Public Comment Letters
July 18, 2022
Comprehensive List

Public Letter #1
From: Daniel Ornelas
Date: Mon, Jun 27, 2022 at 11:48 AM

Thanks for the consistent updates made available to the public.

Just a comment: It looks like p. 44 of DWSP Document has Goal 2 as the same exact wording as Goal 1 on p. 43.

Public Letter #2
From: Ow Family Properties
Date: July 12, 2022

Dear Watsonville City Council and Watsonville Planning Commission,

This letter is on behalf of Ow Family Properties regarding the public draft of the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan dated June 2022 (the “Specific Plan”). Ow Family Properties owns multiple properties that are within the Specific Plan’s area, including properties specifically listed as within Opportunity Sites. While we appreciate the significant amount of time and energy that has been put into the draft so far, we write with some significant concerns about the Specific Plan as it is currently drafted. Our concerns are both about how the Specific Plan will affect current people and businesses within the Specific Plan area and how the Specific Plan could affect future development. We respectfully request that important changes are made to the Specific Plan that will allow it to support and enhance the existing business owners, employees, residents, property owners, and stakeholders within the Specific Plan boundaries, while offering flexibility and new opportunities for the area moving forward. As currently written, we believe the Specific Plan will harm many successful locally owned and operated businesses. We formally request that the following changes to the Specific Plan be made, which include, but are not limited to: allow thrift stores and antique shops in the Downtown Core as principally permitted uses that don’t require a AUP or SUP; allow Dwelling Units and Office uses on the ground floor of the Downtown Core, continue to allow industrial uses (including heavy industrial and manufacturing) in the Industrial Zone; reduce the amount of required parking in the Specific Plan; increase allowable building heights in the Specific Plan area (especially the Downtown Core); and change the Standards in general to be less specific and allow more flexibility, which is needed for the Specific Plan to be effective and more valuable over the long term as styles, needs, customs, the marketplace, and the entire community changes.
Thrift stores and antique stores should be allowed within the Downtown Core as principally permitted uses that don’t require an AUP or SUP. Significant fears of Watsonville residents identified throughout the Specific Plan, including and especially the Appendix, and the public hearings regarding the Specific Plan are displacement and gentrification. Prohibiting antique stores and thrift stores will increase gentrification and displacement because it prevents residents from having access to lower priced goods. This is inappropriate at any time but especially now when inflation is a major problem locally, nationally, and globally. The proposed prohibition is also bad for the environment. Despite the Specific Plan’s goal of sustainability, preventing thrift and antique stores is not pro sustainability or good for the environment, as new items are much more environmentally impactful than used ones. Using and reusing clothing and other goods is much better for the environment than buying new ones. Also, to the extent that the Specific Plan wants to prohibit antique or thrift stores in an attempt to make Downtown Watsonville more “upscale,” which we believe would be misguided, we still don’t believe that the prohibition on antique stores and thrift stores is appropriate. Plenty of thriving upscale downtown areas have thrift and antique stores, including local standouts Santa Cruz and Monterey, as well as major cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York. Furthermore, the definition of “antique store” is so broad that it could prevent uses like art galleries if the art galleries do not focus on contemporary art work or jewelry shops that do not sell mostly new jewelry. Preventing antique and thrift stores from being in the Downtown Specific Plan Area could also negatively affect a number of existing businesses and many employees. We strongly believe that there should not be a prohibition against antique and thrift stores in the Downtown Core and having this language in the Specific Plan goes directly against the wishes of many community members who have voiced their opinion throughout the Specific Plan process. At the very least, all existing stores in the Downtown Core should be allowed to remain and future antique stores and thrift stores should be allowed pursuant to an Administrative Use Permit.

The Specific Plan is too inflexible on what is allowed on the ground floor within the Downtown Core. We believe dwelling units and office uses should be allowed on the ground floor. The demand for retail space continues to decrease; we need to build in more flexibility on what uses can be on the ground floor so that there are not tons of empty storefronts like there are in many downtowns throughout the region. It is common for office-like uses such as real estate offices, insurance company offices, medical offices, and others to be on the ground floor of buildings in downtown settings throughout the region. Further, there are plenty of ways that dwelling units on the ground floor can be incorporated into buildings without negatively impacting the streetscape. Similarly, if we have a great company like Driscoll’s that wants to locate their headquarters in the Downtown Core, they should be allowed to have their office use on the ground floor (similar to Looker in Santa Cruz) as a principally permitted use.

The Industrial Zone is just that: an industrial zone. Accordingly, industrial uses, including manufacturing, must be principally permitted within it now and moving forward. The Downtown Industrial Zone has many dozens of thriving locally owned and operating businesses that have been successfully operating in their locations for decades. They pour their blood, sweat, and tears into their craft and manufacture and produce all types of products, from metal fabrication, to tea bags, to high end woodworking, to loaves of bread, and everything in between. Many of these tenants are in industrial buildings that we own. Kicking out existing uses, as the current language seemingly does, and/or preventing new industrial businesses who pay well from locating in the Downtown Industrial Zone would be a mistake for Watsonville and a tragedy for its residents. Many local companies do manufacturing and assembly that Watsonville would be lucky to attract, including companies such as Santa Cruz Bicycles, Ibis Bicycles, and Joby Aviation. A blanket prohibition on heavy industrial and manufacturing will be overly restrictive on current users and potential future users. Current heavy industrial and manufacturing uses
must be permitted and similar future potential uses should also be principally permitted and not require an AUP or SUP. The idea of expanding uses within the Industrial Zone is positive, but the new uses, such as housing, should be required to “fit in” to the Industrial Zone; the existing and future businesses within the Industrial Zone should not have to move or change their use to accommodate the new uses the Specific Plan contemplates. As such, the Specific Plan must be modified so that it is clear that existing industrial uses will be allowed and supported. New uses should have to adapt to the existing uses/zoning, not the other way around. It is wrong to discourage and/or negatively impact existing businesses in favor of an “idea” and change of use which may or may not take place in the future. It is of critical importance that heavy industrial and manufacturing uses, which are prevalent and thriving with their IG “general industrial” zoning, in what the Specific Plan terms the new “Downtown Industrial Zone”, continue to be supported and allowed in the future without the impediment of Planning Department hurdles via AUP or SUP. Injecting new Planning Department hurdles will hurt a thriving industrial area and many small business owners and employees.

With respect to parking, we strongly believe that parking minimums are a poor policy choice due to their negative effects on environmental sustainability and affordability. Requiring large numbers of parking spaces decreases space for other uses (including housing and space for bikes), substantially increases construction costs, and makes rent more expensive for tenants of new developments. While some car parking may be a good choice for a particular development, requiring large numbers of car parking in a Specific Plan that could be in place for decades as individual car use is declining and walking, biking, and other forms of mobility are becoming more popular seems short-sided at best and very harmful at worst. The State of California clearly recognizes the high costs and negative effects imposed by requiring large amounts of parking. Multiple bills have been passed in the California legislature recently that reduce parking minimums on a state level because local jurisdictions continue to require large numbers of parking spaces, which inhibits new development, particularly new housing development, and contributes to the state’s very high unaffordability. We believe it is misguided for the City of Watsonville to require more parking per unit as a minimum in housing developments than the State allows as a maximum per unit for housing developments that meet bonus density requirements. We, along with an increasing number of planners, scholars, and politicians, believe that there should not be any parking minimums for new developments, but at the very least the amount of required parking in the Specific Plan should be reduced. As such, we hereby request that the minimum parking requirements be substantially decreased and/or eliminated.

With respect to maximum building heights/the number of stories a building may have, we believe that they are too low and should be increased, particularly in the Downtown Core. While project economics and building costs may currently dictate that no or few buildings taller than six stories would be built today in Watsonville, that may not be the case in the future. Our region is blessed with some of the most abundant natural beauty and nicest weather in the world. Allowing taller buildings would allow more housing in a concentrated area and that could help protect against sprawl (and loss of farmland) and reduce new ground-up development of raw land. Allowing taller buildings would allow more affordability. Allowing taller buildings would allow more doctors, nurses, teachers, construction workers, cooks, plumbers, electricians, and farm workers. Allowing taller buildings would allow more students. Allowing taller buildings would allow more sustainability. Allowing taller buildings would allow shorter commutes. Santa Cruz is currently studying allowing buildings that could be as tall as 225 feet. The Downtown Core is a relatively small area and Watsonville should not constrain itself to a six-story limit on buildings for decades to come in its Downtown Core. Please allow for taller buildings in the Specific Plan.
The Specific Plan states, “The intent of the Downtown Specific Plan is to enable a lively and dynamic mix of diverse land uses within a safe, comfortable, human-scale, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use downtown environment. The intrinsic value and amenity of fine downtowns derives in large measure from their concentration of relatively high intensities of diverse uses within a relatively small area.” We believe that the “Standards” section of the Specific Plan is far too narrow and does not allow the flexibility needed to achieve a diverse and dynamic downtown either in architectural style or uses. Some specific items that we believe need to be changed include, but are not limited to: 100% front street buildout should not be required for the Downtown Core or 70% for Downtown Industrial (standards should be lower and allow more flexibility); in the Downtown Industrial Zone more than 70 feet of surface parking frontage should be allowed; building heights should not be limited to 6 stories in the Downtown Core; Massing Increments should not be required and/or they should be loosened greatly; the Façade Design requirements are way too restrictive and should be loosened [all new buildings should NOT be required to reflect the historic patterns and sensibilities of the past (having a formulaic approach will make buildings more homogenous and less interesting)]; the Façade Materials requirements need to be significantly loosened [e.g., rather than mandating that heavier materials “must be used below the lighter material (e.g. brick below siding, not vice versa), the City should have fewer requirements and allow for creative and attractive designs]; modifications are needed to allow Retail/Housing Flex, Ground Floor Office, Ground Floor Residential, and Vehicular Access in the Main Street Overlay; and the Shopfronts section should be modified to allow businesses more flexibility (even if that means allowing an interior layout that does not provide full visibility into the interior of the space). Again, the Specific Plan will dictate development within the Specific Plan area for decades to come and being too narrow and specific on the Standards today will result in the Specific Plan inevitably restricting what can be built, unnecessarily and unreasonably, 15-20+ years from now when community needs, styles, and the market changes in ways that we cannot predict today. The one thing that is inevitable is change; we need to accept that change will occur and make sure the Specific Plan language is flexible enough to allow smart development to happen in the future based on the needs of that time, as opposed to inflexible “Standards” of 2022.

We appreciate all of the time and effort that has been put into the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan so far. Without the important changes outlined in this letter, however, we fear that the Specific Plan could do more harm than good. Having the personal experience of participating in a multi-year Specific Plan process within the City of Watsonville for the Manabe Ow Business Park, we have seen firsthand how limiting and restrictive the Standards and restricted use sections of a Specific Plan can be; being overly limiting on a seemingly small detail within the Standards section today can lead to unnecessary 12+ month-long delays, millions of dollars in extra costs, and/or stopping an otherwise great development completely in the future. Further, we have experienced firsthand how we can plan for what we hope or expect to be developed within a Specific Plan area, but the needs of the community and the marketplace will dictate what actually gets built and that is often very different from the original vision. As such, it is imperative that the Specific Plan is flexible in order to accommodate future needs that we do not or cannot predict today. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the important changes requested in this letter are made to the Specific Plan to support the existing businesses and residents within the Specific Plan area now and also provide an adaptable platform for future growth and development. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

George Ow, Jr., Benjamin Ow, William Ow, Andrew Ow, and 30+ other family members associated with Ow Family Properties
Public Letter #3

From: 'jeanne greatorex'
Date: Wed, Jul 6, 2022 at 10:28 AM

Thank you for sending me a copy of the DWSP. I do not live in Watsonville city limits, rather just on the outside edge. However, I would like to add a few comments, all of which all of you have probably discussed at length. Anyway, here they are:

1. Keep climate change (incl. water use) as a top priority in all decisions
2. Plant trees, trees, trees. Not palm trees; shade trees
3. Make sidewalks as wide as possible with various areas for outdoor seating
4. On Main Street: No parking or minimal parking or maybe parking on one side only
5. Make the city bicycle friendly, such that folks could actually shop by bike.
6. Addition to No. 4. Make the bike lanes as safe as possible. Just painting a green line doesn't make me feel safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to add my 2 cents.

- Jeanne Greatorex

Public Letter #4

From: Philip Wiese
Date: Wed, Jul 6, 2022 at 4:56 PM

Hello. I just wanted to write in support of the draft plan. Specifically, eliminating parking minimums, increasing building height, redevelopment into housing, and road diet. I hope you are able to push back against the car centric status quo arguments (like how can I go to a restaurant if I have to, gasp, park 1 block away! Or, how can I possibly go anywhere if it doesn't involve driving in my (preferably very large) car by myself?). If you can’t tell, I want more housing and fewer cars everywhere and specifically downtown. So I hope this moves forward. I live just outside the downtown zone off East Lake and walk or bike downtown all the time, so it would be very nice to see this come to fruition. Thank you.

Philip Wiese
Public Letter #5

From: Clark Codiga
Date: Thu, Jul 14, 2022 at 4:47 PM

Justin,

There are countless questions that we have as to how the DWSP affects our properties at East Beach Plaza and East Fifth Plaza. As well as how it will impact our (117) tenants and their longtime businesses at these shopping centers. What outreach has been specifically made to the businesses impacted by your proposed plan? None of our tenants we have spoken to are aware of this plan or how it will impact their businesses and are very concerned.

Our concerns and questions including but not limited to:

- Union Street closure
- Traffic patterns/impact on 2-way East Beach Street and East Lake Street
- Is Alexander a 1 way or 2 way Street?
- How the traffic changes will impact East Beach Plaza and East Fifth Plaza
- Main Street lane reduction and its impact on accessing East Beach Plaza and East Fifth Plaza
- ***Reduction and elimination of downtown parking spaces
- How much funding does the City currently have for this project?
- How much is it going to cost?
- How is difference going to be obtained?

A project of this scope and +/- 500 page DWSP Report deserves a longer response period than 2 weeks and more direct public outreach.

We would like to set an in person meeting to have you and your staff explain the proposed changes and city perceived “opportunities”.

We can meet Tuesday or Thursday next week between 10-4pm? Let us know when you are available.

Best regards,

Clark Codiga and Chris Codiga
Oaktree Property Company
Good afternoon Justin,

Please find attached below RTC comments on the draft DWSP. What a beautiful plan! If only every city in the county could look like this. Several of my questions were about implementation, which may be answered in the yet to be published implementation chapter. Many of my comments are very informal, and come from my interest in better understanding your experience with working with and getting buy-in from Caltrans on planned changes on state routes. Let me know if you want to discuss.

Great job!
Thank you,
Brianna
the trail envisions a bicycle and pedestrian path next to the tracks

Isn't the only incorporated city in this image Watsonville? The areas bounded by blue aren't even really towns, are they? Census Designated Place maybe?

Suggest more detail here. Is there now an increase in opportunity for new restaurants?

How heavy? RTC is curious for other complete streets projects on SRs.

SR 129 & 152 are used as a main corridors for freight/goods movement. But, they also serve as main streets in Watsonville that need ATP infrastructure.

Suggest the sections of Main/Lake/Beach that are also SR 152 be a different color in Figures 4-1, 4-10, 4-11

Reduction in width, or just number of lanes? Maybe clarified elsewhere.

add ADA accessibility

What was Caltrans’ response to this suggestion on SR152?

Can this be illustrated visually with a figure? Or called out in the existing figures in Ch 4?

This is the Mansion House, correct? Suggest it be labeled as such or otherwise called out.
Does this paseo demolish the IOOF building?

Were fire chiefs involved in discussions related to traffic calming features and intersection changes? On SR9 local fire chiefs provided important design input regarding evacuation, fire response, etc.

Suggest a discussion of the proposed incentives/disincentives to “encourage”

Why was the historic rail station not included? It seems like a real opportunity was missed.

Is there a map for this?

Which of these are allowed by Caltrans on the SR portions of downtown streets?

So, 12 inches wider than the current sidewalk + planter 9 feet?

Interesting! I thought Caltrans standard was still just one ramp equidistant from both crosswalks?

It might help to give examples here. I’m not sure I even know what this is. What mobility devices are not included?

I am not sure what “active” is referring to. But, they should prioritize crossing for people with mobility devices

Suggest provide image example

width should be wide enough for pedestrians using mobility devices
Page: 94
Suggest provide image example

Page: 94
Recommend including a photo or figure for this design.

Page: 94
Why is this lower than the current design standard? Is this the bare minimum, and the standard is higher?

Page: 96
Suggest defining

Page: 96
Suggest provide an image example

Page: 97
Yes!

Page: 97
Is this required? "should" replaced with required for employment sites, schools, transit stations, multi-family etc

Page: 97
So, Class I? Or I and II?

Page: 98
Are complimentary bicycle and pedestrian facilities planned for Lake and/or Beach? What about a shuttle?

Page: 98
digital real-time schedule displays

Page: 98
Encourage? Or require?

Page: 99
Where is this planned?

Page: 101
Page: 101
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 11:49:15 AM
Suggest another color for state routes

Page: 104

Page: 106
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 12:20:21 PM
Caltrans has approved a design exception down to 10 foot travel lanes? How were you able to gain approval?

Page: 108
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 12:19:58 PM
Has Caltrans approved these design exceptions?

Page: 110
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 12:45:52 PM
The Pajaro River railroad bridge may be raised 6 feet in the levee project. If this occurs, SCCRTC and Watsonville will need to brainstorm additional design solutions for Walker Street.

Page: 112
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 12:49:41 PM
Suggest discussion of lighting and other safety features for these paseos.

Page: 113
Type: Highlight  Author: amarino  Subject: Sticky Note  Date: 7/12/2022, 9:39:30 AM
define what "comfortable" includes

Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 12:53:35 PM
In downtown Santa Cruz, the most persistent issue with a clear path of travel is sandwich board signs placed by adjacent businesses. Suggest specifically mentioning that these will need to stay out of the path of travel.

Page: 114
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 12:56:06 PM
Caltrans OKed a new midblock crossing on the SR?

Page: 115
Type: Highlight  Author: bgoodman  Subject: Highlight  Date: 7/8/2022, 3:17:38 PM
On both sides? Figure shows only Main St side
Show new Class I for MBSST on SCBRL Pajaro River bridge

Consider these facilities extending to EA Hall middle school, or at least a Class III.

RTC staff have heard that Army Corps Pajaro River levee project does not include paths, might want to check in on that project.

Did this amendment occur?

The intent here is unclear. Accommodate like replace the parking, or accommodate like find ways to live with it?

Any discussion of providing marked paths of egress in redesigned parking lots? Instead of just a peds vs. cars free-for-all.

In my personal experience, this is an excellent method. Will these standards become regulations?

So smart! Will this go into effect when the plan is passed? A question that keeps coming up for me during review is implementation steps and timeline. Maybe all will be answered in a later chapter. Might help to clarify here also.

How? Generally, suggest more detail on carrots and sticks of "encourage" vs. "require", and when and how such changes to regulations would go into effect.

I'm assuming remaining in the bike lane is illegal in downtown Watsonville? Is there much enforcement? Its a real problem in downtown SC during morning deliveries.

Define this. Bikes and scooters? Carshare also?

This is confusing, typically the term mobility devices refers to wheelchair?
Specifically not dockless? What was the reasoning?

"should be created" is this required for new major employment sites/ residential projects?

How will this be enforced? In my experience (I actually believe in the very parking lot in the photo), this type of treatment is completely ignored.

define/clarify whether this is will be provided or not, is this a criteria to reduce parking requirements?
Public Letter #7

From: Jorge Ortiz  
Date: Thu, Jul 14, 2022 at 5:37 PM

Hello Justin,

We were just made aware today of the new DWSP the city is looking to implement into the downtown area. We have not been contacted by anyone from the city about what this plan will consist of and more importantly how it will affect our business. We are located in the heart of downtown so we would like to be better informed about any plans for change by the corresponding committee. This email is the best way for receive information and updates on the plan.

Thank you for your time and taking our concerns into consideration.

Jorge L. Ortiz  
Ortiz Store & Deli
Public Letter #8

From: Jane Royer Barr  
Date: Mon, Jul 18, 2022 at 4:55 PM

Justin-

I have just returned from an Indonesian vacation to visit our daughter and family. Sorry that I was unable to get comments in before Friday. Overall, the document is well written. I look forward to hearing the city’s perspective on Benjamin’s comments and discussing them. Otherwise, my only comments would be:

- Consider breaking up the street wall on Main Street via recessed entries, widened paseos, and/or tabling for restaurants and coffee shops
- On page 120, consider reduced parking for market rate projects and density bonuses as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mkt</th>
<th>Density Bonus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bdrm</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bdrm</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bdrm</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bdrm</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Bdrm</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would discourage 4 and 5 bdrm units but don’t think anyone will be proposing them for MFH.

Finally, I think that there is only one meeting coming up on the 21st and not another one on the 28th, am I correct?

Jane Royer Barr  
Associate Director of Real Estate Development