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## ITEM 1: SUMMARY OF MEETING #4

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### Summary of Downtown Specific Plan Update Task Force Meeting #4 Tuesday, April 25, 2017

#### *Task Force Members Present*

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1	Jerry Thorne, Mayor (Chair)	2	Kathy Narum, City Council
3	Herb Ritter, Planning Commission	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		

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#### *City of Pleasanton Staff*

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1	Gerry Beaudin, Director of Community Development	2	Shweta Bonn, Senior Planner
3	Adam Weinstein, Planning Manager	4	Brian Dolan, Assistant City Manager
5	Kendall Granucci, Office Manager	6	Mike Tassano, City Traffic Engineer

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#### *Professional Services*

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1	Sophie Martin, Principal, Dyett & Bhatia	2	Elizabeth Schmid, Associate, Dyett & Bhatia
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## **1. Welcome and Prior Meeting Notes**

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

**B. Action Regarding Meeting #3 Summary and Summary of Design Principles.** Dyett & Bhatia provided a summary of the discussion from Meeting #3 about what constitutes a great Downtown and good urban design.

Comments from the Task Force included:

- Many European cities have successful Downtowns that are pedestrian only. However, typically there is outstanding mass transportation as well.
- The summaries captured all of the salient points well.

*The Task Force voted on accepting the Meeting #3 Summary: eight in favor; zero opposed; one abstained.*

## **2. Meeting Open to Public and Correspondence**

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

- Opposition to adding new housing or buildings higher than 30 to 40 feet
- Opposition to moving the Civic Center site
- Suggestion that a new parking garage be located Downtown, off of Main Street
- Desire for SFPUC site to be kept as open space
- Concern that real estate offices, banks, and other businesses with low pedestrian activity should not be allowed on the first floor

## **3. Review Results of Online Survey and Farmers' Market Outreach**

Dyett & Bhatia led a discussion about the results of the Farmers' Market outreach conducted on March 11 and the online survey that was active from February 28 through April 4. Topics discussed included:

- Farmers' Market
  - General desire to preserve Downtown's character and charm, increase family friendly activities and community events, and address parking concerns
  - Preferences for the Downtown commercial core, transition zone (Peters & Old Bernal Avenues), and existing Civic Center site
- Online Survey
  - Favorite places
  - Preferred uses in the commercial area, office district, and civic center
  - Suggestions for the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and roadway networks
  - Suggestions for parking
  - Additional ideas

The Task Force provided the following thoughts in response to the presentation:

- The results showing that nearly half of survey respondents drive Downtown might be reflective of the age of respondents, and be reflective of why parking is perceived to be such an issue.

- Most residents who responded to the survey seemed to live Downtown.
- The City already closes off Main Street sometimes, such as for First Wednesdays. Closing Main Street to cars could have potential downsides, such as limiting access to businesses for senior citizens who can't walk long distances.
- The results from the Farmers' Market outreach and the online survey were fairly consistent.
- Most do not want to see buildings over two stories or 30 to 40 feet. That's important to keep the character of Downtown.
- Interest in better accommodation for bikes.
- Interest in knowing how many Downtown business owners filled out the survey.
- Suggestion to separate out the library when soliciting feedback on the Civic Center site.
- Suggestion to be more specific when describing land uses. For instance, people may have different reactions to boutique hotels versus larger chain hotels.
- Concern that banks on Main Street break up the flow between retail stores and restaurants. Many people don't visit bank branches any more, as it is easy to do banking online. Desire for information about the bank ordinance in the next meeting packet.
- Consider asking more detailed questions about housing. People might find some forms of housing to be acceptable, such as high-end condos similar to what is being built in Danville.
- How do we make the regulations flexible enough to adapt to changing economic conditions?
- Keep the demographics of the survey respondents in perspective. In particular, we did not hear from a lot of young people (34 years or younger). There should be intentional outreach to this group as well as to older people.
- Downtown property owners and business tenants should be directly invited to participate in this process, particularly to provide feedback on land uses.

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

- Haven't been to a bank branch in years; don't need so many in Downtown.
- Desire for safe ways to bike through Downtown and good places to stow bikes.
- Desire for parking solutions.
- Visible crosswalks can help to naturally slow down traffic. In particular, a crosswalk should be added between Meadowlark Dairy and the Lions Wayside park.
- Downtown Pleasanton is desirable for a number of reasons, including its small town charm and access to open space.
- Get input from older people to better know what their needs are.
- Build a parking structure by the ACE train so that ACE train riders don't park in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Pleasanton needs a unique, signature attraction that draws people to visit, such as an amphitheater for concerts.

The Director of Community Development added that the City is in conversations with ACE and the County to determine both a medium term parking solution and a longer term solution.

#### **4. Vision for Downtown**

Dyett & Bhatia gave a brief presentation on the purpose of a vision statement and what constitutes a good vision statement, and identified language in the current Downtown Specific Plan that is most like a vision statement.

Instructions were then provided for a visioning exercise in which the Task Force and members of the public would place sticky dots on activity boards around the room to indicate their preference for sample ideas and topics that could potentially be included in a vision statement for the Downtown Specific Plan. Task Force members were given red sticky dots, and members of the public were given blue sticky dots.

One Task Force member asked for clarification about whether the entire Civic Center is going to move. The Director of Community Development responded that for the purposes of this activity, that should be the assumption. Information from the Task Force on the Civic Center project will be shared with this Task Force.

The Task Force and members of the public completed the visioning activity during a 15-minute break. At the conclusion of the break, Dyett & Bhatia gave a quick summary of the initial results:

- General preference among the Task Force and members of the public for some kind of balance between preserving what is working well, while still allowing for infill.
- Most were split between two options for an introduction sentence for the vision statement:
  - Downtown Pleasanton is the heart of the city, with a charming small-town core and historic neighborhoods that set it apart as a safe and desirable place to live.
  - Downtown Pleasanton features a vibrant and walkable mix of shopping, dining, entertainment and residences that establish its identity as Pleasanton's center.
- Most were also split (with several Task Force members placing their dots in between two different ideas) regarding new development:
  - In the future, Downtown Pleasanton's best qualities – its traditional character and scale – are preserved and maintained. New investment takes advantage of opportunities while embodying the desirable characteristics of the traditional downtown.
  - New development strengthens the best aspects of the historic core while embracing opportunities for growth and change at the periphery.
- Most of the Task Force and members of the public were supportive of the following idea regarding Main Street:
  - Main Street offers destinations, amenities, and entertainment options for people of all ages.
- Similarly, most of the Task Force and members of the public were supportive of the following idea regarding the Civic Center site:
  - The existing Civic Center site is redeveloped, establishing the southern gateway to Downtown with additional places to shop, dine, and recreate.
- On the topic of mobility, members of the Task Force and the public showed relatively equal support for all three sample ideas:
  - Sidewalks offer a comfortable and pleasant pedestrian experience.

- Priority is placed on getting out of, into and through Downtown efficiently by car, bike, transit, or on foot.
- Active lifestyles are encouraged with increased opportunities for walking and biking and convenient access to transit.
- Finally, of three “extra” ideas, one received considerable positive feedback from both Task Force members and members of the public:
  - The public realm is enhanced with attractively designed streets that provide greater opportunities for community gathering.

Dyett & Bhatia explained that for topics where there was significant support for more than one idea, the language could be reworked to incorporate elements of both (or all three, in the case of mobility). It was also explained that some ideas that received support, but not enough consensus to be included in the vision statement, could still be incorporated into the Plan in its policies.

The Task Force was given the opportunity to comment or ask questions about the visioning activity:

- Mention of a walkable, pedestrian friendly commercial area is missing from the vision statement. A better description of the desired ambiance is needed.
- A better description of public amenities is also needed.
- When the City previously invested in the Downtown, one of the main goals was to make the area more pedestrian friendly by widening the sidewalks. This led to more outdoor restaurant seating, which has made the sidewalks feel narrow again. The added activity is good, but it is important that people can easily walk down Main Street.

The Assistant City Manager clarified that the Civic Center Task Force considered multiple alternatives, including one in which the Civic Center would be remodeled or rebuilt on the current site. However, that Task Force coalesced around moving the Civic Center to the Bernal site. The existing Civic Center site is 9 acres, while the new Bernal site offers considerable more space at 23 acres. A Library Futurist was involved in the discussion of future options for the library.

No members of the public opted to provide comments on the visioning activity.

Dyett & Bhatia stated that they would bring back several versions of a draft vision statement (probably a paragraph in length, combining multiple ideas) to the next meeting for the Task Force’s review. The goal will be to recommend a final vision statement at the May meeting.

## **5. 2002 Downtown Specific Plan Policy Matrix**

The Planning Manager thanked the Task Force members who submitted comments on the policy matrix, and said that the project team would be considering this initial feedback as they move forward. The diversity of responses received reflects the diversity of the Task Force. The work plan is being adjusted to focus on visioning, existing conditions, and opportunities first. The policy discussion will then pick back up in the late summer or early fall.

The Task Force was given the opportunity to comment or ask questions about the policy matrix. One Task Force member asked if the updated Specific Plan would contain a mix of public space priorities and policy statements like the existing Plan. The Planning Manager responded that the Plan covers both the public realm and private businesses. Current projects that Staff is working on include Lions Wayside Park and the Civic Center. The Director of Community Development added that the goal for the

Transportation Corridor is to build it out with parking and bicycle and pedestrian amenities, extending what is already completed behind the Firehouse Arts Center.

## **6. Task Force Check-In**

The Task Force provided additional comments:

- Desire for a schedule of topics that will be covered at future Task Force meetings that provides clarity around when certain topics/geographic areas will be discussed.
- Desire for a railroad quiet zone to address noise concerns for adjacent residential neighborhood. Pleasanton is the second busiest stop.
- Desire to set milestones so that the City can gauge how well it is achieving the vision of the Specific Plan. The community-wide survey would be good tool for keeping track of people's feelings about Downtown over time.

The Director of Community Development responded that the City is monitoring opportunities to engage with ACE regarding quiet zones. However, the cost could be upwards of \$1 million per crossing. The Assistant City Manager added that ACE is exploring adding more runs, which would require that they conduct environmental review. Addressing noise concerns could be included as mitigation.

The Director of Community Development also said that a basic schedule would be provided to the Task Force in order to give an overview of the upcoming process.

## **7. Task Force and Brief Staff Announcements**

City Staff made the following announcements:

- The Downtown Parking Strategy and Implementation Plan was adopted by the City Council last week, and one of the top strategies is to development additional parking along with pedestrian and bicycle amenities along the corridor. The Task Force should take a look as the Transportation Corridor is closely tied to the work of this Task Force.
- Upcoming events:
  - Sunday, April 30 – Popup outreach at the Bike Safety Festival from 1:00-4:00 p.m. in the library parking lot.
  - Sunday, April 30 – Pleasanton Historical Foundation meeting from 1:00-3:30 p.m. at the Museum on Main.
  - Wednesday, May 3 – Popup outreach at the First Wednesday Street Party.

## **8. Summary and Next Steps**

The next Task Force meeting is scheduled for **May 23, 2017**. The next meeting will focus on finalizing the vision statement and reviewing the existing conditions memos. Preliminary focus areas for change will also be introduced. The Task Force should carefully review the cover memo that accompanies the existing conditions memos.