

Downtown Steering Committee Meeting #9
Meeting Summary
October 5, 2011

Public Comments -

1. Steve Cuddy – NV Architects Exchange is offering to put on a design charette for Heritage Park.
2. Elizabeth McKinney – It would be helpful if we had visuals for the transitional neighborhood because at the last meeting the committee members may not have been clear about what buildings are on what blocks.
3. David Graves, 459 Randolph St. – Asked why there was a long hiatus from the last Steering Committee meetings in 2010 and where are meeting summaries and recaps of the discussions that have taken place so far?

The reason for the time that elapsed between the last Steering Committee meetings in 2010 and these meetings was to provide the following:

- Conduct sub-committee meetings on infrastructure and design
- Work with Napa Valley College on 3D modeling of the downtown
- Conduct meetings with Napa County Landmarks, Napa Valley Architects Exchange and neighbors
- Participate in neighborhood tours in and around the downtown
- Complete the Intensive Level Historic Survey and Historic Design Guidelines
- Prepare the preliminary draft Downtown Specific Plan
- Begin preparing the administrative draft Environmental Impact Report

Staff explained that the meeting summaries and PowerPoint slides would be posted on the web before the next meeting.

Historic Design Guidelines -

presented by Rebecca Fogel, Page & Turnbull

Discussion among Steering Committee Members: General discussion related to how to achieve these since these are guidelines and not regulations; how to make the process for the applicant easier and less expensive if they abide by the guidelines; what would trigger enforcing the guidelines; and that these are very good guidelines overall.

The Steering Committee supported:

- Adding a general guideline regarding siting “discretionary” public facilities in a manner that is sensitive to important historic buildings (some signs, trees, etc.), noting that some public works’ locations are not discretionary like traffic light poles, some regulatory signs, etc.

- If a project meets the Secretary of Interior Standards and the Historic Design Guidelines, the project should be approved at the staff level. This process is already the process for projects with designated HRI 3 or its equivalent.
- Use the historic guidelines as a template, these can be applied citywide and incorporated into other historic neighborhood design guidelines. (Not part of Downtown Specific Plan.)

Height

Discussion among Steering Committee Members: It's important to strengthen quality retail along the First Street corridor, so a first-floor minimum height is important there, but perhaps not as important in other areas like Downtown II; the zoning (uses) and height should work together (see zoning map on page 55) because it doesn't make sense to have first-floor minimums just on the north side of First Street; building heights on the south side of First should be allowed to be as tall as the north side to create balance, though there is a concern about creating a canyon-like effect and shadows; some members are concerned about the 60' height allowance in Downtown II and in particular where it abuts the Transition Area. In Downtown I and II, where do we cap the height, at the top of the ceiling, at the ridge line, at the mid-point of the roof pitch? There is an overall desire to allow flexibility.

The Steering Committee supported:

- Retain the first floor height minimum at 15' and relate the boundaries where this is required to the Downtown Core Commercial land use district on the map on page 55.
- Allow 75' maximum height on the south side of First Street and require setbacks above the Third Floor.
- In Downtown II that is not otherwise identified as Downtown Core Commercial District, revise the first-floor height minimum from 15' to 12'. This provides more flexibility within the 60' maximum height limit.
- Staff to provide a recommendation regarding where to measure building height on Downtown I and II.
- Staff to provide a recommendation regarding where to measure building height in the Downtown II zone that abuts the Transition zone.
- In the Transition zone, the maximum height should remain 35' to the ridge line.

Design Guidelines

After a review of the design guidelines and a discussion about how project applications are reviewed for design and the guidelines are applied, the Committee discussed which guidelines should be elevated to standards. There was some discussion regarding the use of neon signs as advertisements or as design features, but the discussion did not result in a change to the guidelines.

The Steering Committee supported:

- Page 92, #10 – says “require” rooftop equipment to be screened from view from the public right of way. Remove this from the guidelines if it’s already required; otherwise retain it as a guideline replacing the word “require” with “encourage”.
- Page 89, under Site and Building Orientation Guidelines – eliminate #4 in Downtown I and II so as not to discourage windows and balconies.
- Page 101, eliminate #5 – says “project awnings over doors and windows and not over blank walls” since it doesn’t seem necessary.

Focus Areas

Staff presented the goals and objectives for the three focus areas and recommended some minor modifications and clean-up to the accompanying maps to the Steering Committee. The Committee agreed with the recommendations, with some additional clarifications:

1. Copia

- regarding gardens, don’t be specific about retaining the north or south garden, allow flexibility
- regarding “will not impact Napa River,” turn that into a positive statement, like “new development will enhance the river.”

2. CineDome

- Add language that captures the Committee’s desire to minimize the impact new development on the NSD site would have on adjacent residential properties
- Emphasize active uses along the edge of the future bypass; street-level vitality; eyes on the bypass.

3. Town Center

- Staff to clean up Coombs Street language and bring back to the Planning Commission / City Council workshop.