

DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN – STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY
10-26-11

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Joe Fisher, representing Copia property: Expressed concern that the land use forecast accurately reflects what is possible in terms of future development, and suggested that allowable uses should be interchangeable to allow the market to decide. *(Under the Implementation discussion, Cass talked about how the EIR will analyze different alternatives for land uses which will build in flexibility.)*
2. Joaquina Pena: Downtown Specific Plan should include a community center and vegetable garden, something for the community; a place to share skills, build a sustainable community, have a tool library, host workshops. She also said something about sustainable design guidelines.
3. Ron Rogers: He is not supportive of one-way streets becoming two-way. The one-way streets accomplish good traffic flow and avoid gridlock. He referenced Whidbey Island, which now is converting streets to one-way for this very reason. Drivers trying to navigate our streets can rely on Google maps, signs, etc; doesn't feel it is the tax payer's responsibility to solve the merchants' problem.
4. Steve Cuddy: Noted the Architects Exchange has submitted comments on the DSP, and will be submitting a development opportunities map.
5. Chris Hall (Zapolski's architect): Introduced himself and said they will be providing written comments, and want to have open communication with the City.
6. Matt Zaks: Does the plan include markers for special trees? What about special consideration for 'special plants'? And what about a list of community members that make positive contributions in the community?

DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. CROSSWALKS, SPECIAL TREATMENTS

Discussion:

For special crosswalk treatments, Public Works prefers colored concrete. The crosswalk bands need to be white (or yellow near schools) and the middle can be another color. Concrete won't fade over time, and paint will, so one benefit of concrete over painted is visibility at night. It's important to note that utility companies often tear up crosswalks to do repairs and are not required to replace the special treatment, so any kind of special treatment crosswalk can end up being patchy over time. Stamped asphalt cracks and water infiltrates, so the life cycle cost is greater than concrete.

Bomanite crosswalks already exist downtown, and you can see over time the City has patched with black asphalt. Thermoplastic lasts longer but the City doesn't have the equipment to replace it and the materials are not environmentally friendly.

Steering Committee Recommendation:

Crosswalks at key intersections and mid-block crossings should have a special treatment; treatment itself to be determined based on technology and maintenance considerations; bulb-outs should be included, with sustainable landscaping as an option

2. TRANSITIONS TO HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Discussion: Rather than put stuff in the streets, put the historic district features in the street furnishings like benches and bike racks (Garrett). Sarah and Tom like the crosswalk treatment with the cobble bands at the edges. A special crosswalk at the entry won't really mean anything to most people; make the signage pedestrian oriented, perhaps put it in the concrete (Dan). Rather than include rumble strips or special paving at entries, include bulb-outs and potential landscape strips which allow for placement of signage (Pete).

Steering Committee Recommendation:

The City Cultural Heritage Commission will work with Napa County Landmarks to develop a signage program that will include signs at key entries, locations for the entry signs, markers for historic buildings, and pedestrian-oriented interpretive signage related to the historic district, as well as potential historic district signage inlaid in the sidewalk at key entry points. *(No to special paving treatment? Yes to bulb-outs?)*

3. HERITAGE PARK

Steering Committee Recommendation:

All supported the recommendation to include Heritage Park and surrounding properties as an open space improvement opportunity in a 'linear parkway' fashion in the Downtown Specific Plan. The committee supported inclusion of a play structure in the plan, or at the future skate park, or at the future ½-acre park at Pearl & Main. All supported moving the bike path westward to connect from Brown Street, along Pearl to the pedestrian bridge on Coombs; this avoids a mid-block crossing. Napa Valley Architects Exchange has offered to sponsor and facilitate a design charette for this project.

4. GROUND FLOOR HEIGHTS MINIMUM

Discussion:

Steering Committee members (Jeff and Dan) clarified the intent of the ground-floor minimum is to create strong retail spaces internal to buildings, and the originally recommended 15' minimum in the core retail area should be a floor-to-floor measurement, so the true ceiling height would be closer to 13' after accounting for venting / mechanical equipment and dropped ceilings. What happens on the outside of the building is up to the architect. The committee agreed that this intent needs to be balanced with the overall intent of the DSP which is to provide developers flexibility, so it would perhaps be more appropriate as a design guideline.

Steering Committee Recommendation:

In the Downtown Commercial zoning district, move and revise the 15' minimum standard to a 14' minimum design guideline. For Downtown II and Transition Area, no need for a minimum or guideline. (Kevin disagreed because he feels this issue is tied to the height issue and overall development flexibility, and if we're going to ask for more height on the ground floor, we should then give more height on the top floor.)

5. BUILDING HEIGHT MEASUREMENT

Steering Committee Recommendation:

- Transition Area, 35' height measured to top point of roof – all agreed
- DT II, 60' measurement to the average (mid-point) of the roof peak; and DT I, 75' measurement from grade to the average (mid-point) of the roof peak – all but 1 agreed (Ryan was a no, thinks measurement should be to top ceiling because the roof is largely invisible from the street)

6. DO NOT EXPAND DOWNTOWN I TO INCLUDE SOUTH SIDE OF FIRST STREET

Discussion:

Staff showed the few development opportunities on the south side of First, and the sensitive design issues those opportunities would face given their proximity to historic buildings. Staff also showed the shadow effect the current buildings on the south side create, and taller buildings will cause the north side of First to be covered in shadows during certain times of the day. Sarah also expressed concern about how tall buildings on both sides of the street would create a canyon effect along a relatively narrow First Street, and would erode the historic character of Downtown.

Committee Recommendation:

Do not expand Downtown I – all agreed but 1 (Kevin, because it limits flexibility)

7. IMPLEMENTATION

Discussion: Cass described the Implementation Plan, that it's a roadmap for moving forward to further the objectives of the DSP. The first step is to complete required regulatory measures and develop a financing strategy, possibly by spring 2012. Committee members and staff agreed that there is a delicate balancing that needs to be evaluated between the burden private development can bear versus the infrastructure costs to support that private development, understanding what the tipping point is, and devising how to finance the balance.

Steering Committee Action: No action necessary. Members may want to spend more time reviewing the Implementation chapter and will provide comments by November 11th.

8. WRAP UP

Joint City Council / Planning Commission meeting on November 15th at 6:30. The committee is ready to forward the draft Downtown Specific Plan, along with the Steering Committee's actions and comments, and public comments received from others up to November 11th, to the City Council and Planning Commission for review and additional input and direction. Then a final draft of the DSP will be prepared and final touches put on the Draft Environmental Impact Report. In December 2011 or early 2012, those documents will be released and the Steering Committee will have a final wrap-up meeting. Public hearings will follow in the spring.