CHAPTER 2

DESTINATION DOWNTOWN
2.1 INTRODUCTION

Streets often help to define places by how they are configured and the priorities they communicate to users. Originally, downtown Salinas was made up of two-lane streets, and was the commercial center of the City. Traffic was heavy and slow in the downtown area and pedestrian activity was prevalent. In the 1970’s, highway engineers implemented a one-way couplet on Salinas Street and Monterey Street in the downtown area that promoted faster travel between Highway 101 and the City of Monterey. Later, the City developed several regional shopping centers to the north of town which dispersed commercial activity. In Salinas, Main Street in the Oldtown Salinas area became a low-volume street that provided parking for businesses. The one-way couplet was too successful in moving traffic through the downtown, as fewer people chose to stop and shop in downtown Salinas. Over time, activity generating land use on Salinas Street and Monterey Street was replaced with surface parking lots. The abundance of free parking has resulted in a tendency to drive more and walk less. Also, due to the lack of traffic on Main Street and the large regional malls in North Salinas, businesses along that street are struggling to stay open; in fact, all but a few businesses close by 6 p.m. each evening. At certain times throughout the day, most of the street parking is occupied, with very few people walking along downtown sidewalks. Downtown Salinas is predominantly an automobile-centric area that does not experience levels of street travel activity present in more successful downtowns.

As depicted in Figure 2-1, this plan proposes to alter circulation patterns and street characteristics to emphasize downtown Salinas as a primary destination and activity center for the City of Salinas and Monterey County. These changes will intentionally reduce vehicle speeds to emphasize pedestrian and bicycle travel. Pedestrian travel will be encouraged as the primary means of travel within downtown. Travel to and within downtown by bicycle will also be encouraged by providing safer routes leading into downtown. Investments in transit will be optimized by providing better connections and travel paths to transit hubs.
2.2 REVISED CIRCULATION PATTERNS

As depicted in Figure 2-2, big changes to circulation patterns are recommended in this plan to increase downtown vibrancy. All of Main Street will become two-way travel which will increase visibility to businesses and eliminate out-of-direction travel. Most of Salinas Street and Monterey Street will also be converted to two-way traffic, which will improve access to downtown and reduce vehicular speeds. Alisal Street will be re-purposed by converting one of the automobile travel lanes into bicycle lanes, resulting in a narrower, slower roadway that is more in character with surrounding uses. Howard Street will be converted to one-way traffic, enabling Church Street to be closed to vehicular traffic between Howard and Gabilian Street. These changes will emphasize downtown as a destination, a place where streets are shared by vehicles, bicyclists, transit, and pedestrians. Pedestrian travel will be emphasized and encouraged as the primary means of travel in downtown. For the same reason, bicycle travel to and within the downtown area will also be enhanced. This includes Class II bikeways (bike lanes) and Class III bikeways (bike routes). As these streets are reconfigured, the traffic signal timings will also be modified and optimized to accommodate flows into and out of downtown Salinas. This will require coordination and cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), which operates all signals on state routes. The City of Salinas may benefit from taking over ownership and control of Caltrans operated signals and routes to allow for greater flexibility in implementing improvements to streets and intersections in downtown. The next few pages describe circulation pattern changes in more detail.

The revised circulation plan emphasizes downtown as the destination. Depicted in Figure 2-2 are the mid-block travel lanes and direction of travel on downtown streets.
2.2.1 Salinas Street Improvements

As part of a one-way couplet, Salinas Street currently accommodates southbound travel only (as shown in the existing cross section below). Removing the one-way couplet is important to boldly proclaim that all roads lead to downtown Salinas. With this change it will be easier for vehicles to reach downtown from any direction.

Traffic speeds on Salinas Street will be reduced, creating a friendlier environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Combined with policies that support living, working and playing in downtown, these conditions will create a street ambience that will help attract businesses to vacant storefronts and redevelop surface parking lots into residential and mixed-use developments.

**Recommended Improvements**

**Salinas Street between Market Street and Gabilan Street**

As depicted in Figure 2-3, this section remains one-way and serves as a transition area to the two-way configuration. The number of travel lanes is reduced from three to two and a bicycle lane is integrated. This will provide more comfortable bicycle access from the Intermodal Transportation Center, to the Monterey-Salinas Transit Center and downtown. Parking remains available on both sides north of Central Avenue, and parallel parking is provided on the east side south of Central Avenue. The Monterey-Salinas Transit Center will continue to be served with a bus only lane on Salinas Street for loading and circulation.
**Figure 2-4 Recommended Improvements**

Salinas Street Between Gabilan Street and Alisal Street

As depicted in Figure 2-4, the existing three lane southbound configuration is replaced with two southbound lanes and one northbound lane. A raised median is added at Howard Street to restrict left-turn movements from and onto Howard Street and to provide a refuge for pedestrians crossing Salinas Street. Parking remains available for the southbound direction only. A pedestrian crossing at Howard Street provides a convenient crossing for pedestrians traveling to and from Government Center. A Class III (sharrow) bicycle route is provided in the southbound direction.

**Figure 2-5 Recommended Improvements**

Salinas Street Between Alisal Street and San Luis Street

As depicted in Figure 2-5, this section of Salinas Street is converted to one lane in each direction with a center turn lane and parking available on both sides of the street. South of San Luis Street, Salinas Street is converted to a single travel lane in each direction. This requires John Street to become two-way between Salinas Street and Main Street. A Class III (sharrow) bicycle route is provided in the southbound direction.
2.2.2 Monterey Street Improvements

As the other half of the one-way couplet, Monterey Street accommodates northbound travel only (as shown in the existing cross section below). As part of the improvements, Monterey Street would also be converted to two-directional traffic to allow more circulation options to, from, and within downtown for drivers. These changes encourage new opportunities for development and promote occupancy of vacant buildings and surface parking lots, helping to create a more vibrant ambience along Monterey Street.

Monterey Street between Market Street and Gabilan Street

As depicted in Figure 2-6, the two-way configuration on Monterey Street begins at the parking garage exit just south of Market Street (shown in the picture to the right). Vehicles will now be able to exit the parking garage to both northbound and southbound travel lanes. While unchanged at the approach to Market Street, Monterey Street transitions to a single travel lane in the southbound direction and three travel lanes in the northbound direction. This concept improves the circulation and access for drivers, while preserving capacity at an important exit from the downtown. A Class III (sharrow) bicycle route is provided in the northbound direction.
**FIGURE 2-7 RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS**
MONTEREY STREET BETWEEN GABILAN STREET AND ALISAL STREET

As depicted in Figure 2-7, the existing three lane northbound configuration is replaced with a single lane in each direction and a center turn lane. This allows for maximized vehicle access opportunities to the adjacent parcels. Parking will remain available on both sides of the street. A Class III (sharrow) bicycle route is provided in the northbound direction.

**FIGURE 2-8 RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS**
MONTEREY STREET BETWEEN ALISAL STREET AND SAN LUIS STREET

As depicted in Figure 2-8, this segment of Monterey Street provides two northbound travel lanes, one southbound travel lane, and a center turn lane. One of the northbound travel lanes terminates as a right-turn only lane at Alisal Street. A Class III (sharrow) bicycle route is provided in the northbound direction.
2.2.3 Main Street Improvements

In downtown Salinas, Main Street is a pedestrian-oriented facility. Speeds on the roadway are slow and sidewalks are wide. Charming, historic buildings dominate the streetcape creating an inviting ambiance. Currently, portions of Main Street operate as a one-way northbound street, between San Luis Street and Gabrielle Street (as shown in the existing cross section to the right and the picture below). This causes difficulty for vehicles to circulate in the area and does not allow as much traffic and visibility to Main Street businesses. It is recommended that the 200 and 300 blocks be returned to two-way traffic flow.

As depicted in Figure 2-9, in order to balance parking supply on both sides of the block, angled parking and parallel parking is switched at midblock. Angled parking allows for more spaces, while parallel parking provides for better loading zones and drop-off areas.

**Figure 2-9 Recommended Improvements Main Street between Gabrielle Street and San Luis Street**

Existing Condition

Recommended

Recommended (Reversed)
2.2.4 Alisal Street Improvements

Currently, Alisal Street provides an important east-west connection into downtown Salinas for automobile traffic (existing cross sections shown below). That function will continue, while transforming the street into a multi-modal corridor that will better serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. As depicted in Figure 2-10, the roadway will be reduced from two travel lanes in each direction to one lane in each direction, a center lane will be added for left-turn movements. Class II bicycle lanes and pedestrian crossing treatments will also be added. The resulting roadway will have sufficient capacity to serve existing and future automobile and bus travel demands, while providing an excellent opportunity to access downtown Salinas by bicycle, as well as make for easier pedestrian crossings. The recommended improvements will extend beyond downtown Salinas to Blanco Road to the west and Front Street to the east in order to provide a continuous bicycle facility leading to downtown. The new bicycle connection between East Salinas and Hartnell College will provide an important and safe path of travel to the downtown and encourage more bicycle travel. Additionally, Monterey-Salinas Transit uses Alisal Street to operate two of its major bus routes and is considering operating a regional Bus Rapid Transit route on the street which would connect Salinas with Marina.

The heaviest travelled portion of Alisal, between Lincoln Avenue and Monterey Street will be configured with two eastbound travel lanes, one westbound travel lane, a left-turn lane, and bicycle lanes. Parking between Lincoln Avenue and Monterey Street is on one side of the street only; the side with parking varying throughout the segment.

The intersection of Alisal Street and Capitol Street will change from all way stop control to either a traffic signal or a roundabout. A roundabout at this location could serve both as a traffic calming device and a gateway statement.

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FIGURE 2-10 RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS
ALISAL STREET BETWEEN CAYUGA STREET AND PAJARO STREET

Parking is on one side of the street only; the side with parking varies throughout the segment.
2.2.5 Lincoln Avenue Improvements

**FIGURE 2-11 RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS LINCOLN AVENUE BETWEEN MARKET STREET AND ALISAL STREET**

Lincoln Avenue between Market Street and Alisal Street

As depicted in Figure 2-11, Lincoln Avenue will be transformed into a multi-modal corridor that, like Alisal Street, will better serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. The roadway will remain one travel lane in each direction. Parallel parking and a center turn lane will be added between Gabilian Street and Howard Street. Class II bicycle lanes and pedestrian crossing treatments will be added along the roadway. The resulting roadway will have sufficient capacity to serve existing and future automobile and bus travel demands, while providing an excellent opportunity to access downtown Salinas by bicycle, as well as make for easier pedestrian crossings. Additionally, Monterey-Salinas Transit uses Lincoln Avenue to operate major bus routes and is considering operating a regional Bus Rapid Transit route on the street which would connect Salinas with Monterey.

Lincoln Avenue Extension

Also depicted in Figure 2-11 and the image below, Lincoln Avenue will be extended north of Market Street to provide the new connection to the Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) and Railroad Avenue. The roadway will be two travel lanes in each direction. This segment of Lincoln Avenue will be constructed as part of the Hub-Start rail project.

Visual Simulation of the new ITC Lincoln Avenue Extension