

City of San Carlos

Downtown Specific Plan



March 4, 2023

Coffee and Comments Open House

Feedback Summary



COFFEE AND COMMENTS OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

Background

In March 2022, the City of San Carlos kicked-off the process to work with the community to create a new vision for Downtown San Carlos, including Laurel Street, El Camino Real, and the cross streets from Holly Street to Greenwood Avenue. This project, called the “Downtown Specific Plan,” will build upon what’s best and most loved about Downtown San Carlos, and take a close look at what needs updating or changing. This process will last about two years, with completion targeted in spring 2024.

Event Overview

As a follow up to virtual community workshop held on February 15, the City hosted an in-person Coffee and Comments Open House for the Downtown Specific Plan on March 4th, 2023 between 10 am to 12 pm at the City Library at 610 Elm Street.

The open house presented an additional opportunity to collect feedback from the community on three preliminary concepts related to place-making and urban design. These concepts included improvements to alleyways, the 700 Block of Laurel Street, Harrington Park, and a new plaza off the 600 Block of Laurel Street. There were two presentations by Lisa Porras, Planning Manager, for the Advance Planning Division - one at 10:15 am and the second one at 11:15 am.

Over 70 community members joined City staff for coffee and pastries and had an opportunity to ask staff questions, view the exhibits, share ideas, and give their feedback.



Community Feedback by Themes

Closure on Laurel

- Community members want City to think big and bold in terms of vision for Downtown.
- Resounding support for extending closure of Laurel Street to all blocks, not just 700 Block.
- The community likes the walkable space currently on Laurel and supports extending it between Arroyo and San Carlos, and Walnut between San Carlos Ave and Cherry.
- People like having a street that is walkable and supports pedestrian activities like places to sit and have coffee.
- A few community members felt full closure plaza would be overdone.

Building Heights

- Some community members suggested keeping heights low along Laurel and maintaining a “small town” feel. One idea was to focus height along El Camino, not Laurel.
- Other comments supported taller buildings with wider space between. The idea that taller buildings create shaded streets which is desirable (“nobody wants to sit unshaded or unsheltered in the street.”).
- Public Space elements/design considerations
- Community wants more seating and gathering places with the space to feel more welcoming and inviting with greening and public art.
- Support for welcoming and central gathering space e.g., Piazza, Square, and Plaza.
- Having events & space where the community can gather.
- Places for kids to play while parents shop.
- Aesthetically pleasing strolling area or seating.
- Places for local artist/ musicians (not large bands) that provided an individualized “experience”.

Public Art

- Community also wants public art or community art as part of the spaces including artistic displays (Like umbrella street in Montreal).
- Suggestion to utilize local artists to offer displays in space and to tie the space thematically to other planned areas or destinations like wine/brewery/art districts.
- Revitalize Alleys through “surprising/delightful” art to attract pedestrians.
- Invest in design concepts that inspire (unique lighting, seating, and signage).
- Fun street art for children to explore & discover, e.g., Hunt for mosaic animals, commemorative tiled, animal statues discretely placed.

Businesses

- Walkable, interesting/diverse businesses that are local.
- Collection of local businesses, especially restaurants & cafes.
- More new shops/cafes/ restaurants.
- Diversity of Businesses (Mom-n-Pop)
- Local business/ shops/cafes/ restaurants.
- Unique businesses that don't make Laurel a food court.

Landscaping

- Making spaces inviting with greenery, trees, plants, etc.
- Open green space.
- More hanging baskets, flowers.
- Native planting with signage for folks to learn about, the plant name, origin and fun fact.
- More trees and green space.

Biking and Micro-mobility

- Street that is friendly for bicycles including e-bikes.
- Inviting and safe, e-bike & bicycle routes and infrastructure.
- Safe bikes, micro mobility access.
- Dedicated bike lanes leading to and through downtown.
- Add more explicit bicycle plans for complete routes downtown, e-bike parking next to plazas.

Amenities

- Public Bathrooms.
- Lighting & safety.
- Alleyway design and purpose.
- General sense of confusion as to what Alleyways are being designed for pedestrians, cars, or services?
- Suggestion to make Laurel Street people friendly and alleys traffic & parking friendly.
- Some people suggested to "keep alleys as alleys".
- Put all services in one area on street that can have access to parking, i.e., North Laurel.

Parking

- Add parking with high density projects.
- Keep stage facing west. Fix City Hall Fountain before taking up sidewalk space on Laurel.
- Full Closure - no fountain in what street or sidewalk is now. Fix the fountain between the City Hall and the library instead.

