



ITEM 1: SUMMARY OF MEETING #3

Summary of Downtown Specific Plan Update Task Force Meeting #3 Tuesday, March 28, 2017

Task Force Members Present

1 Kathy Narum, City Council (Acting Chair)	2 Herb Ritter, Planning Commission
3 Laura Olson, Pleasanton Downtown Association	4 Dirk Christiansen, Pleasanton Downtown Association
5 Justin Brown, Planning Commission	6 Jan Batcheler, At-Large
7 Jim Merryman, At-Large	8 Teri Pohl, At-Large
9 Steve Baker, Economic Vitality Committee	

City of Pleasanton Staff

1 Nelson Fialho, City Manager	2 Gerry Beaudin, Director of Community Development
3 Shweta Bonn, Senior Planner	4 Adam Weinstein, Planning Manager
5 Pam Ott, Director of Economic Development	6 Brian Dolan, Assistant City Manager
7 Mike Tassano, City Traffic Engineer	

Professional Services

1 Sophie Martin, Principal, Dyett & Bhatia	2 Meghan McNulty, Planner, Dyett & Bhatia
3 Jane Lin, Partner, Urban Field Studio	4 Frank Fuller, Partner, Urban Field Studio

1. Welcome and Prior Meeting Notes

A. Introduction. Meeting called to order and meeting agenda discussed.

B. Action Regarding Meeting #1 Summary. The Task Force did not discuss summary notes from the January 28, 2017 meeting.

- *The Task Force voted on accepting the Meeting #1 Summary; nine in favor; zero opposed.*

2. Meeting Open to Public and Correspondence

The Director of Community Development provided a summary of public correspondence received. Reassured public and Task Force that the City reads every word of correspondence. Explained history of the Civic Center Project. Clarified that no planning decisions have been made at this stage of the Downtown Specific Plan update process. Correspondence concerned:

- Importance of historic resource preservation
- Maintaining an adequate parking supply
- One-way traffic
- Costs of relocating of the Civic Center/Library
- Ensuring new development is not incongruous with the scale of Downtown

Members of the public were given the opportunity to comment. Topics raised included:

- Parking, particularly problems with parking monitoring and ACE Train overflow parking
- Concern that the Task Force will be more attuned to the interests of businesses rather than the people living in the planning area
- Concern that the city will allow growth just for the sake of growing
- Desire for more information about the Civic Center/Library relocation, including costs

3. Downtown Tours: What Task Force Members Observed

Urban Field Studio led a discussion about the Downtown tours assignment Task Force members completed in February. Task Force members were encouraged to think about elements that make a downtown terrific. Topics discussed included:

- Gateways and the experience of entering a downtown;
- Parking (lots, garages, parking zones, street parking);
- Reconfiguring street widths in order to extend the sidewalk and/or add additional parking;
- Design elements and setbacks that may make tall buildings seem less imposing;
- Multi-modal circulation (including bicycles);
- Paseos and alleyways;
- Outdoor seating and dining;
- Tradeoffs between sidewalk width, street width, and design elements (bollards, street trees, etc.) in the public right-of-way;
- Gathering places and plazas; and
- Memorable buildings and landmarks.

City Staff reminded the Task Force that this presentation and much of the discussion going forward is and will be focused on the Main Street area because it may see more change in the next 15 or so years than residential areas. The Task Force should think of this Update as an opportunity to make an already great Downtown even greater.

The Task Force provided the following thoughts during the Downtown Tours discussion, arranged by subject matter:

Parking:

- Parking garages potentially allow for a better pedestrian experience and may integrate better with the built environment than surface parking lots, particularly if they are of similar height to surrounding buildings and are well-designed
- Main Street used to have diagonal parking until the mid-1980s, when the City removed diagonal parking and widened sidewalks. Outdoor dining appeared when this happened
- Many communities in California are now doing “reverse parking,” which improves safety conditions
- Configuration of on-street parking can be a traffic calming measure
- Bicycle parking in parklets is a compelling idea

Other downtowns and precedents (see slides for images):

- Mountain View has a well-managed downtown with a great Civic Center, but Castro Street, which functions as the City’s “Main Street,” at times feels too wide for a downtown. The scale seemed to work better when the buildings were taller because the street was wide. Development of this scale wouldn’t work in Pleasanton
- Lafayette also had a large main street (Mount Diablo Boulevard) that is not ideal for pedestrians because it takes too long to cross the street
- The Task Force liked the precedent of Hotel Healdsburg in Healdsburg, CA, particularly the internal breezeway
- Despite its height, a 3-4 story building in the slideshow in Palo Alto looked approachable due to paseos and its mixture of architectural details and setbacks
- Task Force members liked landscaping elements in front of a two-story structure in Danville pictured in the slideshow

Building design:

- Buildings and storefronts along Main Street should look unique and not monotonous
- Buildings look better when their character and scale is compatible with their surroundings
- An approach for taller buildings that was favorably received was to step down building height gradually or to “feather” the height of buildings in transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods
- It is helpful for buildings to have doors on the “back” of the building so that people are drawn “through” the business from parking areas and can easily access others
- Many Task Force members indicated that it would be acceptable to have taller buildings (3-4 stories) if the upper floors are recessed
- Existing City regulations may hinder great design and lead to too many non-descript looking buildings
- Recessed ground floors may allow room for outdoor dining

Streetscapes:

- Flowers, greenery and landscaping on streetscape elements and buildings adds character. Smaller planters may be ideal for narrow sidewalks
- Most members like the idea of parklets if there is not too much reduction in parking supply
- Uneven sidewalks are dangerous, as are allowing too many elements (bollards, trees, seating, etc.) on sidewalks
- Restaurants that spill out to the sidewalk are appealing

General comments:

- A Task Force member came up with the acronym “FRESH” for good, balanced downtowns. Letters stand for Flow, Recreation, Entertainment options, diverse Shopping, and Hospitality. Another Task Force member suggested adding another “E” to the acronym to stand for Economic development
- Main Street isn’t the only part of the Planning Area—there are also residential areas to consider.

The public was given the opportunity to respond to the presentation and Task Force comments. Topics addressed included:

- A reminder to the Task Force that the Downtown is not a tabula rasa, and that they need to remember existing character of the entire planning area
- Enhance the Downtown, do not overhaul it
- Architectural details are of chief importance to great downtowns
- Pleasanton needs to protect historic downtown assets
- People come to Pleasanton for its small scale and sense of place
- The City needs to respond as soon as possible to parking problems
- The consulting team should suggest an appropriate scale for Downtown
- Public art is important and enhances downtown. Bike racks can be creatively designed
- A member of the public that visited both Mountain View and Los Altos commented that the buildings in Mountain View were too tall and the streets were too wide, and it was very evident which side of the street was in Mountain View and which side of the street was in Los Altos.
- Downtown should not have parklets
- Landscaping will be expensive to maintain

4. 2002 Downtown Specific Plan Policy Matrix

Dyett & Bhatia gave a presentation discussing what a policy is, and the importance of good policies and policy language. Explained that this Update will involve reviewing policies in the 2002 Downtown Specific Plan, and the importance of either removing, updating, or adding new policies to reflect current conditions Downtown. Stated that the Task Force should think about how flexible or prescriptive policies should be. Provided an overview of the policy matrix assignment, which is due Monday, April 10th. All materials will be posted on the website for the public.

The Task Force was given the opportunity to comment or ask questions about the material presented:

- Two Task Force members expressed confusion about moving quickly from a high-level visioning exercise to a granular examination of policy
- A Task Force member expressed that it is important to think of the planning process as fine-tuning an out-of-date document

The public was given the opportunity to comment:

- Ashland, Oregon was described as a good case study for Pleasanton, particularly concerning outdoor events and public space around waterways

5. Outreach Approach

The Director of Community Development gave a quick overview of the community outreach approach and progress made so far. Encouraged public to provide feedback at all stages of the process. Encouraged the public to sign up for the project email list. Asked the Task Force to provide feedback on the strategy and whether the outreach approach is missing certain segments of the population.

The Task Force provided the following comments:

- Expressed concern about holding a workshop during the summer when people are not around
- Millennials should be involved in the planning process. Social media (Facebook and Instagram) may be good ways to reach them
- The City should reach out to the Senior Center and the school district

Comments were opened to the public:

- Expressed the importance of providing information to the public about the planning process

6. Task Force Check-In

The Task Force provided additional comments:

- Enjoyed the survey and is looking forward to discussion
- City staff is doing a great job keeping the Task Force organized and informed

7. Task Force and Brief Staff Announcements

City staff announced the following:

- The Pleasanton Unified School District Board at its February 28, 2017, meeting decided that its site on Bernal Avenue and 1st Street will not be part of the Downtown Specific Plan update process
- The FAQ section of the website has been updated recently and will continue to be updated
- On April 18th, the City Council will consider adoption of the Downtown Parking Strategy

8. Summary and Next Steps

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for **April 25, 2017**. The next meeting will discuss online survey results, the existing conditions memo, the policy matrix, and plan visioning.

Pleasanton Downtown Specific Plan
Summary Memorandum - Design Principles (March 28, 2017 Task Force Meeting)
Summary by Urban Field Studio

Urban Field Studio led a discussion about the “Downtown Tours” assignment that the Task Force members completed in February. For the discussion, each member was encouraged to think about elements that make a downtown terrific while reviewing photos taken by all the members. Overall, the Task Force members referenced twenty places, the majority of which were within a range of 100 miles of Pleasanton. The tours provided many examples similar to conditions found on Main Street, but many of the observations could also be applied to Downtown subareas such as the Arroyo, side streets, First Street, and the Bernal Opportunity Site.

Streetscapes are an element of Downtown experienced by all who visit them. The Task Force contemplated how the configuration of the street components - the sidewalk, parking spaces, and roadway - could be reformatted in different ways to allow for certain objectives. For example, sidewalks could be widened to allow for more pedestrian flow and outdoor dining. Parking spaces could be used for outdoor dining or as “parklets”. Pedestrian safety could be enhanced with traffic calming measures, such as reverse diagonal parking. Regulation of sidewalk elements, like bollards, trees, seating, garbage cans, plants, planters, and street signs, could reduce the interruptions and “congestion” to pedestrian flow. There were also examples of paseos, breezeways, courtyards, and alleyways, which Task Force members saw that not only connected the front of the building with the parking resource behind, but also broke up the massing of larger buildings.

Concerning the design of buildings, Task Force members shared their observations about the buildings they saw in other cities. They all agreed that buildings look better when their character and scale is compatible with their surroundings. With regard to the scale of buildings, task members were the most comfortable with buildings that were about two to three stories tall, though most were also not opposed to slightly taller, well-designed buildings with recessed upper floors. There was a mixture of reactions to situations where wider streets sometimes felt too wide in relation to buildings that were not tall enough; however, some members thought that alleyways between tall buildings felt just fine. There was preference for newer buildings to be a similar height to neighboring buildings. An approach for taller buildings that was favorably received was to step down building height gradually or to “feather” the height of buildings in transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The character of buildings at street level was thought to be important to the experience of a place. There was consensus that there needs to be a feeling of variety along a street. Avoiding monotonous design or nondescript buildings was important to the Task Force. They favored buildings that encouraged activity at the street level with restaurants or stores that opened to the street. The acronym “FRESH” was suggested at the end of the meeting to describe the elements of a good, balanced downtown. The letters stand for Flow, Recreation, Entertainment options, diverse Shopping, Hospitality. It was suggested that an E for Economic development should be included as part of that acronym.