CHAPTER 4
BUILDING THE HEART OF SALINAS
Throughout downtown Salinas there is a need to update infrastructure and services to create a sense of place and encourage the gathering of residents and visitors and enhance the safety for all. Salinas is rooted in a rich and unique multi-cultural and multi-faceted past, within downtown there exists a great opportunity to create an area that visitors and residents love. Implementing both large and smaller scale changes to create an attractive and safe area will help Salinas re-establish a positive self-image. Through the creation and integration of gathering places that commemorate Salinas’ rich past and celebrate its cultural and creative present, the distinct character of downtown Salinas that has evolved through the years can flourish and captivate.

Downtown public spaces provide a canvas to form a great harmony between Salinas’ historical integrity and present-day appeal. Improvements, incrementally and overtime, can transform downtown Salinas into a central area that people will feel like they own; a place they want to show-off, share and tell the rich story of Salinas.

Creating Places to Gather
A desirable downtown requires the presence of people. Public events promote human activity and downtown vitality. Lively events have a cyclical effect; attracting increasingly more activity since people are drawn to bustling places. At the first community workshop, the Holiday Café, it was found that "generally participants visualize the future of downtown Salinas as a vibrant, diverse, family and multi-cultural oriented City center filled with activities, art, music, and entertainment day and night for people of all ages". - Holiday Café Report

Currently downtown Salinas does host an array of annual and monthly events that boast the unique characteristics of Salinas and bring people together. The food and wine festival, holiday parade of lights, California Rodeo, Kiddle Kaspers Parade, First Friday Art Walk, and Steinbeck Festival are all special events that attract residents and visitors to downtown. When asked for their fondest memory of an experience in downtown Salinas, 30 percent of surveyor’s responses were event related. Parades, Rodeo Week events, and other events such as the Farmer’s Market and First Friday all contributed to memorable experiences. Expansions and additions to current downtown events to provide more activities, especially in the nighttime, are important to the enhanced attractiveness of downtown. Concerts and other live music events were identified in both the survey and public meetings as desirable downtown events.

Improving Safety and Appearance
A desirable downtown also requires the assurance of safety for all who visit. Public safety is a powerful perception that can have a strong effect on when, where and if a person visits an area. To bring the vision of the future of downtown Salinas to fruition, the improvement of the image of safety is important. When asked what five things they would change about Salinas, public safety in downtown was the top concern. Throughout the public workshops there was a strong desire to make improvements in downtown that would make it safer, more appealing and pleasant to be in, particularly in the evening.

Safe and comfortable places harvest the temptation to linger and explore. An increase in safety in downtown will not only attract people to the area but it will also encourage people to stay downtown and visit more often. When asked if they felt safe from crime in downtown Salinas, the majority of people responding that they use caution when visiting. Some replying that they only feel safe with a group or before six in the evening. Some even went as far to say that after dark they avoid the downtown area all together. Recently merchants have seen an increase in the level of aggressiveness displayed by panhandlers. Panhandling, homelessness, and lighting concerns all dissuade people from visiting downtown.

Feeling safe is a subjective perception; however, an increase in lights, public activity, the presence and availability of public restrooms, and aesthetics can have a great impact on the ambiance of downtown and the feeling of safety. Clean and adequate facilities and illuminated spaces will significantly improve the safety conditions of downtown Salinas, making it easier to hold desirable special events especially at nighttime.

Empowerment - A Call to Action
Ideas and suggestions for restoring downtown Salinas are nearly as endless as the spirit and enthusiasm of the people of Salinas. In working together toward a common plan, merchants, property owners, citizen volunteers and government officials can collectively transform the downtown into the heart and soul of Salinas.
4.2 Creating Places to Gather

By developing places for people to gather, hold events, and perform activities, downtown Salinas can become an exciting and dynamic center for people of all ages, day and night.

4.2.1 Public Spaces

Landscaped areas and vegetation enhance the image of an area. Public parks provide places for people to sit and relax, engage in recreational activities, and do a host of other activities. Public Parks and streets are great open public spaces to accommodate community gatherings and events. With Bataan Park (Figure 4-1) and the Fine Arts Park (Figure 4-2), downtown Salinas has the ability to transform existing under utilized and ill-performing spaces into unique interactive spaces that reflect the past, present and future of Salinas and provide downtown Salinas with additional areas to cultivate their future vision and identity.

**Bataan Park**

Located in the middle of Salinas between the downtown area, the Chinatown district, and the Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC), Bataan Park is a triangular park bounded by Main Street, Market Street and Monterey Street. The park was originally built by the City of Salinas to honor the 105 Salinas and Pajaro Valley military members who fought in the Philippines during World War II. Lost in the midst of three wide busy streets, Bataan Park is now best known as a gathering place for the homeless people who populate the City’s Chinatown district. Throughout the stakeholders meetings, the park continued to be the center of discussion as being in dire need of up-lighting and better pedestrian access.

To reclaim the space, a new design concept (see Figure 4-1) was requested to make the park a more celebrated, active, visible, and usable destination. Currently, access to the park is difficult, resulting in the stark underutilization of the space. As the City of Salinas has grown, Main, Market, and Monterey Street have become busy streets fostering high vehicular speeds and volumes. These streets have become barriers in accessing the park and have turned Bataan Park into an island of green space surrounded by asphalt.

Bataan Park presents a great opportunity to not just connect the downtown area with the Chinatown district and the ITC but also with the historic and ceremonial landmarks that exist around the space. The First Mayor’s House, Historic Train Depot, and the National Steinbeck Center all about the park. The park also presents an opportunity for future developments around it. The new design aims to create a symbolic and well-used space, rich in historical significance and celebration that reconnects the park to downtown and promotes future developments.

The design concept presented in Figure 4-1 is not a final design. Aspects of the design described below can be incorporated as separate improvements, and can be modified and/or changed based on City plans.

The design of the park looks to make these connections by expanding the parks footprint and undergrounding vehicular traffic Market Street (State Highway 183), Monterey Street, and Main Street. By dropping the streets below the park, pedestrian safe connections can be made on one level. This creates a more cohesive and open civic path that sets up opportunities for your “back door” connections to be turned into valuable “second front door” connections and renewal developments to be built near or in the park.

This concept, of creating a park that would serve as a direct pedestrian connection from downtown, was developed years ago by Downtown Stakeholder Team member, Peter Kasavan. With his concept, Bataan Park would be above grade and traffic from Main Street and Market Street would be redirected under the park.

The new design of Bataan Park was developed through a place-driven approach; using the concept of triangulation, the idea that elements in relationship to each other will stimulate linkages between people and places, to connect and promote activity between the various elements of the park. Opening and extending the historic and ceremonial landmarks onto the park and adding inviting amenities that tap into the creativity and uniqueness of Salinas throughout the spaces, promotes the movement and exploration of people through the park and creates a place where people want to stay. The new design utilizes the existing landmarks as central nodes, installing symbolic focal points around them to develop a series of visual lines that spark activity and pull people into and through the path. The central nodes in the new design include the pedestrian promenade, the Plaza, the Steinbeck Plaza, the Rail Yard Plaza, The First Mayor’s House, and the Bataan Memorial. The proposed improvements, while expensive, would provide a tremendous improvement to the pedestrian open space environment downtown.

**A Pedestrian Promenade**

A Pedestrian Promenade can be created using reclaimed civic space when Market Street is pushed below ground. Situated above Market Street, the promenade would connect the park along the southern edge of the downtown area and serve as the main east-west connector through the park. The area would encourage strolling, with large perennial beds along its center and shade trees with seating along its length. The central fountain would perform multiple functions by also serving as a stage. Large public art installations on either end of the promenade would anchor and draw people through the space. This area would be focused on art and natural beauty and would be a great place for art shows or other concert venues that could possibly utilize the center stage and great plaza.

**A Pedestrian Connection to Chinatown**

A Pedestrian Connection to Chinatown is an important connection that can help draw visitors to Chinatown as the area redevelops. Two options were explored in this plan; a new at grade crossing between Soledad Street and Market Street and a bridge just east of the Bataan Memorial. Both options provide an important connection over the railroad tracks from the downtown area to the Chinatown district.

**An Expanded Steinbeck Plaza**

An Expanded Steinbeck Plaza can be a gathering area with tables and chairs at the western end of the pedestrian promenade, offering the opportunity for the Steinbeck Center to extend into the park and create a second front entrance at the northern end of the building. Originally designed with the purpose of installing a restaurant with outdoor dining, this space is currently under-utilized. With the new extension, this area would open up and activity would increase.

Symbolic art in the Steinbeck Plaza could include a statue of John Steinbeck, a celebrated resident of Salinas who drew much inspiration for his novels from the Salinas Valley (potential example pictured above).

A Plaza can serve as the ceremonial civic space and “heart” of the park. The Plaza is a great place for concerts or ceremonies, tossing a frisbee, letting kids run around, picnics, and relaxing on a nice day.

The First Mayor’s House and Rail Museum Site can be reconfigured and expanded to include the area northwest of the park where the historic train is currently displayed. This new space can incorporate the landscape, amphitheater, and John Cerney Murals that are currently in front of the house. The fence that the first train coming to Salinas crashed through can also be added back. With the new design, the First Mayor’s House (shown in the image below) becomes highly visible and a focal point in the park. This will help to attract more visitors and further celebrate the history of the space.
Through the articulation of highly unique and personal focal points within the park’s central nodes, this new design (shown in Figure 4-1) aims to create a public space that will become the civic park in the heart of downtown. The celebration of Salinas’s literary, military, agricultural, and transportation past is stretched to every element of the design in hopes of fostering activity and soliciting thoughts of Salinas’s past, present, and future.

Elements of the design, specifically the symbolic art, pedestrian promenade, and outdoor dining can be applied throughout the downtown area.

As discussed previously, the concept presented is not a final design. This includes the Rail Yard Plaza and the simulations presented on the next page. Aspects of the design can be incorporated as separate improvements, and can be modified and/or changed based on City plans. It is also recognized that approval of these improvements must be granted by the organizations that own and manage the surrounding properties.

**Figure 4-1 Recommended Improvements for Bataan Park**
The Rail Yard Plaza is a public plaza along the west edge of the park that is part of the future redevelopment of the train depot. It celebrates the agricultural importance and historic significance of the Salinas train depot. The focal point for this space is the historic Southern Pacific Railroad train. Relocated from its current location behind a chain link fence, the historic train becomes a permanent interpretive historic display in the plaza, educating all who visit on the industrial and agricultural advancements that have taken place in Salinas. The connection of the Steinbeck Center and historic train depot is one of historic and literary significance and one that is highlighted through the park design. The rail yard plaza also features a pedestrian walkway that would include scored concrete to mimic rail lines within a rail yard and connects the park with potential future developments to the west.

The Rail Yard Plaza with the incorporation of the historic Southern Pacific Railroad train is a direct reflection of the history of how Salinas has prospered. The coming of the railroad to transport goods and people was a major turning point in the history and economic advancement of Salinas. Situated between the First Mayor’s House and the Steinbeck Plaza, the Rail Yard Plaza has the unique opportunity to exhibit the literary, agricultural, technological, and economic history of Salinas. In the late 1800’s, over six hundred railroad cards departed the Salinas railroad station everyday, transporting local produce across the United States. To this day, more than 80 percent of the lettuce grown in the United States comes from Salinas. By showcasing the historic train and encouraging activity around it, this rich history and significance can be imparted to all who visit.

The Bataan Memorial is the main theme of the current park and through interpretive and artistic enhancements becomes the focal point of the new design. Currently, the memorial is a rock with a plaque dedicating the park to the men who served with Company C, 194th Tank Battalion, California National Guard, during World War II. The new memorial celebrates the military history of Salinas by commemorating the national guardian and telling the story of the heroic soldiers who, in early 1941, marched down Main Street to the train depot to the cheers of the City on their way to defend the Philippines. After the American troops surrendered in the spring of 1942, the soldiers that had survived fierce combat were prisoners of the Japanese. Their ordeal was far from over, it continued with the infamous Bataan Death March where they were forced to walk more than 70 miles without food or water. From there, they were scattered to multiple prisoner of war camps around the Japanese Empire. Along the death march and at the prisoner of war camps, an estimated 20,000 soldiers who defended the Philippines died from heat exhaustion, brutal beatings, bayonet attacks and other methods of execution. Out of the 105 men who paraded through Salinas in 1941, only 47 made it home in 1945 to tell the story. During the time the company was in combat, it earned three Presidential Unit Citations and the Philippine Presidential Unit. Additionally, six men received Silver Star medals for valor and the entire company received the Bronze Star medal.

The train was also a part of the story of the Salinas National Guardsmen who fought Japanese Troops in the Philippines during World War II. Pictured to the right, the military significance of the train depot can also be incorporated into the Rail Yard Plaza with sculptural footprints embedded in the pedestrian walkway. These footprints would represent the 105 men who lined up to take the train in 1941. This simulation pictured to the left represents a potential idea for the Rail Yard Plaza and is not a final design.
Fine Arts Park
The Fine Arts Park is a proposed pocket park programmed for art and music related events and activities, that utilizes an existing landscaped area situated between two buildings. The landscaped area would be extended approximately 40 feet into a privately-owned parking lot, removing 6-8 parking spaces.

The pocket park (shown in Figure 4-2) would offer a new location for local venues for people to encounter art and music and to participate in other cultural activities day and night. At the back of the park would be a raised platform stage, equipped with technology and power infrastructure to accommodate any type of venue. Behind the stage would be a decorative wall that creates a “back of house” stage condition for performers and event planners to utilize in organizing the events. Ornamental landscape would be incorporated on both sides of the park to soften the building edges and retain focus to the middle of the park. Festival lighting would be laced through the top of the space to enhance the ambience.

Framing the park from the outside would be a sculptural gateway that serves as an important detail for the park in both form and function. On either end of the entrance, would be theatre ticket kiosks that can hold advertisements of upcoming events as well as provide minor storage space to be used for power equipment and other utilities. To secure the park at night when not in use, accordion style gates that lock in the middle would be incorporated in the front of the venue. The gateway is a piece of art itself, with a theatrical theme that includes representation of art, theatre, and music.

While depicted at a specific location in a private lot on Main Street, the pocket park concept could be incorporated and developed anywhere. The programmatic design of the space is minimal in purpose to allow for the maximum flexibility in event organization. With the goal of increasing activity in downtown, the space is designed to accommodate many different uses. For the average day, the park could be used as a plaza with tables and chairs available for citizens for daily and spontaneous activities. Other times, the space could be turned into a performance venue that could extend onto Main Street for large street festivals, be used for standalone performances or other non-performance events.

With a permanent venue like the Fine Arts Park, local acts that participate in the various annual events (like the ones pictured on this page) can perform on a more regular basis.
Street Closures for Events
Public streets are also great open areas that provide flexible, public spaces able to accommodate community gatherings and events. Public streets comprise a significantly large portion of publicly-owned land in downtown Salinas; closing some of these streets to automobile traffic could turn them into high-quality destinations. Historically, streets have been a huge part of a community’s public space, serving as meeting places, market places, playgrounds, etc. Seasonal or weekly events activate the street and showcase participating businesses in the downtown area. When streets are designed as great spaces for people to come and stay for a while, it reinforces downtown Salinas’s future vision and identity.

In downtown, the conversion of one-way streets to two-way operations can increase the flexibility to close streets. Depending on the time of day and day of the week, multiple street closure scenarios could occur. With close monitoring, additional protection, and adequate lighting, street events can be extended to night closures to provide more activities, especially in the nighttime. Programmed events with activities and concerts throughout the day and into the evening can reveal the attractiveness of downtown at different times of the day and provide residents with live music and other nighttime events. All of these events will also draw new people to downtown and introduce all the positive changes that are occurring downtown.

Overall, street closures will increase foot traffic in the downtown area, calling greater attention to local businesses. Some events will help increase sales by drawing people to the local shops and food and beverage establishments. On the other hand, some events can reduce local businesses access and parking, creating inconvenient conditions for local businesses. Proper City permits must be obtained to ensure that adequate business access is provided and transit service is adjusted if necessary.

4.2.2 Downtown Shuttle
Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) previously operated a shuttle service that connected Hartnell College’s main and east campus areas with stops in downtown Salinas. This route was temporarily operated through grant funding. Currently, the shuttle buses are being reused on MST’s regular routes. As additional parking structures are built within downtown Salinas, it is recommended that shuttle service be resumed to provide connections to areas near downtown and to provide safe and convenient access from parking areas to downtown destinations. A shuttle system can be used to enhance mobility in downtown Salinas and connect gathering places. Shuttles present a simple and affordable alternative travel method to personal vehicles that can be used by residents, workers, and visitors. Designing different routes for various times of the day and special events, shuttles can connect key trip generators. A shuttle route can target commuters during the weekdays by providing connections between parking structures and busy office and other employment destinations; it can also target visitors and residents by providing access to the popular gathering places within downtown Salinas including tourist, commercial, entertainment, and recreational destinations. Operation times for shuttles can be very flexible; they can operate all day, for peak hours, or other specified time periods more reflective of special events.

Temporary shuttles can be implemented in the downtown for special events and community programs to encourage the spread of activity throughout downtown, not just the special event location. Additionally, as nighttime activities increase a free shuttle system could be incorporated between parking lots and the downtown area to increase both comfort and safety.
4.3 IMPROVING SAFETY AND APPEARANCE

4.3.1 Stimulating Revitalization

As stated previously, public streets comprise of a significantly large portion of publicly owned land in downtown Salinas. The downtown streets not only provide the facilities to get from one location to another but are also the foundation of the downtown area, serving as a backdrop for the city. Active public streets can highlight local institutions and spur economic rejuvenation by serving downtown Salinas’ needs and attracting more people to stay. As part of the public realm, streets must have a variety of functions while serving all who pass through.

Sidewalks (or roadides) provide a great canvas for shared activities and uses. Active design techniques should be used to create great sidewalk experiences that accommodate the needs of the adjacent land uses and general civic functions. This can include aesthetics (such as street landscaping, lighting, historic markers, and public art), sidewalk cafes, architecturally defined street dining, plazas, and seating areas, public facilities and amenities. Sidewalks in an urban context should have four basic zones, as depicted in the illustration below.

Downtown Salinas has been described by many as a downtown with “good bones.” This is one way to characterize the value of the beautiful historic facades and streetscape. With a great foundation, small incremental improvements can create a large impact in downtown Salinas. Simple aesthetic improvements and additions can link dissimilar buildings and areas under one authentic theme. By providing clean and adequate facilities, illuminated spaces and intriguing storefronts, downtown Salinas can become a safe and secure area with an enhanced daytime and evening ambience for people of all ages, day and night.

Many small steps and a few large strides in the same direction will take us far.

At one of the first Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST) meetings Jim Daisa of Kimley-Horn discussed case studies where cities and property owners partnered to make streetscape, pedestrian, lighting, signage, and facade improvements that stimulate revitalization of commercial districts. Mr. Daisa noted that in Barracks Row, Washington DC, “hundreds of small incremental improvements and a long-term management approach are the key to the success of revitalization”.

This section summarizes the ideas suggested by the DST to improve the safety and appearance of downtown Salinas to activate the streets and surrounding areas. These ideas are ways to put “meat on the bones” and bring the heart of Salinas to the downtown area. This is an open invitation to celebrate the rich history and diverse community that is Salinas.

Landscape

Landscape along a streets’ edge can enhance a visitor’s experience and affect the quality of an area. Green vegetation quickly enhances the visual quality of an area. The addition of flowers, trees, and bushes can provide a refreshed image to downtown Salinas. Whether in tubs, pots, gardens or hanging planters, flowers and other greenery can brighten up any area and soften a harsh environment. Landscape selections in downtown Salinas should be pre-determined based upon traits suitable for an urban retail environment.

Lighting

Lighting draws attention to storefronts, discourages crime, highlights pedestrian activity, and creates an evening ambiance. Lighting plays a significant role in increasing the sense of security for visitors, giving people a wider scope of vision and eliminating dark corners. With increased street and parking lot lighting, display window lights, and architectural lighting downtown Salinas can boost nighttime activity and become a safer place.

Public Facilities and Amenities

Public facilities including bicycle racks lamp posts, trash receptacles, public bathrooms, benches, tables, kiosks, and way-finding signage make visitors feel comfortable and portray a sense of care that the City has for the public. Amenities that respond to the needs of a location and to the activities that take place there are a direct reflection of a downtown area. The simple cleaning and painting of existing facilities including trash receptacles, signal electrical boxes, light poles and fire hydrants can have a big impact on the aesthetic appeal of downtown.

Bicycle Racks

Free and/or discounted bicycle and skateboard racks are available through the Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC). Having safe and easily accessible places to lock your bike or skateboard is a big incentive for urban cycling. While there are several bicycle racks along Main Street between the Steinbeck Center and San Luis Street, bicycle and skateboard racks should be distributed throughout downtown.

Through the TAMC application process, generic racks can be acquired at no price and “art racks” can be acquired at a discounted rate of up to half price. “Art racks” (non-standard bicycle racks) can be a great addition to downtown Salinas’ streets. Local artists can be commissioned to design unique and innovative pieces that not only act as sculptural art but can also serve as bicycle and/or skateboard racks. This type of amenity will help enhance the aesthetic appeal of downtown, promote bicycle activity and can potentially help brand the downtown area.

The City of Carlsbad has installed bicycle racks (like the one pictured to the right) throughout the downtown Village area. These custom “Bike the Village” bicycle racks not only bring more bicyclist and visitors to the area, but also help to brand the area and lend character to the “village by the sea.”

http://bikesd.org/2012/07/carlsbad-continues-to-make-carlsbad-better-for-biking/

Way-finding Program

Way-finding signage is important to guide the movement of people into and through the downtown area. A way-finding program can help to alleviate any frustrations associated with finding particular destinations; particularly public parking. Making it easy for tourists, residents, business owners, and employees to navigate through downtown Salinas will have a lasting impact on their impression of an area.

Due to outdated, aged, and deteriorated amenities, the parking lots in downtown are not very inviting to downtown visitors. The walk from a parking lot to the activities and businesses is a visitor’s first impression of downtown. Clean and friendly facilities between the parking lots and businesses are important to make visitors have a memorable experience.
4.3.2 Commercial Building Facades

To create a positive self-image and cohesive downtown character the unique physical environment of the downtown storefronts must be improved. Renovating and revitalizing these storefronts offers an opportunity to return to the authenticity of Salinas’ past. Historic preservation and historic repurposing of existing storefronts can greatly add to the character and aesthetic appeal of downtown.

The storefront breaks the boundary between the interior of the shop and the street environment. The storefront is an opportunity for business to present the character of the business onto the sidewalk. When properly integrated, storefronts, along with the building facade and structure, can activate and unify a street and ultimately a downtown. Materials and color of a storefront have a great impact on both the building and the downtown image. Protection and maintenance of building features is also important to provide a clean and active setting.

Display windows are the character-defining element of a business. They offer opportunities to market and advertise, with the goal of inviting street users into the business. In downtown Salinas, merchants rarely change their store-front dressings. This represents a missed opportunity for business owners and portrays a sense of carelessness and lack of effort from the business owners. Vacant storefront window displays can also become temporary art exhibits. Displays of any kind have to be managed, and kept fresh; it is this freshness that is needed to attract visitors of all ages.

Storefront lighting creates a sense of security to passersby. It also presents opportunities to highlight window displays after closing time. In downtown Salinas, businesses should be lit even when closed to advertise the business, highlight the building features and downtown character, and illuminate dark corners of the property or street.

Security is an important concern for business owners in downtown Salinas. While security elements such as metal bars and blinking lights deter criminals, they also deter visitors as they portray a sense of fear and insinuate the presence of crime. These elements can have a great impact on the businesses and area around them; they not only detract from the quality of the street in both appearance and sensation, but also hide the interior of the shops from view.

General maintenance is a small improvement that can greatly change the appearance of downtown. Alternatively, inattention to peeling paint, ripped awnings, and window panes can worsen the appearance of downtown and contribute to an outdated and deteriorated look. Fixing broken items and repainting faded objects can also help to deter vandalism and assert ownership and pride. Even just washing the windows can transform a building at a very low cost. Sweeping entries, cleaning sidewalks, changing window displays, and watering planters demonstrates a sense of pride for both the business and the neighborhood and is easily recognized by visitors and shoppers. A city investment program (whether grants or low cost loans) can be established to assist business owners in minor improvements that will enhance the appearance of downtown businesses.

4.3.3 Design Guidelines

Design guidelines should be established to encourage good cohesive design and address issues in planning commercial properties. These issues can include storefront design, streetscape improvements, and the maintenance of buildings and the public pedestrian space. Design Guidelines can be developed with a personalized set of principles that address issues as they relate to the unique physical and historical environment of downtown Salinas.

Historic Quality

When developing the downtown district’s design principles it is important to employ the existing buildings and their unique historic features and design constraints. With very little investment and effort older buildings can perform to modern standards without compromising their historic design quality. It should be the goal of the design guidelines to preserve the authenticity and historic quality of downtown Salinas by preserving, repurposing, and stimulating their existing resources and filling in the missing areas with new structures that are sensitive to downtown Salinas’s revitalized image.
In Ventura, it is believed that a commitment to public art fosters civic engagement, increases academic achievement, public safety, and fuels innovation. Art is recognized as a critical component of the City’s economic engine. Ventura’s program is more formal and structured compared to that of Morgan Hill; local artists make up the commission that governs all policies, and the City Council has the final word on all questions concerning the arts.

In 2008, Morgan Hill added “Art” to their Library and Cultural Commission. This one Commission is a seven member board appointed by the Council to oversee: 1) a definition and mission statement; 2) funding; 3) maintenance; 4) permanent and temporary exhibits, and; 5) collaborative community partnerships.

In discussions with the Library Services staff, local artists from Salinas, and members of the Monterey County Arts Council, it is agreed that a Downtown Cultural Arts Advisory Board can become a subsection of the larger City Commission, and create its own arts, history and cultural district. The larger commission would assume the role of addressing many of the same policies addressed in Morgan Hill, including a city-wide arts “mission” statement, new and diverse funding mechanisms, maintenance and care of existing works, and determining the best policies to promote the development of both permanent and temporary presentations. However, the larger commission would yield to the local preferences of the downtown board and help to mediate any challenges that cannot be locally resolved.

This plan can harness the energy of local artists to initiate the creation of a Downtown Cultural Arts Advisory Board. It is imagined that this board can become a subsection of the larger City Commission, and create its own organizational structure in place to support public art. Members of the Downtown Stakeholder Team agree that public art is needed to help create a unique sense of place. Inspired by the work of Peter Kageyama, (author of the “For Love of Cities”) it is recommended that the art be bright and colorful, be both temporary and permanent, and reflect the true colors of our diverse community.

A Town Downtown Cultural Arts Advisory Board

A review of the cities of Morgan Hill and San Buena Ventura revealed two different structures for an “art in public places” policy. Both utilize temporary and permanent public art to bring life and vibrancy into their downtown areas.

In Salinas, the idea for the Big Week Sign Committee was granted permission to erect the large sign over Main Street to advertise both the rodeo and the chamber of commerce. 22 years later the hat was added and the chamber of commerce was removed. The dates were changed every year to advertise the California Rodeo.

The Salinas sign decorated the center of town for many years. In 1915, under the leadership of the Salinas mayor at the time, the Big Week Sign Committee was granted permission to erect the large sign over Main Street to advertise both the rodeo and the chamber of commerce. 22 years later the hat was added and the chamber of commerce was removed. The dates were changed every year to advertise the California Rodeo.

Sign Plan

A Sign Plan can be adopted as part of the design guidelines to enhance the visibility of downtown. Currently, City staff is largely sympathetic and responsive to the needs of downtown businesses in regards to the current sign code. However, a detailed review of the code is recommended to echo the outcomes of the Vibrancy Plan. There are currently many great examples of downtown signs that keep with the quality and character of downtown and it’s historic buildings; unique branding and use of nostalgic or historic features as part of the Sign Plan is important to distinguish the main commercial core of downtown and advertise important events.

Markers, Kiosks & Plaques

Historic markers and plaques can be used to reflect historically significant places and events. Presented in a creative and visually appealing way, these historic markers can be a part of the sign plan to act as a form of permanent public art that educates and invites passersby to linger and ponder the moment. Directional kiosks should also be part of the sign plan to provide additional information and assistance. Kiosks can help residents and visitors navigate to and from all the businesses and amenities in downtown and can also provide space for revolving advertisements and other information.

The installation of a landmark sign that reflects the historic Salinas sign that hung above Main Street many years ago is one such way to foster the future vision and capture the unique past of downtown Salinas.

Downtown Tours

Walking tours can be a great way to provide an overview of all the cultural and historic landmarks and tell the story of downtown Salinas. Walking tours can be self-guided through the use of maps or cell phone technology. Salinas 411, a local organization, created a cell phone App. that acts as a travel guide divulging insider information about downtown. One main feature of the App. is a self-guided audio tour of historic sites.

4.3.4 Public Art

Art Displays

Public Facilities also present opportunities for the display of art and community bulletins. The addition of public art to facilities can elicit conversation, interaction and bring people together. Incorporating clean and durable facilities in downtown Salinas can have a lasting impression on visitors and can distinguish the downtown area from others.

Permanent murals and temporary art displays can be installed on the walls of parking structures, the sides of buildings along pedestrian walkways, and the back side of buildings in alleys. These murals can be painted by local children or local artists, depicting historic Salinas to bring back good memories of Salinas. When combined with lighting, these spaces can be visible at night and create a safer feel for nighttime visitors.

A balance of street furnishings and public facilities coupled with unique public art will create an inviting and comfortable environment that fits well into the future vision of downtown Salinas.

Currently, the City has little organizational structure in place to support public art. Members of the Downtown Stakeholder Team agree that public art is needed to help create a unique sense of place. Inspired by the work of Peter Kageyama, (author of the “For Love of Cities”) it is recommended that the art be bright and colorful, be both temporary and permanent, and reflect the true colors of our diverse community.

A Downtown Cultural Arts Advisory Board

A review of the cities of Morgan Hill and San Buena Ventura revealed two different structures for an “art in public places” policy. Both utilize temporary and permanent public art to bring life and vibrancy into their downtown areas.
**A Permanent Art Collection** can be a great means to celebrate downtown Salinas’s heritage. Morgan Hill’s “Permanent Art Collection” policy defines “permanent” as art which is installed for one year or more in open and freely accessible areas designed as a public area, lobbies and public assembly areas of City property, or on non-City property if the work is installed or financed, either wholly or in part, with City funds or grants procured by the City (Morgan Hill LCAC 08-04). To oversee this policy, a three-member review committee that includes one commission member, one member from the community at large and City staff representative was established. There are twelve specific criteria applied to each “review.” The policy also includes a “Deaccession Procedure” if the value of an existing work is no longer being met, or if it is determined that maintenance costs are not feasible.

Permanent art displays can reflect historically significant events and places. In conversations with the Historic Resources Board, historically referenced art should be the focus of permanent displays downtown, but permanent art should not be completely restricted to only historic reference.

Examples of public art installations in the Little Italy district of downtown San Diego. As pictured to the left; public art can also double as advertising for local businesses.

**Figure 4-3 Art Installation Locations**

**Figure 4-4** shows the locations of existing murals and the potential locations for both temporary and permanent art.

Within downtown Salinas, many historic referenced murals already exist (some examples are shown to the left). As a supplement to the existing artwork, it is suggested to install more dimensional and sculptured pieces throughout the downtown area. Locations pictured on the map for new art installations include both public and private locations, and will therefore encourage creative collaborations between the City, community and property owners. Some locations included are alleyways and midblock crossings that through the installation of art and other amenities, can be converted into pedestrian malls and attractive outdoor spaces that can be used by local restaurants and retail stores.

The Urban Arts Collaborative is a great resource to discover diverse young urban artists living in East Salinas. The collaborative already works with existing public institutions, like the City of Salinas, and the County of Monterey, as well as with community and non-profit organizations and foundations. The Public Works Department is currently negotiating a license agreement with the Urban Arts Collaborative to rent the second floor of the Women’s Club at 215 Lincoln Avenue. Permanent use of this building cannot be established until accessible restrooms are installed downstairs, but until this time, accommodations can be made that will help the collaborative establish its first home; where it belongs in the heart of the City of Salinas.
It is recommended to proceed with the following steps to help facilitate the evolution of a Cultural Arts Advisory Board as a part of the Community Benefit District to make art in public places a priority for the City of Salinas and in turn bring more people and activity into the downtown area.

- Create funding for the arts by adopting an ordinance that funds these processes for new public art as well as maintenance of existing art
- Create an Arts Commission with clear by-laws that are inclusive and represent the whole community
- Establish a structure and a systematic process for honoring local artists in both a permanent and temporary nature
- Establish the first implementation plan for this art policy in the downtown
- Establish a criteria for permanent and temporary public art
- Establish a pre-approved list of artists to streamline art exhibits, their changing nature and solicit new pieces for downtown
- Incorporate into the business improvement district a review committee, or “Art Exhibit Panel” to act as jurors when art proposals are received
- Create a detailed map of the downtown that identifies potential locations for permanent and temporary art displays
- Actively solicit art for the downtown after the system is established.
- Make public art a part of all public spaces in the downtown, and use it to increase linkages between cultures, all ages, and different places in the downtown
- Establish a permanent home for the Urban Art Collaborative or similar artist studio.
- Connect permanent art displays to the historic heritage of the city
- Engage property owners in the public art process and create new public private partnerships in collaboration with CSUMB, Hartnell College and other educational resources.
- Quantify the economic benefit of art in the downtown
- Establish community-wide artistic competitions and special events that feature the downtown (concerts, kinetic sculpture races, food festivals, support First Friday Art Walk)

4.3.5 Enhanced Midblock and Alleyway Connections

Midblock and alleyways connections can become attractive places for pedestrians and business owners with no additional land or right of way acquisition required. The majority of alleyways in downtown Salinas are narrow public spaces maintained by the local government that are commonly used for storage of public facilities, trash collection, and vehicular access. The renovation of some of these alleyways into clean and accessible common areas can enhance the public activity in downtown. To encourage more walking downtown, pedestrian alley networks can also start to be developed.

Several blocks in downtown are fairly long, creating long pedestrian pathways. Midblock connections for these areas not only provide shorter pedestrian routes and greater access, but also provide unique public spaces. Many of the midblock connectors within downtown are regarded as dark and unsafe by visitors. Safety and visibility are most important due to their remote location and narrow nature. Providing public amenities such as lighting, landscaping, and street furniture can provide pedestrians with an opportunity to utilize the space, increasing activity and safety within the alleyways and midblock connections.

Temporary art exhibits that are dynamic and multi-faceted will help to attract all ages to downtown. It’s changing nature will invite the community to return often to see what is new. Following in the footsteps of Morgan Hill, holding competitions and other events can further encourage local groups and school participation. In conversations with the Urban Arts Collaborative there exists, “a cohort of young, diverse graffiti and urban artists living in East Salinas” that can be the exact vehicle to promote this spontaneous, colorful, constantly changing temporary art in the downtown.

Two steps need to be taken to make temporary art an attractive draw to downtown Salinas: 1) bring the Urban Arts Collaborative downtown, and; 2) pick up the Cultural Arts Map and begin to define where and how temporary art can be displayed, maintained and appreciated. If managed properly, the downtown’s new temporary galleries can be a magnet for economic change in the downtown.

The walls within these midblock and alleyway connections are true blank canvases. With the cooperation from private property owners, hardware can be installed that will provide a secure method for displaying works of art of all types. Anchors can be installed to secure temporary sculptural three dimensional art that does not block pedestrian access.

Properly designed and maintained midblock walkways and alleyways allow for greater access to destinations and more choices for pedestrians, all together creating a more friendly pedestrian experience and increasing activity within the street atmosphere. These spaces can also be used for outdoor dining areas. Where possible, windows and doors can be added to the side of buildings to open up the street. This along with the incorporation of vegetation and public art can transform the alleyways into attractive places for relaxing.

Shown to the right are examples of art installations in Midtown Lane and the one just north connecting Main Street with the proposed “Cork-Yard” and the wall of Roja’s.
4.4 Empowerment - A Call to Action

Bob Phipps (known as the Retail Doctor) attended business owner meetings in April to assist local merchants in helping to transform their businesses, increase sales, and seize the competitive advance that they need. Some of the key points made by the Retail Doctor that apply to the Vibrancy Plan include:

- Storefronts need to be lit, even when closed.
- Local merchants rarely change their storefront dressing; their presentation is static. In doing so, they are missing a great advertising opportunity.
- Local business owners open when they feel like it, rather than when clients are present. Business owners should operate their business like a business, not a hobby.

Mice on Main in Greenville, South Carolina is an example of one person’s idea blossoming into a unique attraction. High school student Jim Ryan developed a senior project to create a scavenger hunt on Main Street with brass mice (pictured to the right). Jim raised money, received the Mayor’s support, and navigated through the red tape at City Hall to gain approvals. Jim partnered with local sculptor, Zan Wells to create nine individual, life-sized bronze mice that were placed throughout downtown Greenville.

Cloud Gate in Chicago, Illinois is an example of a piece of public art that attracts visitors from all over. The City of Chicago commissioned world-renowned sculptor Anish Kapoor to create an iconic art piece for their downtown’s Millennium Park (pictured to the right). The resulting Cloud Gate has become a must see tourist attraction for the City.

Bubble Gum Alley in San Luis Obispo, California is an example of an extremely unique attraction. At some point, someone started placing chewed gum on the walls of a downtown alley. While it is unclear who started the tradition, the alley walls have become filled with layers of used gum and visitors are excited to add to the collection when they visit San Luis Obispo.

Ambassador Program

An Ambassador Program could provide a means of harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of Salinas’ citizens who want to help create a successful downtown. Visitors’ impression of an area is often shaped by the people they encounter. Currently, downtown Salinas does not have enough nighttime activity to make visitors feel safe, apart from times when special events occur. A nighttime visitor is just as likely to encounter a panhandler as she/he is to encounter other guests. One way to quickly change this experience is to create an Ambassador Program consisting of volunteers who can greet people, provide directions, report aggressive panhandling, and generally promote the downtown area.

The ambassadors should be branded with similar shirts or jackets to be easily identifiable. Ambassadors can also act as a link between shop owners, private security, and police to create a positive presence between all and effectively report potentially threatening behavior. The ambassador program could also lead campaigns to end homelessness in downtown Salinas. Furthermore, ambassadors could service as walking tour guides, story tellers, or facilitators of children activities. Ambassadors could also help in the set-up, take-down and staffing for special events and activities held downtown.

In downtown San Diego, the Make Change Count program was launched to discourage panhandling. Red parking meters are used as donation stations to promote awareness and provide the public an easy way to donate to programs and services to end homelessness.

Marco Li Mandri, president of New City America met with a group of 24 downtown property owners to discuss the formation of a Community Benefit District, also referred to as a PBID, to assist in paying for certain amenities to the downtown. New City America has prepared over 50 PBIDs across the County. PBIDs are becoming an important mechanism to fill revenue gaps left by inadequate or under funding of neighborhood services. Sales and property taxes are typically used to fund “General Benefit” services. For public streets, “General Benefit” funding typically relates to the area of the street between the curbs. While “Special Benefits” are funded with non-public sources and deliver services between the curb and the property line. Since customers walk on sidewalks, their experiences and perceptions a neighborhood are greatly influenced by the quality of this space. PBIDs are formed through a weighted vote of all property owners in the district, including governmental agencies, with assessments collected with property taxes. PBIDs are capable of funding the following:

- Local merchants are typically too hard on themselves when it comes to competing with chain stores. Instead, local businesses must gear up before chains come in, by promoting themselves and re-publicizing how special they are.
- Don’t underestimate the value of stellar customer service.

Oldtown Salinas Association (OSA) is a non-profit business organization established in 1977 established to promote businesses in Oldtown. OSA is a Business Improvement District, which is capable of funding some of the same activities that PBIDs fund, with a focus more on operational improvements and services. OSA collects funding from business taxes. OSA is implementing a number of activities aimed at improving the safety and appearance of Oldtown Salinas.

City and other government staff will also play an important function, including:

- Identifying and applying for funding to implement capital improvement projects in the downtown
- Helping to streamline the approval process for events, art, and improvements
- Implementing improvements
- Policy Alignment
- Partnerships

Economic development
- Business attraction and retention
- Planning, zoning and land use issues
- Beautification and decorations
- Tree maintenance, planting, watering
- Marketing and promotion within the district
- Special community or neighborhood fairs, festivals or events
- Public space development and management
4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Multiple recommendations are suggested to help create a downtown environment that attracts visitors. These recommendations are grouped into three categories: organizational changes, fast track actions, and capital intensive improvements:

Organizational and Operational Changes

1. Form a Community Benefit District (CBD) to collect funds to make improvements to downtown public places, streetscape, parking, shuttles, and lighting.
2. Oldtown Salinas Association to partner with the CBD to provide complementary services.
3. Establish an Arts Oversight Committee to promote the use of art in public spaces and right-of-way. The committee will establish a protocol for incorporating public art and will identify locations for public art, interfacing with local artists, determining the appropriateness of proposed art pieces, and assisting artists with approvals for the placement of art.
4. Establish Design Guidelines within 18 months of the Plan’s adoption by the council. Provide detailed options for facades, street furniture, signs, lighting standards, and trash receptacles. Work with building owners to preserve structures with historical significance.
5. Develop a Sign Plan within the Design Guidelines to update the current sign code and develop a consistent signing theme. Signage includes historic markers and plaques, and directional kiosks.
6. Establish a Way-Finding Program to guide residents and visitors through downtown and particularly to appropriate parking destinations. The program should include sign guidelines with a hierarchy for informational and directional signage.
7. Promote historic tourism in downtown, making it the hub for regional history. Develop historic walking tours weather self-guided or with a tour guide. Create a special event with a unique Salinas theme to celebrate history.
8. Establish and expand the Ambassador Program to provide readily available opportunities for citizens to volunteer, while promoting and enhancing a positive image of downtown Salinas to visitors. Use walking tours to showcase art, historic sights and events downtown.
9. Increase the frequency and variety of special events and activities held downtown. As street patterns switch from one- to two-way operation, seek multiple locations for event street closures to ensure that benefits of drawbacks of these events are shared among merchants.
10. Adopt local merchant strategies to attract more evening customers to downtown, to increase sales and encourage more people to visit at night. Strategies may include keeping storefront lights on in the evening, holding more evening events downtown, staying open late one or two nights per week, or simply staying open an extra hour.
11. Work downtown business owners to determine incentives for the implementation of architecturally defined street dining and promote the completion of sidewalk cafe encroachment permits in the downtown area.

Fast Track Actions

Actions have already begun to take place to address the communities’ concerns and to follow through with many of their recommendations. The Fast Track Accomplishments presented are initial steps being taken to improve the safety and comfort of downtown Salinas to bring the vision of the future of the area to realization. These initial improvements will have an immediate impact on the ambiance and character of downtown and begin to develop an area that both residents and business owners can be proud of.

12. Install new bike trail signage to connect north Salinas to Downtown, particularly from Sherwood Drive to downtown.
13. Apply to the Transportation Agency for Monterey County’s Bicycle Protection Program to receive funding for the purchase of generic or artistic bicycle and skateboard racks and lockers.
14. Acquire right-of-way for the Lincoln Avenue Extension and finalize the design of Lincoln Avenue improvements.
15. Install new trash and recycle bins throughout the downtown area as part of a City and OSA project. New bins will help to improve the conditions of the City sidewalks.
16. Festoon Lighting has been sponsored by a few DST members to be installed in pedestrian midblock crossings. Also known as café bulbs and string lights, festoon lighting is a great and inexpensive way to improve the look and feel of an area. Expanding festoon lighting to Main Street and Lacy Lane will increase after-hours lighting and greatly enhance the ambiance.
17. Street Vegetation is planned to be purchased by property owners and planted by the City. Additionally, grant funds have been secured for an OSA project to paint the planters on Main Street and the City Parking Operations is currently repairing the planters on Salinas Street.
18. Panhandling Awareness Training is being sponsored by the OSA to train local business owners. Downtown area merchants have seen an increase in the level of aggressiveness displayed by panhandlers, while business owners have the right to seek police assistance for unruly behavior, additional knowledge on panhandling will be beneficial to business owners and their clients.
19. Security and private patrol in downtown has increased. There are currently two private patrol officers that walk downtown during the hours of 5-7 in the morning to clear the sidewalks of homeless encampments.
20. Way-finding and information signs have been ordered for parking facilities. In addition, the OSA and Leadership Salinas have ordered a total of six kiosks. Install gateway signs at significant downtown entries.
21. Public restrooms in parking facilities were included as a Capital Improvement Project for the City.
22. Install historic markers and plaques to identify the location of historic buildings or the location of historic events.

Capital Intensive Improvements

The following improvements will require time and funding to implement.

23. Activate Main Street through the use of seating, ornamental entries, special signage and lighting. Trim back trees and relocate some raised planters to open up the area for more active uses and improved lighting and visibility. Feature art and historic markers where feasible and applicable.
24. Develop a plan and implementation program for a small outdoor music venue (Fine Arts Park) along or near Main Street. The City should work with property owner(s) to locate site and the Arts Commission to establish a design and programming for the facility.
25. Develop a plan and implementation program for major capital improvements, including enhancements to Basha Park, with a bridge or improved pedestrian access to Chinatown, and better connections to the National Steinbeck Center, in a manner that supports their programs and facilities.
26. The City should seek funding for the design and implementation of improvement to the park.
27. Improve midblock walkways and alleys to make them more visually appealing, better lit, and useful to the public. Consider the use of permanent and temporary public art to enhance these spaces.
28. Construct other pocket parks such as Founder’s Plaza and “Cork-yard” as parking structures develop and surface parking lots are not needed.
29. As part of the Sign Plan, focus on the installation of a landmark sign based on the Historic Salinas Sign.