



Downtown Merchant Meeting with City Manager
West Park Bistro
788 Laurel Street, San Carlos, CA 94070
October 8, 2026, 8:00 AM

Meeting Summary

Staff Present:

Kathy Kleinbaum, City Manager
Al Savay, Community and Economic Development Director
Lisa Porras, Planning Manager
Sajuti Haque, Economic Development Manager
Grace Le, City Engineer
Andrew Douglass, Senior Management Analyst
Linnet Kwok, Senior Administrative Clerk

Attendees:

Count	Name	Business	Employee/Owner
1	Kevin Clay	KC Holdings LLC	Property Owner
2	Chris Bianchini	Bianchini's Market	Owner
3	Terry Horn	Bow Wow Meow	Owner
4	Russ Vavuris		Owner
5	Lynne Board	Joey Rae	Owner
6	Mus	Stamp	Owner
7	Mike Ayoelota		Owner
8	Ken Castle		
9	Susan Kimmel	Clocktower Music	Owner
10	Alex Kent	Compass	
11	Eilish Lancaster	Lark	Owner
12	Jane Lau	Sunshine HK Café	Owner
13	Robin Rojas	Michelle Fiorg, MD	Office Manager
14	Suzie Hughes	One Life	Owner/
15	Amy Buckmaster	Chamber SMC	CEO
16	Nathan Conte	Groovy Goose	Owner
17	Lori Ryan	Prairie	Owner
18	Miquetta B	Prairie	Manager
19	Garret P	Faith & Spirits	Owner
20	Mark Iwanowski		
21	Susan Hu	King Chuan	Owner
22	Henry Eng	Number5Kitchen	Owner
23	Oliver	Molly O's	Owner
24	Gayle Collins		
25	Ron Collins		

26	Amgela Pace	Blue Line Pizza	Owner
27	Gayle Ellis	Bloomingales	Owner
28	Craig Wiesner	Read & Teach	Owner
29	Brian Kimmel	Clocktower Music	Owner
30	Denise Kirksey	Shelby's Garden	
31	Paula Bozicevia	Ale Arsenal	Owner
32	Paul Dupont	Mudita	Owner
33	G Osbourne	Prairie	
34	Becky Cook	Letter By Letter	Owner
35	Michelle Qodri	Town	Manager
36	Frank Sanchaz	Town	Manager
37	Greg St. Claire	Town	Owner
38	Tracy Everett	The Toss	Owner
39	Kavita Malaviya	Emkay Diamonds	Owner
40	Shannon Williamson	Bow Wow Meow	Owner
41	Allie Board	Joey Rae	Owner
42	Sally Mamott	Skin Care by Sally	Owner
43	Augi Di Paola	JMS Development Partners	Partner
44	Shahab Tehrani	TEH San Carlos	Owner
45	Fredy Joudieh	Sarrtori	Owner
46	Heather Lin	EDAC	
47	April Davis	Blue Line Pizza	Manager
48	Anette Grostal	Nordic Nest	Owner

Al Savay welcomed attendees, explained the purpose of the meeting, and introduced Kathy Kleinbaum, City Manager.

Kathy Kleinbaum provided an update on the implementation of the Downtown Streetscape Plan.

Al Savay opened the floor for questions and comments.

Greg St. Clair, owner of Town kicked off the first feedback.

Henry Eng, owner of Number5Kitchen, presented the results of a downtown survey he conducted. He distributed hard copies of the results to staff and attendees and submitted a series of questions to staff requesting written responses (see attached).

Other attendees shared their comments and concerns.

Attendee feedback/ comments:

Communications

1. Concern over a lack of engagement with business and property owners downtown.

2. Businesses need a reliable process from the City to share information and maintain an open dialogue with the downtown business community.
3. Establish better collaboration between the businesses and the City.
4. Suggestion to use business license contact information for communications to businesses.
5. Concerning that not a single-Council member is present.
6. Attendee shared that there is a Women in Business Facebook group.
7. Need answers to questions, ensure questions are answered and sent to businesses.
8. The Council should do a weekly walk downtown and attend the City booth at Farmer's Market.

Parking

1. Concerns over parking loss, insufficient parking.
2. The City needs to enforce parking regulations.
3. Can the EV charges in Wheeler parking garage be removed? Not in good use.
4. The City's parking spaces at the Caltrain lot should be used for employee parking.
5. The City should build a parking garage at Clark parking lot.
6. Parking is necessary for the food delivery economy.
7. Bianchini's parking lot is public and private combined; more enforcement here is needed.
8. More enforcement of parking and security.

City Activities

1. Can the farmers market be moved out of the 600 block and onto a parking lot, or in the Caltrain parking area?
2. The Art & Wine Faire should start further down the block.

700 Block Laurel Street - Closure

1. Concerns over street closure (700 block Laurel Street) and its impact on businesses.
2. Downtown is an asset and can generate sales tax; city should focus on increasing sales tax by helping businesses directly.
3. The City should re-open the 700 block of Laurel Street.
4. Can we open the 700 block temporarily?
5. San Carlos' context is different than cities with renowned public plazas.

6. Test reopening the 700 block. Evaluate a temporary hybrid configuration, including one-way circulation options, while preserving parklets and pedestrian activities where feasible. Measure the results before making further permanent commitments.

Outdoor Dining

1. Clarify standards for outdoor dining when the plaza is completed.

Business Vitality and Data

1. The City should prioritize downtown businesses; business first.
2. Is the City collecting data on how downtown businesses are performing?
3. Does the City have funds to assist downtown businesses during construction?
4. Concerns about business stability with foreseeable downtown construction combined with current economic conditions.
5. Reflections and interest in forming a downtown business association.
6. Suggestion for businesses to work together and create a downtown WhatsApp group.
7. The street closure is impacting businesses, including other cities like Mountain View.
8. Access to downtown needs to be easy; it's essential.
9. Owner of number5 Kitchen shared results from a self-conducted survey to business operators (see attached)
10. Landlords noted challenges of pulling in new businesses to vacant spaces.

Future Construction Impacts

1. What is the City's plan for access to, and allowance for, businesses to stay open during future construction? There needs to be a plan for storefront access during construction.
2. What is the construction timeline for the 700 block of Laurel Street?
3. The City went through downtown construction before – what will the city do to help businesses stay afloat, provide grants, pay the rent?

Cleanliness

1. Concerns over cleanliness, aphid droppings from infested trees, street cleaning schedule and impacts (the sidewalk cleaning process impacts parklets and outdoor dining with mud).
2. City needs to clean at least every week.
3. The City should hire an arborist to deal with aphid infestation.

Pest Control

1. Concerns over proliferation of rats.

Beyond the Downtown Core

1. The City's focus is on the downtown core; focus should also be on south Laurel Street and other parts of the downtown.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30am.

Meeting Photos



Community Input Attachments:

1. Business Survey (handed out by Henry Eng during the Oct. 8, 2026, meeting)
2. Questions Prepared (handed out by Henry Eng during the Oct. 8, 2026, meeting)
3. Supplemental Input (received via email Oct 27, 2026, from ["downtownsancarlosbusinessstudy@gmail.com"](mailto:downtownsancarlosbusinessstudy@gmail.com))

Downtown San Carlos Business Conditions

32 owner responses | A proposal for evidence-based decisions and partnership

What is happening to Downtown businesses?

1

Customer activity was once described as strong

Respondents compared conditions before closure, or their initial period if they opened later.

75% strong or very strong

- 34% very strong; 41% strong at baseline
- Many owners recall stronger customer activity before closure
- Request City vehicle and pedestrian counts before and after closure

2

The closure is perceived negatively by most respondents

Owners' assessment of the 700-block closure.

81% negative impact

- 69% very negative
- 13% somewhat negative
- this warrants investigation

3

Parking and foot traffic remain major challenges

Current operating challenges reported by Downtown owners.

81% parking | 63% foot traffic

- 44% vehicle access and circulation
- 47% inflation and operating costs
- 44% economy/consumer spending
- 41% rent

4

Construction presents a business-survival risk

Owners were asked about future Downtown construction.

97% concerned

- 88% reduced customer traffic
- 72% reduced sales
- 63% loss of customer parking
- 60% customer and vehicle access
- 53% identify risk of business closure

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Small - business resilience has limits

If another substantial, sustained decline occurs:

50% within 3 months

- 75% say significant operational changes could become necessary within six months
- national average - 27 days cash buffer days (~4 weeks of operating expenses) in reserve if inflow stop completely
- Construction timelines and business survival timelines are different
- Many of us are already hanging by a thread
- What continuity and mitigation measures are in place for the current Harrington Park construction?

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The central unanswered question

We request a documented response from the City.

- What quantitative business-performance data did the City collect before and after the permanent closure of the 700 block of Laurel Street?
- How were those data used in deciding whether to retain the closure and advance subsequent Downtown improvements?

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What the 32 respondents reported

Three separate survey questions addressed prior City data collection.

32 of 32 answered “No”

- No participation in a City business-conditions/performance study
- No participation in a City study of closure economic/operational effects
- No request for baseline operating information
- This reports respondents' experiences; it does not establish that the City holds no other data
- What do you know that we don't? Please share with us.

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We need two-way consultation and follow-through

Business concerns need documented responses, task owners and next steps.

From one-way updates to a working partnership

- previous business community meeting and other meeting with City staff
- Business participants report no substantive follow-up
- Establish written responses, named task owners, deadlines and recurring reviews
- One way communication is not a dialogue, consultation, or meaningful stakeholder engagement

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Test the alternative: a hybrid reopening

We have years of experience with the closed configuration.

We have tested closure.

Let's test reopening.

- Trial vehicle circulation, including one-way options
- Preserve parklets/outdoor activities where feasible
- Retain selected pedestrian-only days and events
- Measure before and during the trial

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Protect businesses before major construction

Agree on a continuity and mitigation plan in advance.

- Customer access, parking, circulation and deliveries
- Construction phasing, storefront visibility, signage and advance notice
- Marketing and promotion
- Monitor business impacts and define intervention thresholds
- Marketing and promotion
- Put this in the project budget
- Consider grants, fee relief or other support when warranted

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Make businesses ongoing operating partners

91% favor baseline and continuing measurement; 88% favor formal ongoing participation.

Engagement → Consultation → Collaboration

- Create a Downtown Business Working Partnership
- Review operating metrics and agreed actions regularly
- Assign owners, deadlines and written follow-through

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Six actions we ask the City to agree to

1. Treat Downtown businesses as a primary stakeholder
2. Test reopening the 700 block
3. Solve parking and access based on actual demand
4. Develop a Downtown economic strategy
5. Measure economic performance and use it in decisions
6. Protect businesses before major construction

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A request for an evidence-based response

Our survey is a warning signal, not a causal study.

What data informed the decision?

- Share the City's quantitative before/after business-performance evidence
- Explain how it informed the closure and later improvements
- Identify gaps and agree on measurement and next steps
- We want Downtown San Carlos to succeed—together

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Downtown San Carlos Business Community

Questions Requiring Written Responses & Requested Actions

A. Questions Requiring Written Responses

1. Economic evidence and the 700-block closure

What quantitative business-performance data did the City collect before and after the permanent closure of the 700 block of Laurel Street?

How were those data used in deciding whether to retain the closure and advance subsequent Downtown improvements?

Please identify the data sources, dates, findings, and relevant City reports. If such data were not collected, please confirm that in writing.

2. Business consultation and economic impact assessment

What direct studies or surveys of Downtown business operating conditions, sales performance, or the economic effects of the closure has the City conducted?

When were they conducted, which businesses participated, what were the findings, and how were they incorporated into City decisions?

Our survey respondents reported no participation in the three categories of City business-performance data collection we asked about.

3. Harrington Park construction

What business continuity and mitigation measures are currently in place for businesses affected by the Harrington Park construction?

How is the City measuring impacts on customer access, parking, traffic, visibility and business activity? Who is responsible for responding when problems arise?

B. Six Actions Requested by Downtown Businesses

1. **Treat Downtown businesses as primary stakeholders.** Establish a continuing working partnership with meaningful consultation, documented responses and accountability.
2. **Test reopening the 700 block.** Evaluate a temporary hybrid configuration, including one-way circulation options, while preserving parklets and pedestrian activities where feasible. Measure the results before making further permanent commitments.
3. **Solve parking and access based on actual demand.** Examine customer versus employee parking needs, circulation, convenience and utilization.
4. **Develop a Downtown economic strategy.** Focus on increasing customer visits, business sales, commercial occupancy and economic vitality.

5. **Measure economic performance and use it in decisions.** Establish and regularly review business-performance indicators, including sales, customer activity, parking and vacancies.
6. **Protect businesses before major construction.** Develop and fund a Business Continuity and Mitigation Plan covering access, parking, signage, phasing, communications, marketing and appropriate financial support.

C. Requested Follow-Up Commitments

Deadline	Requested commitment
At this meeting	Designate a City point of contact responsible for coordinating responses and tracking follow-up.
By COB Oct 8, 26	Provide written acknowledgement of the survey and all questions above; identify which can be answered with existing information and which require investigation.
By Oct 10, 26	Provide substantive written responses, available supporting documents, and a timetable for any outstanding information.
By Oct 14, 26	Hold a follow-up working meeting with Downtown business representatives and relevant City staff to agree on priorities, responsibilities and a recurring meeting schedule.

Our Request

We are not asking the City to agree with every recommendation today. We are asking for a documented, accountable process in which questions receive answers, commitments have responsible owners, and progress is measured.

We want to move from engagement to meaningful consultation—and from consultation to collaboration.

Submitted on behalf of participating Downtown San Carlos business owners.

Attachment 3

Comments received via email from: downtownsancarlosbusinessstudy@gmail.com

"On behalf of participating Downtown San Carlos business owners

Supplemental Statement — October 8, 2026 Downtown Merchant Meeting

At the October 8, 2026 Downtown Merchant Meeting, participating Downtown business owners were asked to indicate, by a show of hands, whether they supported testing the reopening of the 700 block of Laurel Street to vehicle traffic. According to our account of the meeting, those participating in the show of hands expressed unanimous support for conducting such a trial.

This statement documents the reported expression of support by participating business owners. It is not intended to represent a scientifically conducted survey, a formal vote of every meeting attendee, or the views of all Downtown San Carlos businesses.

Submitted by Downtown San Carlos Business Study as a supplemental account for inclusion alongside the City's published October 8 meeting summary."