



**CITY OF SAN CARLOS
DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

January 25, 2023, 6:30 PM

CONDUCTED REMOTELY
www.cityofsancarlos.org

MEETING SUMMARY

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Anthony Kamm, EDAC (absent)
Mark Maxwell, PRC (absent)
Samina Ginwalla, YAC
Maya Nayberg, YAC
Amy Buckmaster, Chamber San Mateo County
Jean Dehner, ACC
Allison Chang, Downtown Property Owner
Tom Davids, Downtown Property Owner
Allie Board, Downtown Business Operator
Donna Lera, Downtown Business Operator
Madison Blanton, Special Needs
Joaquin Pedrin, At Large
Sreecharan Chandrasekharan, At Large (absent)
Monette Meredith, At Large
Elisa Espinoza, At Large
James Bertram, Alternate
Cecile Lee, Alternate
Elizabeth Min, Alternate
Tracy Massaro, Alternate

STAFF

Al Savay, Community and Economic Development
Director
Lisa Porras, Planning Manager
Megan Wooley-Ousdahl, Senior Planner
Sajuti Hoque, Senior Management Analyst

CONSULTANTS

Jami William, Principal, RRM Design Group
Katja Dillmann, Senior Planner, RRM Design Group

1. MEETING KICKOFF

The meeting kicked off at 6:31pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

- a. Lisa Porras, Planning Manager, gave the introduction, including the Plan overview and update.

Draft Concepts for 700 Block of Laurel Street

- b. Jami Williams, Principal, RRM Design Group, presented the Urban Design and Placemaking Concepts and options for the 700 block of Laurel Street.

Katja Dillmann, Senior Planner, RRM Design Group, conducted a polling exercise using Slido.com.

Downtown Advisory Committee (DTAC) Discussion on Laurel Street 700 Block

Jami Williams clarified that in the Flexible Closure Option, parklets could remain, beautified, and standards could be put in place for their visual appearance.

Jami Williams clarified that in the Widen Sidewalk Option, bicyclists and motorists will share the travel lane.

Joaquin Pedrin (At Large) asked about the implementation time.

Jami Williams explained that the Specific Plan would provide direction on how the streets should be configured in the future and then functionality would be programmed later.

Joaquin Pedrin wanted to know if the parking for all of Laurel Street would be proposed to parallel or just on the 700 block?

Jami Williams shared that this depends on which option is chosen.

Joaquin Pedrin shared that the Plaza Option is great, but it must depend on the alley solutions, especially for business owners.

Maya Nayberg (Youth Advisory Committee) shared that the teens would go to downtown if there is a plaza to hang out, and it would be a safer environment.

Amy Buckmaster (Chamber San Mateo County) shared that she loved the Plaza idea, and it could capture community events. She shared her concern for businesses and emergency response teams and wondered how businesses would get their goods and services. Amy Buckmaster also wanted to know if the bollards would be in place.

Jami Williams stated most likely bollards would be in place.

Samina Ginwalla (Youth Advisory Committee) wants a more accessible downtown. She echoed Amy Buckmaster's concern. She added that there would be so much more to experience when one is on foot.

Donna Lera (Downtown Business Operator) referred to the Green Furniture photo in the presentation. She shared that it would be nice to have that. She wanted to know with a wider sidewalk, how would space be shared between pedestrians and restaurant outdoor dining. Donna Lera stated that it would be difficult to support retail when cars could not access the stores, and referenced UPS moving to San Carlos Avenue.

Jami Williams clarified that both the Widen Sidewalk and Full Plaza Options would have room for outdoor dining.

Jim Bertram (Alternate) shared that he is leaning towards the Plaza Option. He agreed with the representatives from the Youth Advisory Council. He shared that a plaza would separate San Carlos from other cities and is flexible for future needs.

Cecile Lee (Alternate) shared that the Plaza Option would allow more opportunity for inter-generational activities such as theatre in the summer, movies, etc.

Elizabeth Min (Alternate) wanted to know the funding model and asked if the City could afford a plaza.

Al Savay, Community and Economic Development Director stated that everyone should focus on the desired outcome first, then figure out the funding. He shared that the City would get creative about the funding, and everyone should dream big.

Allie Board (Downtown Business Operator) shared that if the City goes with the Plaza Option she would not be in business. She shared that in the last few months, her business was terrible. Her customers could not find parking. Allie commented that there is a youth center and library for youth to hangout; they do not need a plaza to hang out. Allie Board shared that during the City's public events such as Globin Walk and Winter Lights, she hardly got any business on those days, and business was the worst during Art and Wine Faire.

Lisa Porras shared that the DTAC would discuss Land Use in the Specific Plan. She stated that the City just adopted the Housing Element, which is supporting increased development along El Camino Real and throughout the downtown, specifically for residential uses. As the Downtown grows, more people would be living around Downtown. Lisa Porras added that soon they would discuss how housing could change the Downtown in a positive way.

Allison Chang (Downtown Business Operator) shared that a Plaza would allow greater access for people using wheelchairs.

Donna Lera shared that she heard challenges from retailers similar to what Allie Board shared. She stated that a few businesses have already left Laurel Street and UPS Store was a great example.

Maya Nayberg commented that younger youth use the Youth Center, but older teens like high schoolers do not necessarily have a place to go, which is why the plaza will be beneficial for this older age group.

Elisa Espinoza (At Large) thanked Allie Board for her great point. She agreed with Lisa Porras that that having more housing near Downtown would help increase foot traffic. Eliza Espinoza shared that she lives a block away from Downtown and find herself going to the Downtown shops frequently because it is so close, and she does not need to drive.

Draft Concepts for Public Spaces

Jami Williams presented the Draft Concepts for Public Spaces.

Katja Dillmann conducted the Polling Exercise on Public Spaces.

Katja Dillmann clarified that Eat Lunch Outside in the polling option meant take away lunch. She also clarified that People Watch meant a place to enjoy the community without having to purchase anything.

Downtown Advisory Committee (DTAC) Discussion on Public Spaces

Jami Williams clarified that the discussion covers all public spaces not just the 700 block of Laurel Street.

Tracy Massaro (Alternate) wanted to know the decision process for the concept options.

Lisa Porras explained that the City staff are collecting feedback from the DTAC first, then will be holding a community-wide workshop on February 15, 2023. After that, the City will present these options and the community's feedback to the Planning and Transportation Commission, and then to the City Council. Lisa Porras added that the City Council would provide their input and discuss a preferred recommendation. City staff will return to the DTAC after fine-tuning the concepts. Lisa Porras stated that this is an iterative process.

Monette Meredith wanted to know how to address the equity of the businesses on the 600 and 700 block. She shared that a plaza in one block would bring unequal opportunities.

Jami Williams stated that the Downtown Specific Plan would look at the entire Downtown area.

Amy Buckmaster shared that if there is a plaza, there should not be any pop-ups to take away sales from the permanent businesses.

Elizabeth Min stated that there is a need to look at parking.

Maya Nayberg referred to Cecile Lee's comment about an outdoor movie theatre. She stated that the Youth Center has a big movie screen. The Youth Center is a more structured place for younger students, and high schoolers do not go there. Maya suggested a coffee shop for studying.

Cecile Lee seconded Maya Nayberg's suggestion of coffee shop to expand to adults who work from home. She suggested integrating an interactive game area in the plaza such as bocce ball and chess games. Cecile Lee added organizing a Beer Garden Oktoberfest like the one organized by Redwood City would be nice.

Draft Concepts for Alley Improvements

Jami Williams presented the Draft Concepts for Alley Improvements.

Downtown Advisory Committee (DTAC) Discussion on Alley Improvements

Joaquin Pedrin wanted to know if more research would be done. He shared that there is a 40-foot alley area behind UPS, which is a big opportunity.

Jami Williams confirmed that more research would be done, and the City needs to look at alleyways in a cohesive way.

Monette Meredith (At Large) stated that it is unclear where businesses are in the alleyways, and delivery trucks are blocking the way.

Donna Lera suggested to have security in the alleys and making them a one-way street. She added that there needs to be more ADA-accessible parking.

Donna shared that businesses along El Camino Real and businesses along Laurel Street share the alleys that run behind and between the buildings. She shared that space is

limited, and it can be difficult for the businesses to share the space and meet their needs for access, deliveries, etc. Solutions need to be considered to maximize the usage of the alleyway areas.

Samina Ginwalla shared that she saw needles, empty alcohol bottles, and beer cans in downtown. She stated that if the City is going to fix the alleyways, safety should be a top priority.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

6. WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

Lisa Porras shared the following:

The upcoming Downtown Specific Plan Community Workshop will be held on February 15, 2023, starting at 7:00pm. She asked the DTAC to reach out to their network and invite their friends, neighbors, and colleagues to the workshop.

All the feedback from the DTAC members on the presentation and the questions from the polls will be fine-tuned before presenting this to the broader community.

The Zoom meeting link for the February 15th Downtown Specific Plan Community Workshop will be sent out to the registered attendees on the week of the event.

The project is still in Second Phase – Concept Plans Alternatives.

DTAC is the first to view the Concept Plans. These will then be taken to the broader community, followed by the Planning and Transportation Commission, and then City Council. The Concept Plans will evolve. A preferred recommendation based on all the input from the community will be shared with the DTAC for their feedback.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 pm.