

Weekly Downtown Stakeholders Team (DST) Meetings

Issue 1
DST Meetings #1 - #6
February 20, 2014

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Kick-Off Meeting

The City and consultant Kimley-Horn and Associates (KHA) took the lead on the first meeting, held on September 25th to describe the intentions of the City and the County, working together to engage the community in an open dialogue concerning downtown Salinas.



may come and go, but all are invited to join the conversation

DST came to the consensus around the following framework:

- Meetings will be every Wed.~90 min.
- Transparency is key to building trust-let's get everything on the table

Several names and organizations were suggested as future teammates.

KHA was selected by a team of stakeholders and approved by the City and County to help advise this process. The process is open and transparent, and all at the table are of equal status. Members

The structure will engage the Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST), advised by technical assistance teams as necessary that may include transit, parking and historic preservation.

“Should we be looking at connections between areas (downtown, ITC, Chinatown) or the areas themselves?”

Land Use and Boundaries

Alan Stumpf shared the **Downtown Rebound Planning Program** which sets forth development regulations and guidelines aimed at making downtown a desirable place to shop, work, and live.

Debbie Hale shared TAMC's plans to **Extend Commuter Rail Service** to Salinas from as far north as Sacramento.

The environmental phase is complete, engineering and design is currently underway, and construction is expected to begin in 2015 and end in 2018.

Don Reynolds shared the **2010 Chinatown Rebound Plan** and its status. It focuses on social services, traffic circulation, historic preservation & land use. It can be found at:

salinasdcb.org

John Ford provided an overview of some future plans **the County** is considering, such as the re-use of the old jail facility and the relocation of District Attorney Offices. Important issues to keep in mind are the need for increase safety in pedestrian crossings at Alisal Street, and the need for adequate parking facilities.

Street Configuration & Transit

Jim Daisa and Dave Sorenson from consultant Kimley-Horn (KH) presented the following “Vibrant Streets” case studies:

- Allison Ave in downtown La Mesa;
- Barracks Row in Washington DC; and
- Cesar Chavez Parkway in San Diego

These projects were funded through a combination of City General funds, Business Improvement District contributions and Historic Preservation grants.

Major improvements that proved to enhance traffic circulation were:

Improvement Description :		Possible applicability:
Converting 1-way streets	to 2-way streets with center turning lane	Monterey St (from Market St to Gabilan St)
	to 2-way streets with parking on both sides	Main St (from Gabilan St to San Luis St)
Converting 4-lane street	to 2-way street with center turning lane, bike lanes and parking on each side	Alisal St (from Capitol St to Pajaro St)
Installation of strategic pedestrian crossing Locations		Alisal Street

Additional improvements included in KH’s presentation of successful case studies were:

- installation of iron streetlights
- revitalization of dilapidated building facades
- improvement on sidewalks with brick and slate pavers

These improvements led to

- dozens of new businesses replacing the empty spaces
- \$80K+ in annual sales tax plus
- Increased Property Values
- Vacancy Rate decreased to 5%
- Rents increased to an avg. of \$40/ sq. ft.

“Hundreds of small incremental improvements and long-time management are the key to the success of the [revitalization] programs.

It’s the small steps that make the biggest impact”

“It’s about the Value, Not the Cost”

Kageyama challenged public officials to encourage citizens to come up with untested ideas and ask, “Where’s the fun in this?”

For the Love of Cities

Kageyama, the author of “For the Love of Cities,” said it’s all about turning the city you live in into a city you’re in love with.

“Most people think that city making is something that’s left for the mayor, city council, city manager,” Kageyama said. “But ordinary citizens have a role in making cities as well.”

His message had two main points;

1. People don’t necessarily love the big things in their communities, they love the small things that make them feel connected to people and place

2. It’s the *people* who make a community vibrant.

Small towns and cities will never be able to compete with major cities in terms of sheer number of amenities.

It is the little things we remember about a place. City of Salinas hosts the annual **California Rodeo** and showcases the ever-fun **Kiddie Capers Parade**. The annual **Parade of Lights** and sold-out **Day of the Family** are only a few events that bring Salinas’ residents together.

People who love a place will feel like they own it, it

is theirs to show-off and to share. Creating a city that people love is important, Kageyama said, because when you love a place you find meaning in it and you commit to it.

- Ideas to consider in Salinas:
- *Rebuild the Historic Sign*
 - *Have a Salsa Dance Party*
 - *Redefine Public Spaces for Events*
 - *Alleys are Dull – lighten them up*
 - *Tree lighting*
 - *Spontaneity*
 - *Provide space for Fun*

Mobility

A number of ideas were introduced that, if implemented, would materialize into positive noticeable change.

Bataan Park, a major gateway, continues to be the center of discussion as being in dire need of up-lighting and better pedestrian access. It was noted that minor improvements, such as installing low-voltage tree lights (aka festoon lights) and clearing up tree growth to open up views would transform the park and make it more inviting.

Parking Lots are currently not very inviting to downtown visitors. Alan noted that the customer's walk from the car lot to the business ought to be a more pleasant experience.

Not only is it the visitors' first impression (therefore it should be clean and friendly) but it is also the first opportunity to make their visit a memorable one.

Fred requested that consideration be made to the possibility of opening City parking lots (8 & 12 on Lincoln /Gabilan and Lincoln/Central) to the public during the evening and over the weekend in an effort to increase activity.

Downtown Alleys (by Patria, the Golden Fish, the Steinbeck Center) are regarded as dark and lurking by visitors. The alleys should serve as connectors, and in order for them to be used, they need to be well-lit and inviting.

The discussion on alleys led to the realization that the Steinbeck Center's space (adjacent to the alley) is currently under-utilized. Originally, the building was designed with the purpose of installing a restaurant and opening it up for outdoor dining. While the current state of darkness may change once the new Taylor building is open for business, a need for activity at the Steinbeck Center location exists.

Salvador Munoz noted that an increase in Main Street pedestrian traffic may be achieved by integrating dynamic sidewalk features (bike parking, water features, signage, maps) that would serve as gathering places instead of travel routes.



Photo courtesy of Kimley-Horn's Salinas Mobility Study (2013)

Parking

Sanjay Pandya, Kimley-Horn & Associates, put forth several Progressive Parking Concepts that are being tried in other cities. These are not a one-size fits all, so several concepts were presented and discussed to see if similar strategies could work in Salinas. According to Sanjay, "Parking is a means to an end, define the end, and you'll find out what parking needs to be." Sanjay referenced Donald Shoup's *The High Cost of Free Parking*.

Currently, parking is used to drive development and our tendency is to focus

on ways to integrate parking to the fabric of the community. Rather, parking should be looked at as an economic catalyst for the community.

One strategy presented for future consideration includes establishing **Progressive Parking Policies**, which would encourage setting rates & policies that place value on parking demand. Examples include setting tiered (or staggered) parking rates (instead of 90 minute free parking).

Sanjay concluded his presentation by stating that parking needs to:

- Support development
- Promote economic development, and
- Not restrict growth

The question was raised: "Where else in Salinas can we find paid parking?"

Colleen Bailey asked whether there is a way to provide employee parking AND create an easy way to get to work. Now, parking is abundant (parking lots, parking garage), but there is no incentive to use them; the parking garage is more expensive than on-street parking and the parking lots do not feel safe.

"Do we have a parking problem, or an enforcement problem?"

"Is this the right time to change parking dynamics with so many vacant properties?"

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While Preserving the connection to History, Downtown Salinas will offer a vibrant place where the City's past and future come together to create a healthy mix of residences, businesses, civic institutions, recreation and culture in a fun, safe and family-friendly setting



More information to come on Next Month's community workshop/meetings!



“Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan”

Downtown is changing! These changes are most evident in the development of the corporate headquarters of Taylor Fresh Foods, and the transformation of the Train Station into an Intermodal Transportation Center that consolidates transit services.

It is also important to understand that over time many changes have occurred in downtown that have had a significant cumulative impact including the development of the **National Steinbeck Center**, the **Monterey Street Parking Garage**, **Bankers Casino**, **the County Government Campus** and **Maya Cinemas**.

In response to these changes the City of Salinas, in coordination with the County and other downtown stakeholders, has begun the process of developing a **Downtown Vibrancy Plan**. The purpose of this plan is to look at how best to transform the downtown city-core to create a cohesive environment built for pedestrians, bicycles and multimodal transportation and then automobiles. This will be accomplished by revitalizing and modernizing downtown infrastructure, adjusting traffic flow and improving amenities. The final plan is also expected to include updated parking and street layout scenarios while identifying key development sites that when developed will result in significant improvements to the business and economic climate in downtown Salinas.

Food for Thought from DST Members:

- Can we approach Council to get land availability approved to put up a “For Sale” sign & begin to attract new business?
- Definition of Downtown is constrained by the highways. What if we take back our highway and are able to extend the limits of downtown?
- Do we need to pursue structured parking?
- If paid parking is implemented, will it spill to residential?
- Should parking be seen as a revenue stream?
- Should we work on getting people *through* downtown or *retain* people in the area after work?
- Should we find alternative routes to loop traffic around downtown?