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Introduction: Downtown Vibrancy Plan – Holiday Café

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 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.

The planning process began in mid-2013 with the selection of Kimley Horn and Associates (KHA) as the lead planning consultant. KHA was selected based on their clear understanding of the project, the assemblage of a project team with a high rate of success with similar projects, and their demonstrated ability to develop and manage a process that includes significant levels of stakeholder and community input.

The process of engaging the community started in September of 2013 when a Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST) was formed to guide the planning process. The team includes property owners, business operators, architects and representatives of the many agencies and institutions that will be affected by the changes in downtown. The DST has met several times to begin the process of re-conceptualizing downtown.

KHA, the DST and City staff have all recognized from the beginning that community outreach and input are essential to the success of this planning effort. To that end the scope of work for this project includes a minimum of three public meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to gather data “check in” with the community about
emerging plans, and to ensure that the final plan for a vibrant downtown is in alignment with community needs and desires.

The information that follows is a summary report of the first public meeting that was held on December 18, at the National Steinbeck Center in downtown Salinas. The meeting was attended by over eighty individuals who generated an enormous amount of information and data.

The intent of this document is to describe the public meeting process and provide some level of analysis of the data collected. This report is not intended to be definitive or fully interpretive of the data. The information will be fully considered by the DST for inclusion in the final plan and responses generated from the conversations in writing are included in Appendix A.

The next community meeting associated with this plan is expected to occur in mid-February where developing plans will be discussed.

**Meeting Design**

The process used for this meeting is a modified version of the World Café Model. This process developed by Juanita Brown allows participants to engage each other through a range of questions designed to address a specific topic. This process was selected for its energetic and conversational style that builds on the natural cross pollinizing and idea sharing that happens among groups of individuals who are provided the opportunity to focus their best thinking. Given that the meeting took place in the month of December a festive holiday theme was chosen and supported by appropriate decorations and refreshments.

The process was also selected as the structure that is used prevents single groups or individuals from dominating the conversation, generates significant amounts of information and lends itself to being conducted in multiple languages. Full Spanish translation was available during the meeting.

Prior to the Café, invitations were distributed through a variety of means including newspapers, social media, e-mail and word of mouth. The focus of the outreach effort was to gather a wide range of individuals who hold multiple perspectives about downtown. The success of this effort was demonstrated by the attendance of participants representing a large cross section of the population of the City of Salinas.
Four different questions were provided to groups of participants seated at round tables. Twenty minutes was allotted for each question with an assigned scribe capturing information. The information that was generated from the four questions was posted in galleries that were visible to everyone. After each question participants were asked to move to a different table and sit with other participants that they had not met. Once introductions were made the next question was offered and conversations began again.

The questions posed and the answers given will be used to report on outcomes from this process. Each question will also include a “word cloud”. Word clouds are a visual representation of the information collected that allows for a quick interpretation of the highlights and priorities in each question. The more times a single word is used the larger it appears in the graphic.

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

A number of very positive responses were provided to this question. Over thirteen references were made to either walking or walkability indicating a strong desire for pedestrian oriented design and activities. Ten references were made to businesses with five mentioning shops and five mentions of restaurants. Combined history or historic was mentioned nine times with architecture being mentioned four times and buildings being mentioned six times. The Maya Cinema, movies and theater were mentioned a combination of thirteen times. Events were mentioned nine times including the farmers market being mentioned four times. The Steinbeck Center was mentioned five times and art received five mentions.

Further analysis reveals that participants see the downtown as the center of our city preferring the hometown and homegrown quality of downtown businesses. This is illustrated by numerous references to “mom and pop” shops stores and restaurants as well as the positive comments directed to a specific number of local businesses not affiliated with larger chain stores or corporations.

In terms of physical “place” pedestrian activity is seen as contributing to the sense of a “hometown downtown” with references to large sidewalks that support foot travel. Multiple references were made to the perceived importance of working with the existing older architecture and preserving the sense of heritage and history that is so
much a part of downtown. Several comments spoke of the need for new buildings to be integrated with existing historic design.

The Steinbeck Center, Libraries and Churches were offered as specific examples of the types of facilities that contribute to the positive qualities of downtown. Special events, restaurants, and cafes were also identified in having importance to downtown. Transportation, transit systems and parking were all seen as contributing factors that supported downtown.

Following is the word cloud for this question.
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. There appears to be a strong desire to make improvements in downtown that not only make it safer but also make it more appealing and pleasant to be in the city-core. Several references to amenities were made including benches landscaping, public restrooms, art and general clean up and repair of existing facilities. Several suggestions were made to address the high rate of vacancy in stores along Main Street.

Several specific recommendations for improving downtown were offered by participants. Improved lighting was named thirteen times and often paired with safety that was mentioned six times. Several references were made to improved ambience and aesthetics in downtown including cleaning and repair of sidewalks that was mentioned six times along with landscaping, seating, better signs, public restrooms and bicycle facilities. More activities were mentioned seven times along with nightlife, nighttime and live music being referenced a combined total of fifteen times. Pedestrian, people and public were mentioned a combined total of seventeen times. Though parking, transportation, street and traffic were mentioned a combined total of twenty-one times, car or automobile was not referenced once.

Younger members of the participant group made several comments that there were very few nighttime activities in downtown that would attract people. 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.

The need for looking at traffic flow and parking was again evident with suggestions to eliminate one-way traffic, improve pedestrian walkways and providing adequate parking. Also included were requests to provide adequate directional signs with useful information. 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. Grocery stores were one of the items most mentioned as supporting housing.
City government was seen as both helping and hindering the process of making the changes that are needed in the downtown area.

Following is the “word cloud” for Question #2.

Question #3: What is your vision for the future of Downtown Salinas?

In this question participants were provided four draft vision statements that had been previously developed by the Downtown Stakeholder Team. Using these statements to “jump-start” the conversation participants were asked to imagine Downtown Salinas in five years if everything they had hoped for had been realized.
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.

The downtown area will be a safe well-lit and attractive place where people will have locations like parks and plazas to gather and connect. Traffic will flow easily along attractive streets and parking will be plentiful and easy to find.

The community, the City, the County and business will all work together to create this reality. The vision question “word cloud” follows:
**Question #4: What are the themes and patterns you see running through the information that has been generated?**

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. The information posted in galleries covering several square feet with approximately 50 pages of flip charts. Participants were asked to identify the overarching themes and patterns that were present in the information. This final question was debriefed with the whole room with all participants hearing all answers.

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.

Appendix A:

Question 1; What do you like most about Downtown Salinas?

Library and Churches
Walkability
Theater and access
Things to do with family
Friendly and Appealing (scale of downtown)
Lighting and Trees
Old Buildings

Charm & Classic
Feel – Real Neighborhood
Entrepreneurs – Mom & Pops
Restaurants
History and Rich Culture
Farmers Market
Safe & Friendly Atmosphere
Local Businesses – Shops and Restaurants  
Walkable  
First Friday Art Walk  
Parades (Rodeo-Colmo, Kiddy Kapers, Christmas, Veterans)  
Great Walking Area  
Public Transportation  
Eating Facilities  
Visiting Friendly  
Organized Events  
Coffee Shops  
Services/YMCA, Personal, Professional  
Landscaping  
Steinbeck Center & Library  
Network/Community  
Local Businesses – No Franchises  
Sense of History  
Pedestrian Friendly  
See Your Neighbors  
Diversity  
Parking Available  
Active Business Owners  
Local Government Downtown  
Nite Life  
Quality and Selection of Shops  
Affordable  
Walkable  
New Buildings  
Charm – Architecture, Historic (lots of potential)  
Feels like home & serves as a connection to people I know  
Potential  
Parking is easy  
Coffee House  
Safe  
Events – Wine & Food Festival, Holiday Parade of Lights, Farmers Market  
Dudley’s is like our “Cheers”  
Ariel Theater – Community youth resource  
Maya Cinemas  
Landscaping – seasonally attractive  
Banners celebrating local people – connects community with the buildings  
Restaurants
Movie Theater
Young people hanging out
Steinbeck Center
Walkable – easy to get around
Lots of “resources” near-by by foot
Sense of history/architectural
First Fridays
Bus system – trains are close by
New transportation options are coming
Locally owned businesses
Sidewalk tables – need more
Special Events
Restaurants and Cafes
Maya Cinema
Micro Brewery
Street Architecture
Historic Buildings
Steinbeck National Center
Cork Trees
Trees on Main Street
Within Walking Distance
Safety

Events/1st Friday
Challenging
Diversity of Services
Hanging Flower Pots
Well maintained by HOPE Services
Educational Center (Ariel, dance studio, Hartnell)
Walk through by Patria
Parking is sufficient
Businesses are friendly
Community excited about potential
Feels safe
Happy we are discussing Downtown’s potential
Decent acts at the Fox Theatre
Active Volunteer base in Old Town Association
Historic feel
Character is Authentic
Some Restaurants
Wide Sidewalks (Pedestrian Dominated)
Art Walk
Small-town Feel
Walkable (things/businesses to walk to)
Movie Theater/YMCA
Cherry Bean/Rollicks
Farmers Market
Good Food
History
Downtown is Hometown
Because it is!
Walkable
Interesting things, history, art, etc.
Mix of residences and businesses
Sangs, Museum, Courthouse building
Historic Significance
Environment & Pride (people, plants, trees)
Appreciation for the Arts & Live Music
Proximity to Residential Community
Events, coffee shops (Art)
Architecture (Essence of age)
Convening place in city (Good for meetings)

Local Businesses (No BIG companies)
Home/comfortable Vibe
Relatively clean
Good to meet people, sense of community
First Friday, Maya Theatre, Sculptures (Local Businesses)
Fun and Sports Events (Ciclovia/Heart & Soul Race)
Layering events & community spearheading events (Farmers Market/community identity, Steinbeck Center)
Trying to discover Downtown (providing attractive shops/events)
New development – keep old charm
Look of old buildings
National Steinbeck Center
Variety of Business
Closeness of downtown – being able to walk
Question #2: What would you change or fix about downtown Salinas.

Increase Nighttime Safety –
More lights
Pressure wash sidewalks annually (possibly paid by business owner)
More public restrooms
Better signage – street name signs lighted
Lights in the trees / on tree trunks
Fix all sidewalks if a walkable City is desired (roots lifting & cracked)
More diverse restaurants
Improve panhandling situation
More activities into the nighttime

Better downtown ambience
By asking businesses to leave their window lights on will give opportunity to walk around after dinner/movie.
Make people feel comfortable

Nightlife
Advertising (not on the street)
Way finding sign
Lighting – bright
Art in the landscape
Improve vacancy
Extend the valley center area – Oldtown
More safe / security / Bike Police or Horse
### Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan

#### Holiday Café Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential</th>
<th>Graffiti abatement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of 1-way streets</td>
<td>Create 2-way streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidewalk dining</td>
<td>Better lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live music</td>
<td>Live entertainment (music variety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments (more)</td>
<td>Wider sidewalks (outdoor dining)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More diversity of restaurants</td>
<td>More downtown housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater variety of retailers</td>
<td>Signage, banners, art, sculptures, Public art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional landscaping</td>
<td>More nightlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public arts</td>
<td>Better landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well thought out walkways</td>
<td>More restaurant choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixes</strong></td>
<td>Clean sidewalks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian safety</td>
<td>Traffic calming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage (non-existent)</td>
<td>Bike pedestrians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting (safety &amp; ambience)</td>
<td>Connect to intermodal transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure parking</td>
<td>Address homeless issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address homeless / drug using population</td>
<td>Public restrooms/facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panhandling (aggressive)</td>
<td>Integrated vegetation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service training for small merchants</td>
<td>More occupants in downtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain planter boxes</td>
<td>Improve surrounding streets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16
Unique Flagship program that draws huge #’s of people to Salinas
Entertainment to attract younger people. Nightlife needs to be attractive to Hispanic community
Fill vacancies – Fitness club, Nightclub. No chains (community invested). City needs to be business friendly. Too many restrictions
Pedestrian friendly with family friendly atmosphere.
Bike Friendly
Green areas, landscaping with access to public transportation. Outdoor seating areas

Ambience
Increase Lighting (some improvements) – string lights

Improve plantings, plants, color
Safety – Lighting in parking
Fill all the empty buildings.
Fix business environment
Parking availability
Incentives – such as $5K loan OSA
Business that draw people to downtown
Make downtown the meeting place
More people living (with parking)
More entertainment – morning, lunch, night
More centralized place and approve for dealing with social services
Children activities (splash park, children’s museum)
Physical Activities

Fix
More organized activities
Reducing vacancy
Homelessness
Safety
Traffic
   Improve:
More parking
Better quality restaurants
Fun, uniqueness, find charm & capitalize
Attractive merchants
Improve building character
Come Here More Often
Establish a grocery store & open access area – picnic space
Extended hours
Better promotion (multi-ethnicity)
Rewards program
More info access (historical trail)
Police presence
Loft housing

Business diversity / filling vacancies
Slow traffic down
Activities / events
Public safety
Aesthetic improvements (Building facelifts, maintenance, lighting, etc.)
Traffic Flow
Housing for young professionals
Grocery
Live / Visual arts (it’s here, we just need to support it)

“Santana Row” like more pedestrian friendly / outdoor seating/ eating
Retail diversity
More walkable/bikeable area (W Alisal toward Government buildings)
Nightlife atmosphere improve more
Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan
Holiday Café Report

Lighting, music, organize outdoor activity, concert in the park (SHS lawn)
Mixed used buildings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grocery / apartments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Parking
Public WC’s
Public Art – Fun
Artistic signage
Kiosks – info
Gateway to DT
Infrastructure to retain visitors – diverse venue
Walk of fame
Historic walk/ tours
Heritage museum
Transportation – ped crossing

Bicycle parking
Fam/student venues
Marketplace – Housing 2nd floor
Sidewalk seating – diversity – business
Live music / family entertainment
Courtyards – sitting, read, art exhibits, social activities, fountains
Traffic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

City Government
Leadership – signs – direction
Lighting Street
Business that stay open late
Improve entrance to downtown
Question 3: What is your future Vision for the City of Salinas

**Future Vision**

- **Group 1**
  - Great Destination
  - Family-town center p.m.
  - Culture
  - Safety-
  - Fully Occupy Building
  - Need to have people → groups
  - Connected

- **Group 2**
  - Foot traffic
  - Family Friendly
  - Retail Business
  - Condos/Lofts
  - Safe Place to be!
  - Multi-cultural

- **Group 3**
  - "We don’t do Vision"
  - Get shops to stay open
  - Start with 2 nights/week Sundays
  - More Parades/First Friday
  - Attract Latino Population

- **Group 4**
  - More Apartments and People Living Here
  - Trolley Free and Advertise
  - Employees-parking/Full-Nobody Walking
  - Build [parking] at Greyhound
  - Golden Fish
  - Beverly Fabrics

- **Group 4**
  - An Exciting Destination
  - Vibrant/Walkable
  - Easy
  - Safe
  - Accessible
  - Diverse
  - businesses/Professional/Good Mix
  - Locally owned/operated
  - Friendly/Welcoming
  - Easy to Navigate/User Friendly
  - Wi-Fi – a wired downtown

20
Businesses opened on Nights/Weekends

Safe Environment  •

Group 5  •

Street Music Ok  o

OK with “civic messiness”/open to Risk

Yes, we’ll take attorney’s advice  o

Listen to community  o

More events ➔ EVERY Week (Daily “Themes”)

Festivals Specific to Salinas ➔ Salad Bowl Festival

Snow!?? (Snow sculptures/Skating) Sand ??!(Beach Volleyball) Bubbles!??

Sponsorships BIZ + Non-Profits (Private/Public Partnerships)

Vital Community  o

ASCAP (“pay to play”) Blanket Permits or creative negotiations[http://www.ascap.com/about/]

Green Space  o

Sustainable ➔ committed (KYOTO Principles-Green

Mayor’s United Nations Accords we agreed to)

Group 6

We envision the City of Salinas as a magnet for commerce and culture while respecting our great history

Our friendly city welcomes and supports independent and diverse businesses that are open evenings and weekends drawing residents from the surrounding areas. The City is a safe place for people of all ages. The city has improved public transportation unique to the downtown character.

Build awareness, attract people from around the region. Highlight the history-name the buildings. Fill the vacancies with the businesses that would be a regional draw.

Business that are open in the evening and
weekends to draw people. City should loosen restrictions to allow for night time entertainment. Business-friendly city.

- Host more family Events
- Address Parking-Bike friendly
- Park
- Public Restroom
- Public Seating
- Trolley

Group 7

- Walkable Paradise
- Activities for children and families
- Wine Hub/Tasting Rooms—Wine destination

- Salinas needs to have excellent hospitality industry (hotels, B&B’s)
- Downtown needs to be a center for more arts (galleries, theatres)

- Artist Colony

Group 8

- Clean
- Fresh
- Colorful
- Vibrant

Downtown Salinas is a colorful place with a freshness that matches the bounty from the fields surrounding the city. A vibrant place that is attractive to a diversity of ages and backgrounds. Group 9

A vibrant, bustling downtown Salinas is a place where people live, work and play. It is connected to our history and appeals to all ages and cultures in a business-friendly, tax generating mecca!!

Notes:

- safe, high tax base, night-time activities, live music
- authentic connections to history by design make the vision appealing to young people
- “people come to people”=energy
- What do they want and need
Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan
Holiday Café Report

- Outdoor eating
- Business-friendly city
- Include residential/mixed use
- Ditch bus station
- More Hispanic ethnic groups
- Government/financial hub of the city
- Group 10
  - Downtown is a place where...
    - People gather **DAY** and **NIGHT**
    - It’s a dynamic environment with lots to do for people of all ages
    - Where youth demonstrate their talent
- ART
- Live Music
- Theater
- Food
- It’s warm and welcoming
- It’s a destination: A place you want to go and return to
- A place youth want to move back to!

Group 11
Safe, community, events
Diverse, Services, People
Sustainable, Housing
Multi-Cultural hub, Art, performance
Nature—plazas—courtyards
Hallmark location—fountain
Walkable historic district
Promote downtown
Pedestrian oriented-walkable
Engaging experience
St. am

Group 12
Music in all venues, music and culinary capital→regional attraction
Inclusive
Network
Hub/transportation (SJO↔King City)
Public Restrooms
Public Art/Cultural opportunities/inside/outside
Fine Arts
Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan

Holiday Café Report

- SLO Co → Public gathering
- Plaza for Public Use (with entertainment)
- Full Store Fronts
- Christmas Ambassadors (concierges)
- Housing above businesses/ground floor retail, diversity of types + $
- Active Nightlife for Youth “Something Happening”

Vision Statement Drafts

Statement #1:
Historic Downtown Salinas offers vibrancy, synergy and assets to create a future where activities and uses contribute to a healthy mix of residences, businesses, civic institutions, recreation and cultural opportunities, in a fun, family-friendly setting.

Statement #2:
A vibrant downtown Salinas is a place where people live, work, and play while enjoying and appreciating the history and culture of the area.

Statement #3:
A pedestrian and family friendly Downtown that provides a mix of market-rate housing and retail, is safe and welcoming, and provides support activities that brings the critical masses through its authentic connections to History by design.

Statement #4:
Historic Downtown Salinas needs to capture the unique character of Salinas that tells the story of the diversity of our people, the bounty of Salinas Valley with housing targeting young professionals who will support a vibrant workforce and nightlife.
Final Summary World Cloud