

## **DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DTAC) MEETING** **March 19, 2024**

### **Meeting Purpose:**

The purpose of this DTAC meeting was to receive the committee's endorsement on the direction that the Streetscape is progressing in; and provide the project team with feedback on specific design elements, programming ideas, and if any critical considerations were missing from the design concepts.

### **Meeting Agenda:**

The meeting agenda included a presentation by the Planning Manager, Lisa Porras, and the lead consultant, WRT. The presentation focused on the public realm design and programming concepts for the Specific Plan Area. It was followed by a break-out group discussion and a report-back by each group.



At the end of the meeting, the committee endorsed the public realm design concept with clear direction for 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.

- **Trash Management:** Policy and infrastructural recommendations.
- **Phasing and Implementation Plan**

### Public Space Design

- The committee favored the idea of curb-less street design for 600, 700, and 800 blocks on Laurel street.
- Groves as a design element was appreciated with a suggestion to further investigate their location and placement, especially to make sure they are not affecting the visibility of businesses.
- The committee recommended that the 700-Block of Laurel Street be a “wheel-free zone”, citing concerns around the safety of pedestrians especially that of seniors.
- The committee emphasized considering accessibility in all public space design elements.
- The committee advised that the project team also consider the reconfiguration of the side streets and intersections and not just the main streets in the specific plan area.
- The committee recommended engaging with the stakeholders including Bianchini’s market for temporary use of their parking lot as a festival overflow space.
- The following design elements were suggested by the committee to include in the public space design:
  - Raingardens.
  - Water Fountain.
  - Accessible seating/ furniture.
  - Streetlights design reflecting the “San Carlos” character.
  - Uniform design for awnings and signage.
  - Outdoor dining – while also providing enough walking spaces on the sidewalk.
  - Tree species responding to local ecology (trees and their surroundings need to be better maintained)

### Mobility and Street Design

- The committee mentioned the following circulation challenges:
  - The current configuration of San Carlos creates traffic congestion and blockage, and the road diet will intensify the traffic congestion issues.
  - The turnings on Cherry Street are dangerous and need design interventions for the safety of all users.
  - Walnut Street is a difficult street to maneuver and needs signals at specific intersections.
  - The circulation on Cherry and Walnut Street is often blocked off by delivery trucks, food delivery services, and double-parked vehicles, creating challenges for the residents.
- The committee suggested calling the alleyways as “Passageways” and be made part of the circulation network.

### Parking Strategy

- The committee identified parallel parking on 600 and 800 blocks of Laurel Street as a concern, as it causes traffic flow to slow down and create a traffic back-up.
- Considering the reduction of on-street parking spaces on Laurel Street, the committee suggested exploring a strategy to phase out the removal and relocation of parking spaces.

- The committee asked to consider access and safety in the off-street parking lots, especially for employees working late hours..
- The committee suggested studying the possibility of having a parking garage, perhaps with the acquisition of a parcel to build one, in the Specific Plan Area.
- On Laurel street at the Post Office, the committee suggested that the on-street parking adjacent to the Post Office needs sufficient, at least the same as existing, number of parking spaces.
- The current configuration on San Carlos Avenue has diagonal parking. The committee suggested developing a parking layout different from a diagonal parking arrangement.

### **Alleys Strategy**

- The committee suggested focusing on the 700-block alley, considering its complex circulation and access needs involving delivery trucks, trailers, trash, and parking.
- The committee stressed the need to introduce the parking assessment district on both sides of the 700 block.
- The following considerations were recommended for design of the alleys.
  - Function and beautification.
  - Safety.
  - Indicators/ signage for parking availability.

### **Programming**

- The committee mentioned that downtown San Carlos is overextended to the restaurants and needs to consider other active uses and programs to activate its public realm.
- While the Harrington Park programming was supported, the committee was divided on the proposed level changes in the park. Some preferred it to be sunken while others preferred it to be at one grade, even with the sidewalks.
- The following programs and uses were suggested by the committee:
  - Public Restrooms.
  - Outdoor Dining.
  - Public Art – either as soft elements as surprise features during the walk or contextual themes-based murals, etc.
  - Designated pick-and-drop spaces.
  - Ice skating rink during winter season and roller-skating rink during summer season.

### **Strategy for Businesses**

- The committee advised the project team to develop strategies to retain the businesses in the downtown.
- Citing the formula business ordinance of the City of San Carlos, the committee suggested that the city needs to carefully review the ordinance and seek opportunities to introduce at least one anchor business/store in the Downtown to make it a regional destination.
- The committee preferred the wide sidewalks and walkable environment around the businesses but suggested that they be supported with on-street parking.



### **Trash Management**

- The committee suggested regulation of the trash pick-up and delivery times.
- The committee recommended that the policy for trash consider pick-up services to access the trash in the existing enclosures. Additionally, it was advised that the proposed trash enclosures should be designed for ease in loading and unloading of trash bins.
- As per the committee, trash management is an important component that the specific plan should incorporate.

### **Phasing and implementation**

- From the phasing point of view, the committee suggested that to take pressure off Laurel Street while it undergoes changes and to ensure access to businesses during construction, alleys should be improved first and made available for effective use.
- The committee highlighted the 700-block alley and its access ways as the first phase to prioritize improvements.
- The committee suggested that the project team develop a timeline for construction including phasing strategies.