n December 18th community members were invited to provide their perspective on the developing Downtown Vibrancy Plan. The process used for this meeting is a modified version of the World Café Model. This process was selected for its energetic and conversational style that builds on the natural cross pollinating and idea sharing that happens among groups of individuals who are provided the opportunity to focus their best thinking. The Public Input process was successful in a number of ways as allowed community members to:

- Become familiar with the Downtown Vibrancy Plan
- Provide significant input that will be incorporated in the final outcomes
- Provide clear vision and values that were greatly needed to develop, maintain and sustain a Vibrant Downtown.

At the Holiday Café, participants were seated at round tables and provided four questions for which they were allotted 20 minutes. A scribe captured the information and presented it to the group. Participants were then asked to change tables and sit with others they had not yet met. Once introductions were made, the group tackled the next question.

Summaries of answers to the questions are as follows:

**Question 1: What is it you most like about Downtown Salinas?**

A number of very positive responses were provided to this question including multiple references to walking or walkability and positive comments about businesses and restaurants. Downtown history including historic buildings and architecture were mention as were the Maya Cinema, movies and theaters. Special events including the farmers market were named as well as art projects and the Steinbeck Center.

Participants also see the downtown as the center of our city preferring the hometown and homegrown quality of downtown businesses. Several comments also spoke of the need for new buildings to be integrated with existing historic design and the importance of transit systems and parking to downtown.

**Question 2: What are the five things you would change about Downtown Salinas?**

Public safety in downtown is a top concern. This is referenced in a number of ways from addressing lighting concerns to mentions of panhandling and homelessness and an increased police presence. Several references were made to improved ambience and aesthetics in downtown including cleaning and repair of sidewalks along with landscaping, seating, better signs, public restrooms and bicycle facilities.

Younger members of the participant group made several comments that there were very few nighttime activities in downtown that would attract people including live music. Others spoke of the need for merchants to stay open later to serve visitors who might come in the evening and some spoke of providing all services in a way that made them attractive to the Hispanic community.

Improving traffic flow including the elimination of one-way traffic was mentioned as was improved pedestrian walkways, directional signage and adequate parking. Locating housing downtown was also seen as important as well as providing the kind of services that would support people living in the downtown area. City government was seen as both helping and hindering the process of making the changes that are needed in the downtown area.
**Question 3: What is your vision for the future of Downtown Salinas?**

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. It is also seen as a business center for local business and local government.

It is viewed in the future as a transportation hub as well as a destination for visitors and those conducting business. Downtown is also seen as being technologically advanced and fully wired with constant access to the Internet. In the future downtown will have housing with many people living and working in the same general locations. Small businesses and restaurants will be thriving, offering a wide range of quality choices. There will be more cultural activities and parades. Music and art will be everywhere.

**Question 4: What are the themes and patterns that you see running through all of the other answers?**

In this question participants were given the opportunity to leave their tables and view the entire body of information that had been generated through the meeting to identify patterns and themes.

The themes that were identified by participants spoke to a safe well lit well signed walkable downtown. Creating a downtown that is exciting and dynamic (day night) was an identified theme. Art, music and things for young people to do also was and identified them as was establishing a diverse business base and a business friendly process/climate.

**Conclusion:** The Holiday Café Public Input Process was successful in a number of ways. The meeting allowed community members to become familiar with the Downtown Vibrancy Plan as well as provide significant input that will be incorporated into the final outcomes. This gathering also provided the opportunity for the Downtown Stakeholder Team, and associated city and county staff to have their months of work validated by the community.

The meeting also clarified the vision and values that the broader community has for developing maintain and sustaining a vibrant downtown Salinas. The Holiday Café is a great example of how an entire community benefits when a sincere well-planned and well attended meeting supports citizen involvement in co creating a viable future for the City of Salinas.