the design framework presentation, the following questions/comments were raised by AC members and the public.

- What is the purpose of the opportunity sites?

- *The purpose of the opportunity sites are to prioritize development in these areas and catalyze revitalization in downtown. Figure 3-3 provides a map showing them, which are further described in section 3.3-character areas (pages 58-86).*
- Including a rail and trails components would be a great asset to the Specific Plan Area.
- It would be interesting to bring tech while highlighting agriculture rather than beer gardens and coffee roasters.
- It would be useful to include the depot on a historic list or include it into the plan by adjusting the Plan Area boundary.
 - *Changing the plan boundaries at this stage would severely delay the process.*

Chapter 4: Mobility

Simran transitioned into a discussion about Chapter 4: Mobility where she highlighted some of the standards, guidelines, and design concepts in the plan. She explained the plan's mobility objectives, which include complete streets, parking, curb management, and travel demand management, were the foundation for the four (4) mobility goals established by the plan. Simran discussed the Downtown street framework by highlighting the Caltrans routes in the Downtown (i.e., SR-129 & SR-152) and the conversion of the one-way couplet on Beach Street and Lake Avenue, into a 2-way couplet. She followed with a brief explanation of the street network diagram which provides classification for all downtown streets, a bicycle network map diagram with existing and future bicycle facilities, and a multi-modal network and strategies diagram focused on pedestrian improvements. Simran continued to explain that the plan also included section graphics that would highlight the changes to the street networks. She spent time discussing the key improvements details for a few of the sections which included, Main Street (between E. Lake Avenue and E. Beach Street), E. Beach Street and E. Lake Avenue (between Main Street & Union Street), Union Street (between Maple Avenue to Grant Street), and paseos. Simran concluded the mobility section by highlighting the major recommendations for parking, curb management, and transportation demand management with the intention of supporting the commercial, civic, and entertainment core of the city and enhancing the vitality of Downtown.

Chapter 5: Public Realm

Simran transitioned into a discussion about Chapter 5: Public Realm by highlighting the public realm improvements diagram which showcases the Specific Plan Area improvements intended to enhance the pedestrian experience and create linkages between various activity nodes. In this section of the presentation Simran detailed components of the public realm improvements which included sidewalk treatments, street trees, street furniture, street and pedestrian parklets, lighting, gateways, signage & wayfinding, public art, and landscaping.

Questions from AC Members & Public

The following questions/comments were raised by AC members and the public in response to the mobility and public realm segments of the presentation:

- Was the possibility of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) studied under the mobility section?
 - *The Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) conducted a traffic corridor study, including using the rail right of way for BRT service. More information is available on SCCRCC's website at <https://sccrtc.org/projects/rail/rail-service-studies/>*
- It would be useful for the plan to have a relationship to the existing depot.
- There is a need for senior care and senior housing in Watsonville. Perhaps including mixed-use with commercial on the ground floor and senior housing on the floors above could help the Downtown. I think we should consider another independence SQQ type facility and establish an opportunity site between E. Lake Avenue and E. Beach Street or at another location Downtown. The site near Walker Street is close to the potential future train and the trail that could connect to Caltrain in Pajaro or our current transit center.
- One concern I have with chicanes is that they can sometimes alienate cyclist because the cyclist may lose portions of the bike land and are forced to share the lane with cars.
- It would be useful for the tree recommendation to consider lower water needs, native species, local adaptation, and fire safety.
 - *Many of these considerations were made during the selection of potential trees.*
- Walkability between Walker and Main Street is really challenging for people with mobility issues. They often need to move onto the street because of utility poles and narrow sidewalks.
 - *You bring up a good point. Since this is an old Downtown, we're dealing with issues of limited right of way. The Plan tries to balance those needs while keeping those considerations in mind. There are fiscal constraints to underground utilities; however, in areas with new development there is an opportunity to underground utilities. There is also currently an underground utility district in the Downtown on Lake Avenue (from Rodriguez to Brennan Street) with preliminary plans to underground utilities. PG&E has historically had an underground utility funding source and now that funding is going away, undergrounding will be difficult to fund.*
- Pajaro is going to be a Caltrain stop and a bike to train connection could bring people to Downtown through Pajaro and we should encourage that access with this plan.
<https://www.tamcmonterey.org/monterey-county-rail-extension-phase-2-pajaro-watsonville>
- Watsonville is good at thinking long-term. Please don't pass up opportunities to connect with the depot.
- Gateway signage is unnecessary because you only need one. It would be best to put funding toward infrastructure like rails to trails to funnel people into the Downtown instead.
- I think it's important to support all forms of transportation with this plan.
- Can the city force property owners to make something a historical site?

- *As part of the Specific Plan, we've done a windshield survey of historic properties and the city also has a local register of sites. The Specific Plan has identified potential historic resources. Additional surveys and coordination with property owners will be necessary before any official designation.*
- The plan should look at connections to edges and the slough trail because people use them to get across town without cars. These could be gateways for people rather than for cars.
 - *Connections are acknowledged in Specific Plan even if some of those areas aren't in the Plan Area boundary itself. Please see figure 4-11 Future Bicycle Network, which shows a bike lane along the rail line in the Walker Street right-of-way, in accordance with the city's Tails and Bicycle Master Plan and SCCRTC's Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Train Network Master [Plan].*

Chapter 6: Land Use & Zoning

Simran continued the presentation by explaining the details of Chapter 6: Land Use and Zoning. She highlighted the key components of the chapter in addition to describing the significance of the regulating plan; she described representation for zoning districts, overlays, transitions, and retail-ready Main Street frontages. She also shared that the color scheme of the plan carries through to the tables used in the chapter. She continued to explain land use regulations and permit types, form regulations (e.g., building placement, height, building massing, façade design, and frontages), and site standards and guidelines contained in the plan.

Questions from AC Members & Public

Following this segment of the presentation, the following questions/comments were raised by AC members and the public.

- What is the Downtown neighborhood transition density potential?
 - *Within the neighborhood transition overlay, buildings would be allowed up to 3 stories.*
- Is there an estimated number of how many new homes can be produced as a part of the DWSP (both min. and max)? Specifically, in terms of 6th cycle RHNA numbers.
 - *Please see section 3.4, which indicated that 3,910 DU are anticipated in the next 25 years. Our plan is looking at 3x RHNA in the longer term. The City will also look at the General Plan for other areas across the city in addition to starting the Housing Element update which needs to be approved and completed by winter of next year.*
- Are there best practices on how to deal with the buildings that have been built Downtown? (e.g., retail, housing, parking, and food delivery)
 - *These standards come from real-world examples, we also looked at some of the properties mentioned by the community to help support the writing of the Specific*

Plan regulations. The Curb Management Strategy also deals with how to manage curb pick-up services and pick-up/drop off zones.

- There is a concern for the environment and our climate emergency. Trees could be used for more than their beauty and instead support agriculture, education, and water conservation.
 - *This is an interesting idea; urban agriculture is a big topic, and the tree selection is based on what is most beneficial for Downtown. A key consideration for selecting the street trees were their size, to ensure they are mature enough to provide shade, but not too large as to cause sidewalk damage. More info on street trees can be found on pages 137-140 including native trees such as the California Buckeye.*
- For housing on Lake Avenue and Beach Street, how will developer parking needs be met?
 - *If it is a residential building, they will need to accommodate parking onsite. For commercial uses, they can use shared parking (e.g., City Hall parking and other supply within the parking district)*

Chapter 7: Historic Preservation

Simran moved into the presentation of Chapter 7: Historic Preservation by identifying the designated resources in the Plan Area. She highlighted that there were seven (7) Federal, four (4) State, and 10 Local resources. She also identified that there were 75 eligible resources:

- **Tier I resources (58)** are those that have a high degree of historic integrity, and
- **Tier II resources (17)** have less integrity.

She explained that the purpose of differentiating Tier I and Tier II properties is to classify those properties which have a higher likelihood of historical resources eligibility and those that are pending further study and formal evaluation. Simran concluded the section by referencing the four (4) Historic Districts proposed in the plan which include the Main Street Commercial District, East Beach Street Residential District, West Beach Street Residential District, and East Beach Street Residential District.

Chapter 8: Infrastructure

Simran transitioned into Chapter 8: Infrastructure by explaining that part of evaluating the future of Downtown entailed evaluating the existing infrastructure such as water supply, sanitary sewer, and stormwater. She explained that generally the current systems that are in place are sufficient to support new development, but there are areas that will require certain upgrades to support the increase in future demands. Maria Esther Rodriguez, The City Engineer / Assistant Public Works Director, finished by stating that as the city goes through their update program some of these upgrades and replacements will take place.

Appendices

Simran mentioned that the Appendices consisted of three parts. One focused on Community Engagement effort throughout the process, another focused on the Applicable General Plan Goals & Policies, and a final appendix which included the Historic Report.

Questions & Discussion from AC Members & Public

Following this segment of the presentation, the following questions/comments were raised by AC members and the public.

- When is the EIR coming out for remarks?
 - *The EIR will be completed over the summer and fall and will be made available to the public then. We will provide a link once the draft EIR is completed so that the public has sufficient time to review and comment prior to it going to public hearing.*
- What emergency service response time will this be evaluated for the road diet?
 - *The proposed road diet would include a center turn lane; emergency vehicles would be able to pass.*
- TAMC has plans to install a road diet in Pajaro along Salinas Road. For more info, see their Pajaro to Prunedale study, section 7 for project area 6:
https://www.tamcmonterey.org/files/90ba39ab3/19_0618+G12+Corridor+Plan+FINAL.pdf
- Caltrans announced they want to make all projects complete streets.
 - *The Director issued new policy that through Caltrans funding, complete streets measures need to be included. Main Street was discussed heavily with them, and we met several times over the course of the project.*
- I would love to see art reflective of the area's history. Buildings and art act as their own gateway.
- We heard a lot about walkability, but not about sitting. Currently the farmers markets and some events lack seating and tables. The lack of seating in public spaces also has racist and ableist origins, so adding benches and tables are important.
- Nightlife such as dancing and art galleries are also important for hours after 9pm.
- Antique stores and thrift stores are important to Downtown and attract unique crowds.
- I would like to see more electrification of Downtown such as EV charging stations.
 - *The plan doesn't include charging locations; however, the building code covers EV ready charging. The City is also looking to install EV charging station on city-owned property and is also a requirement for commercial uses in new development.*

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Simran closed the meeting by stating that a PDF of the plan was available on the project website and also available on a commenting platform called Konveio. She mentioned that comments would be accepted until July 14, 2022 through the platform and via email at downtown.specific.plan@cityofwatsonville.org. Input will inform the Advisory Committee at their next meeting and the Project Team in making updates and edits to the final plan. Simran highlighted next steps in the process which included the Final Advisory Committee Meeting on July 21, 2022, the EIR being underway, and that the Plan Adoption Hearings are anticipated for Fall of 2022. Following next steps, a raffle was held which resulted in two (2) winners of prizes to local businesses. Simran thanked the Advisory Committee and the public for their time, effort, comments, and questions. She concluded by encouraging everyone to review and comment on the document during the public review period.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:00 pm

Relevant Meeting Links

Project Website:

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

Public Draft Comment Pages

- *DWSP Chapters 1-4:* <https://bit.ly/3l7krpf>
- *DWSP Chapters 5-8:* <https://bit.ly/3ywxzRE>
- *Appendices:* <https://cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/19286/Draft-DWSP-Appendices>

Joint Community Meeting & Advisory Committee Meeting #8 Flyer:

- <https://www.cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/19291/Joint-Community-Workshop-3-and-Advisory-Committee-Meeting-Flyer-English>

Joint Community Meeting & Advisory Committee Meeting #8 Full Presentation:

- <https://cityofwatsonville.org/DocumentCenter/View/19312/Joint-Community-Workshop-3-and-Advisory-Committee-Meeting-Presentation-Slides-6-30-22>

Joint Community Meeting & Advisory Committee Meeting #8 Recording:

- *Spanish:* https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YAWT21iRvXiDGcqm3GqNQb7pW_KtFKQZ/view
- *English:* <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zv0WKSe5jpQjyINVQoQyPP1dsXb7gXDy/view>