

Advisory Committee Meeting #1

Summary Notes

Meeting Objectives

- Initiate the Advisory Committee for the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan.
- Discuss the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee.
- Provide an overview of the Specific Plan process.
- Brainstorm on key issues and opportunities in Downtown Watsonville.

Attendees

Advisory Committee Members

- **Present:** Francisco Estrada (Mayor), Felipe Hernandez (Councilmember), Jenni Veitch-Olson (Planning Commission Chair), Jane Barr, Gina Cole, Maria Elena De la Garza, Neva Hansen, Carmen Herrera Mansur, Rachel Mayo, Sal Orozco, William Ow, Manuel Rodriguez, Shaz Roth, Tony Scurich, Brian Spector
- **Additions:** Aurelio Gonzalez (Councilmember)
- **Absent:** None

City Staff

- **Present:** Matt Huffaker (City Manager), Justin Meek (Principal Planner), David Honda (Police Chief), Rudy Lopez (Fire Chief), Maria Esther-Rodriguez (City Engineer/Asst. PW Director)
- **Absent:** Suzi Merriam (CDD Director), Murray Fontes (Principal Engineer – transportation), David Caneer (Principal Engineer – water & storm water)

Consultant Team

- Simran Malhotra and Kelsey Hubbard, Raimi + Associates

Summary Notes

Introduction and Welcome

Matt Huffaker, City Manager opened the meeting and welcomed the Advisory Committee (AC) members. Justin Meek, Principal Planner, introduced the consultant team. AC members introduced themselves and shared how long they have been part of the Watsonville community and in what capacity.

Overview of the Downtown Specific Plan

Simran Malhotra provided a brief overview of the consultant team and their roles, a summary of what a Specific Plan is, key components of the Specific Plan process, the project schedule and community engagement approach.

AC Roles and Responsibilities

Simran Malhotra provided a brief overview of the role and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee. Ground rules for participation were also covered.

Study Area Tour

Kelsey Hubbard briefly presented a virtual walking tour of the Downtown area. The virtual walking tour highlighted Downtown assets, development sites, good urban design and planning practices as well as opportunities for improvements.

Group Discussion

The consultant team posed four questions to the Committee. A summary of responses are as follows:

1. *What are the key issues that Downtown is facing now and in the future?*

- *Safety – pedestrian environment*
- *Main Street is too auto centric, and people drive too fast*
- *Traffic*
- *Vacant buildings and underutilized parcels*
- *No real destination downtown*
- *No synergy between residents and businesses*
- *Cleanliness*
- *Homelessness and mental health issues*
- *Lack of density downtown, not enough people live there to activate it*
- *Little opportunity to be social at night*
- *Lacking cohesive identity*

2. *What are the strengths of Downtown and what are the opportunities for improvement?*

- *More housing is needed downtown*
- *Fox Theater and Mansion House both hold great potential to be a jewel in Downtown*
- *Watsonville is a unique community with agriculture, wine, art, education, and nature*
- *Plaza is a great strength of downtown!*
- *The Farmer's Market has a distinct character and draws people in*

3. *What topics do you want to have more in-depth discussion on during Advisory Committee meetings?*

- *Traffic and parking*
- *Economic development*
- *Pedestrian environment*
- *Housing*

4. *How can you help with community engagement? What ideas do you have for reaching out to the diversity of community members?*

- *Reach out to local radio stations*
- *HOAs*
- *Advertise very visually*
- *Provide dinner and childcare at public meetings*
- *Social media*

Public Comments

Members of the public were given the opportunity to share any thoughts or comments. Six community members participated in public comment.

- *Signage is confusing Downtown, don't really know what is there*
- *Downtown is not ADA friendly*
- *Strong community outreach needs to happen*
- *Advocating for activities that draw young people Downtown*
- *Synergy needs to happen between property owners, tenants, and the City.*
- *Youth outreach is very important, they are Watsonville's future.*
- *Add members to the Committee that represent youth and mobility-challenged viewpoints.*

Wrap-up and Next Steps

Adjourn at 7:30 pm