



## Planning and Transportation Commission STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** May 20, 2024

**ITEM TITLE:** Receive a Presentation on the Downtown Advisory Committee Endorsed Street Design as part of the Downtown Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan project.

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### PROJECT BACKGROUND

City Council Strategic Objective:

*“The City of San Carlos will work with residents, property owners, business owners, committees, commissions, the Chamber of Commerce, and all other interested members of the community to develop a plan to understand and ensure that the downtown meets the needs of the community and businesses now and into the future.”*

Downtown Specific Plan+ Streetscape Master Plan Study Area

The Downtown Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan study area (Figure 1) is framed by Holly Street to the north and Greenwood Avenue to the south, with El Camino Real to the east and Walnut Street to the west. The Downtown Specific Plan will also address the streets around the Civic Center: San Carlos Avenue, Cherry Street, Elm Street, and Chestnut Street as indicated by the green dotted line in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Downtown Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan Study Area**



### Draft Vision Statement for the Downtown Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan Project:

“Downtown is the **heart of San Carlos** that provides a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, safe, charming, futuristic, and accessible destination for the community. It is a **place for celebration and gathering** that offers **diverse and authentic experiences** through a draw of food, retail, services, art and music in a visually attractive environment for the growing community. Downtown is an **inclusive place** with easy access for all, opportunities for housing and businesses of all types, and **inviting spaces for all users**. Downtown San Carlos is a **sustainable district**, with landscape that **supports ecological and community health and well-being.**”

### Milestones Since May 2023:

During a Study Session on April 24, 2023, the City Council confirmed its support to transform the 700 block of Laurel Street into a permanent public plaza. Four months later, on August 28, 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-108 and declared its intent to establish a pedestrian mall on the 700 block of Laurel Street. Since that time, staff met with the downtown property and business owners, and the project team collaborated to refine ideas for a new public plaza plus additional street designs for the remainder of the downtown plan area.

A workshop with the Downtown Advisory Committee (“DTAC”) was held in November 2023 to gather their feedback on the refined ideas. This was followed by Downtown Ideation Workshops and Open House, an online survey, and input from City commissions, which altogether led to a DTAC endorsed street design on March 19 and is now ready to be presented to the Planning and Transportation Commission and City Council.

### Meeting Purpose

The goal of this meeting is to present the DTAC’s endorsed street design to the Planning and Transportation Commission (“PTC”). No formal recommendation nor decision will be made. Comments and feedback from the PTC will be shared with the City Council on June 10, 2024. Following the Council’s remarks, the project team will continue with technical analysis relative to traffic and parking outcomes. The outcomes and tradeoffs will be brought back to the PTC and full City Council as part of the process to select a preferred street design and continue to develop the Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan for adoption in 2025.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The process to create the Downtown Specific Plan recognizes the value in executing a robust community engagement strategy that brings people together. This strategy includes rolling up our sleeves and working closely with the City Council appointed advisory committee (Downtown Advisory Committee, or “DTAC”) and inviting input and feedback from the community at large. By working with the community, city staff invite participants to share their stories, concerns, ideas, and inspiration for what the future of downtown could be. Our hope is that participants walk away with a better understanding that they can positively influence the quality, character, vibrancy and health of the downtown where they live, work, and enjoy their time.

Since the beginning of this project, staff worked closely with the City’s Communications Division to carve out a process that would be inclusive and widespread. Outreach methods are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Outreach Methods**

Email distribution list (sign-up on project website)	Downtown Specific Plan Project Website <sup>1</sup>	City Calendar of Events	City Council Newsletters	Announcements to City Commissions/ Committees
Social Media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Twitter</li> <li>• Next Door</li> <li>• LinkedIn</li> </ul>	Government Access TV Channel	Flyers (sent to 9 targeted audiences/locations)	Newspaper Display Ads	Adult Community Center Newsletters
Chamber of Commerce	San Carlos School District Newsletters	ACC Digital Board Sign	Farmers Market	E-Notify
Spotlight Newsletters	City of Good Living Newsletters	Collaboration with City of San Carlos’ Communications Team	-	-

As part of the community engagement strategy, the planning process seeks to engage many key audiences through varied platforms to receive input; these are identified in Attachment 9, Civic Engagement Summary to Date.

**FROM COMMUNITY INPUT TO A DTAC ENDORSED STREET DESIGN**

Based on the input received from the DTAC on November 14, 2023 (Attachment 8), the city staff and consultant team further refined street design concepts and presented these to the community for feedback through 3 different civic engagement options:

- 1) Downtown Ideation Virtual Workshop – December 6, 2023
- 2) Downtown Ideation In-Person Workshop and Open House – December 9, 2023
- 3) Online Survey – December 26, 2023 through January 22, 2024

Street design concepts presented at these venues included:

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<sup>1</sup> [www.sancarlosdowntownplan.com](http://www.sancarlosdowntownplan.com)

- A. Two design concepts for the 700 block of Laurel Street (see Figure 2 below)
  - a. Design ideas for Harrington Park
- B. Two design options for the 600 and 800 blocks of Laurel Street
  - a. Design ideas for the new plaza along the 600 block of Laurel
- C. Redesign of the 1100 and 1200 blocks of San Carlos Avenue
- D. Redesign of Arroyo Avenue
- E. Redesign of Brittan Avenue

Figure 2. Concept Alternatives for the 700 Block of Laurel Street, Between Cherry and Olive Streets

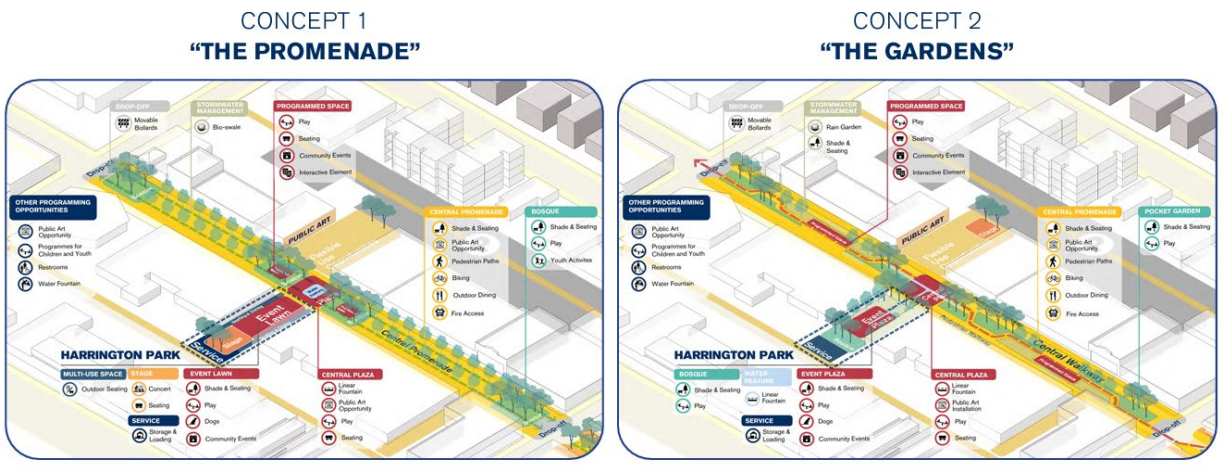


Figure 3. Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan Guiding Principles



The evolution of the designs for streets and plazas were based on Guiding Principles (see Figure 3 above) and community wide feedback received during the Downtown Ideation Workshops and accompanying online survey. Further refinements were developed from input from the City of San Carlos' Economic Development Advisory Commission; Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission; and the Youth Advisory Council. For a detailed account of input and feedback received, please see:

- Attachment 2: Downtown Ideation – Community Feedback Summary Dec 6 and 9, 2023
- Attachment 3: Online Survey, December 26, 2023 through January 22, 2024
- Attachment 4: Economic Development Advisory Commission Input, January 23, 2024
- Attachment 5: Parks, Recreation & Culture Commission Input, February 13, 2024
- Attachment 6: Youth Advisory Council Input, March 13, 2024

Staff and the consultant team thoughtfully considered how to conceptualize all the input and feedback into the proposed street designs. This also included considerations from citywide staff

that were gathered during an interdepartmental meeting on February 29, 2024. The street designs were then brought to the DTAC on March 14, 2024 for their consideration and endorsement.

The concepts presented include a comprehensive design for the 600, 700, and 800 blocks of Laurel Street as shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4. Streetscape Design for 600, 700, and 800 blocks of Laurel Street**



At the end of the meeting, the DTAC endorsed the street redesign concepts (see Attachment 1).

DTACs endorsed street design include the following features:

- diagonal to parallel parking
- wider sidewalks/ active pedestrian friendly environment
- defined 8 ft wide outdoor dining/retail zone (i.e. parklets removed/replaced with traditional outdoor dining appearance)
- lane diets/traffic calming/pedestrian friendly
- protected bicycle lanes
- curbless streets
- public seating areas
- uniform street trees and groves for shaded gathering areas
  - a. uniform theme (i.e. "the sway" carried throughout the downtown core along Laurel Street)
  - b. plaza features on all 3 blocks of Laurel Street

- c. emergency vehicle access provisions
- d. passenger pick up and drop off (PUDO) locations
- e. retractable bollards for access and programmatic closures
- f. provisions/space for public restrooms and drinking fountains
- g. designed to accommodate all existing program offerings (e.g. farmers market, art & wine, goblin walk, hometown days, night of holiday lights, etc.)

The DTAC also gave clear direction to the project team to further study the following topics:

- Public Space Design: public plaza and the Harrington Park design elements.
- Mobility and Street Design: all the streets in the project area.
- Parking Strategy: on-street and off-street parking.
- Alley Strategy: integration of alleys into the public space design.
- Programming: temporary and permanent programs to activate public spaces.
- Strategies for Businesses: policy changes for thriving businesses.

For a detailed account of the DTAC's input from their March 19, 2024 meeting see Attachment 7.

Following the DTAC's endorsement, the project team met with the City's Parks, Fire, and Public Works Departments, the City Council Downtown Subcommittee, as well as members of the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition and staff from SamTrans. City departments were supportive of the proposed street design concepts and offered additional details and key considerations for the project team to address as the plan progresses. The Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition and SamTrans were generally supportive of the proposed street designs.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

Following receipt of the Commission's input, feedback, and response to the DTAC's endorsed street designs, staff will take these ideas to the City Council for its review on June 10, 2024. Following the Council's remarks, the project team will continue with technical analysis relative to traffic and parking outcomes. The outcomes and tradeoffs will be brought back to the PTC and full City Council as part of the process to select a preferred street design and continue to prepare the Specific Plan + Streetscape Master Plan for adoption in 2025.

Respectfully submitted by:

Linnet Kwok, Senior Administrative Clerk

#### **ATTACHMENT(S):**

1. Draft Street Design Diagrams – as Endorsed By DTAC, with Refinements from the Project Team
  - a. 1100 & 1200 San Carlos Avenue
  - b. 600 Laurel
  - c. 700 Laurel

- d. 800 Laurel
  - e. El Camino Real
  - f. Other Street Sections within the Downtown Specific Plan Boundary
2. Downtown Ideation Workshops and Open House – Dec 6 and 9, 2024
  3. Downtown Online Survey – December 26, 2023 through January 22, 2024
  4. Economic Development and Advisory Commission Input, January 23, 2024
  5. Parks, Recreation, and Culture Commission Input, February 13, 2024
  6. Youth Advisory Council Input, March 13, 2024
  7. Downtown Advisory Committee (DTAC) – Endorsement and Comments, March 19, 2024
  8. Downtown Advisory Committee (DTAC) – Meeting Notes, November 14, 2023
  9. Civic Engagement Summary to Date
  10. Case Study – Street Redesign from Grass Valley, CA