City of Watsonville

Downtown Specific Plan + EIR

Planning Commission Briefing | March 2, 2021
Progress Report to Date
Specific Plan Process and Schedule

Existing Conditions + Visioning
Review existing conditions, identify issues and opportunities and develop a long term vision for Downtown.

Community Engagement

We are here

Alternatives
Create and refine land use and mobility alternatives.

Plan Development + EIR Preparation
Craft development and design regulation and conduct environmental analysis.

Review + Adoption
Public and decision makers to review and adopt the Specific Plan.

Project Kickoff

Summer 2020
1 Advisory Committee Meeting

Winter 2021 - Spring 2021
3 Advisory Committee Meetings

Spring 2021 - Fall 2021
3 Advisory Committee Meetings

Winter 2022
1 Advisory Committee Meeting
Progress To Date

- Existing Conditions Reports
  o Market Assessment
  o Noise Evaluation
  o Transportation
  o Utility Systems
  o Water Supply
  o Land Use and Urban Design

- Downtown Character Areas
  o Downtown Core
  o Civic Core
  o Commercial “Flex”
  o Workspace / Industrial
  o “Flex” Neighborhoods – (East & West)

- Vision Themes and Guiding Principles
- Land Use and Mobility Alternatives
Community Engagement Efforts to Date

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Advisory Committee Meetings (3)
- Community-Wide Visioning Workshop (1)
- Community-Wide Surveys (2)
  - Strengths, Issues, and Opportunities Survey (666 respondents)
  - Draft Themes and Guiding Principles Feedback (100 comments)
What we’ve heard so far...
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**Strengths of the Downtown**

- Watsonville is a *unique community* with agriculture, wine, art, education, and nature themes
- Charming historic architecture and character
- *The Plaza is the Crown Jewel* of the downtown
- *Farmer’s Market* has a distinct character and draws people to the downtown
- Recent streetscape improvements, beautifying the streets
- Murals and art!
- Scale of *downtown very walkable*
- The neighborhoods in and surrounding Downtown provide affordable housing for residents
What we have heard so far...

**Key Issues Facing Downtown**

**Identity and functionality**
- No real destination or cohesive identity
- **Lacking synergy** between residents and businesses
- Lack of density downtown, not enough people live there to activate it
- **Little opportunity to be social** at night
- Lack of wayfinding signage
- Cleanliness
- Not ADA compliant

**Traffic and Safety**
- **Main Street is too auto-centric**, people driving too fast
- Pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Main Street **congestion/traffic**
What we have heard so far...

**Key Issues Facing Downtown**

**Social Issues**
- People experiencing **homelessness and mental health issues**
- Resetar and clientele

**Demographic changes**
- Fear of **gentrification**
- Concerns about **displacement**
- **Small local business preservation**
- Concern with migration from the Bay area
What we have heard so far...

Opportunities in the Downtown

- Fox Theater and Mansion House both hold **great potential**
- **More housing** is needed (both market rate, low income, and affordable)
- Desire to see **more diverse uses and activities**
- **Cabrillo College** brings young people to the downtown, but need a place to go or something to do
- **Kitchen and retail incubators and Digital Nest** establish fresh momentum to build off of
What we have heard so far…

**Opportunities in the Downtown**

- Strong non-profit presence providing services to residents
- Space for new businesses to come in and provide essential missing services/needs
- Main Street roadway very wide - opportunity to widen sidewalks, add bike lane or parklets
- Recently approved alcohol ordinance allows new uses within the downtown
- Sustainability and community health and is highly valued by community members
Downtown Existing Conditions
Downtown Demographics

- 2,193 residents, 711 households (2019)
  - 4% of the City population

- Median age –
  - Downtown - 27.7 years
  - City - 30.1 years

- Diverse racial and ethnic mix in both the City and Downtown
  - 90% Hispanic origin in Downtown

Age Distribution 2019

Downtown Demographics

- 2,193 residents, 711 households (2019)
  - 4% of the City population
- Median household income
  - Downtown - $36,500
  - Citywide - $55,000
- Pockets of very high-cost housing

Household Income Distribution 2019

Existing Land Use

- **740 residential units** (60% multifamily, 40% single family) in Downtown
- **Multifamily** is a mix of duplexes, garden-style apartments, higher density buildings with 10+ units
- **81% renters in Downtown, 50% citywide**
- Majority of the housing is built before 1970
- **Non-Residential uses (as a % of City)** –
  - Office – 36%
  - Retail – 30%
  - Industrial – 6%
  - Flex/R&D – <1%
Downtown Street Network
Downtown Street Framework

FRAMEWORK NETWORK

- **Main St Corridor** (Historic Main Street)
- **Regional Connectors**: (Lake Ave, Beach St, Riverside Dr, Freedom Blvd; connections to Santa Cruz, Salinas, Gilroy and the beach)
- **Cross-Town Connectors**: (Union St/Brennan St, Rodriguez St & Walker St)
- **Local (Downtown) Street Network**
- **Historic Depot / Bus Depot / W. Lake Ave Corridor**
Downtown Street Framework

LARGE BLOCKS DOWNTOWN:

- Most blocks in Downtown Watsonville are **600 ft or longer** (2,000-3000 ft block perimeters)
- Typical walkable urban blocks: **250-400 ft** block lengths (>1,200 ft perimeter)
- Watsonville Plaza: 280 x 250 ft
- Additional connectivity needed through large blocks (paseos & walkable alleys)
Key Findings – Downtown Street Framework

**CONNECTIVITY**

- **Strong existing street-network** with a clear hierarchy
- Additional/improved connectivity can be added relatively simply as infill occurs
- Alley walkways can provide pedestrian connectivity
- Caltrans Route Designations – Hwy 152 and 129
- Main St is *not* under CALTRANS jurisdiction between Riverside Dr and Beach St only
Downtown Character Areas
Downtown Character Areas

- Downtown Core
- Civic Core
- Commercial “Flex”
- Workspace / Industrial
- “Flex” Neighborhoods – (East & West)
Downtown Core

[Images of various scenes from the Downtown Core, including buildings, streets, and events.]

[Map showing the location of Downtown Core in Watsonville, with streets such as E. LAKE AVE., Brennan St, Union St, Maple Ave, and Rodriguez St indicated.]
Civic Core
Commercial “Flex”
Workplace / Industrial Flex
Downtown “Flex” Neighborhoods (West)
Downtown “Flex” Neighborhoods (East)
Vision Themes and Guiding Principles
Vision Themes

Vitality  Dignity  Equity  Preservation  Safety  Innovation
Guiding Principles

- Preserve key elements that make Downtown unique
- Establish a varied choice of uses and experiences for our diverse community
- Create housing opportunities for all
- Promote local economic prosperity
- Create a vibrant, safe, and active Downtown
- Foster a healthy, inclusive, and culturally connected community where all can thrive
- Re-imagine and innovate mobility options and connections
- Incorporate sustainable design elements to improve community health
Guiding Principles

- **Preserve key elements that make Downtown unique**
  - Celebrate the Plaza as an authentic gathering place and central node for the community and foster its energy to elevate community connections.

- **Establish a varied choice of uses and experiences for our diverse community**
  - Identify and recruit key missing uses that would help diversify the options of experiences in downtown.

- **Create housing opportunities for all**
  - Encourage housing (market rate, low income, and affordable) that supports the varied socioeconomic interests and needs of the community.

- **Promote local economic prosperity**
  - Maintain and strengthen Downtown’s diverse business presence supporting economic prosperity for all.
Guiding Principles

- Create a vibrant, safe, and active Downtown environment
  - Encourage mixed use with ground floor commercial uses and housing above.

- Foster a healthy, inclusive, and culturally connected community where all can thrive
  - Promote livability regardless of age, ethnicity, income by focusing on community connection, needs, and sense of belonging.

- Re-imagine and innovate mobility options and connections
  - Design safe pedestrian and bicyclist facilities that invite all users regardless of age and ability to use and enjoy.

- Incorporate sustainable design elements to improve community health
  - Leverage connections to the adjacent natural environment (Pajaro River, sloughs, etc.) with bicycle and walking trails.
Next Steps in the Process
Next Steps...

- Refine Land Use and Mobility Alternatives
- Finalize Historic Resources Survey Report
- Host Advisory Committee Meeting #4, Community-Wide Workshop #2, and conduct Community-Wide Survey #2 to gain community input on Alternative direction
- Reconvene with City Council and Planning Commission to gain input on Preferred Alternative direction
- Craft Development and Design Regulations
- Conduct Environmental Analysis