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

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1.1 Introduction

The Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan has been developed to restore activity, commerce and vitality to downtown Salinas. By design, the plan relies heavily on input from those who will benefit from a vibrant downtown. Initially, two major outcomes were sought: improving mobility and effectively managing parking.

Through an extensive outreach process, which is summarized later in this chapter, the focus of the plan expanded. Residents expressed a desire for downtown to become the heart of the City, the place to gather for civic and community events. A Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST) stressed that land developers, County and City staff need to partner in for civic and community events. A Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST) through dialogue with residents, property owners, and others who cared enough to share their aspirations.

The Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan has been developed to restore activity, commerce and vitality to downtown Salinas. By design, the plan relies heavily on input from those who will benefit from a vibrant downtown.

Through this process, the plan has evolved to include these four major themes:

- **Destination Downtown**
  This chapter discusses improving mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles. The title of this chapter emphasizes that streets should lead to downtown, not bypass the area with fast-moving, one-way traffic. By slowing traffic, the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists will improve.

- **Managing Parking Resources**
  This chapter explores where parking should be provided to serve anticipated demands and how that parking should be effectively managed. It also establishes a game plan for building structured parking and repurposing some surface parking lots for development activity.

- **Building the Heart of Salinas**
  This chapter discusses how we can make downtown the soul of Salinas by creating places to gather, a hub for arts and history, and a safe, family-friendly locale. By building the heart, a destination is created to attract visitors.

- **Stimulating Development Activity**
  This chapter discusses the creation of catalyst sites (former surface parking lots) that can be redeveloped into desired uses. It also suggests a means for aligning the land use approval process to facilitate private investments in downtown development.

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These themes and implementation strategies are presented in the next four chapters. The final chapter presents an overall implementation plan.

The remainder of this chapter presents the process used to generate a cohesive plan that evolved through the four major themes and the ideas and support from stakeholders and the public.

Early in the process of developing the Downtown Vibrancy Plan, stakeholders decided that the planning area needed to be fluid in order to take advantage of opportunities and to interface with adjacent areas. The cloud map pictured above was used to visualize the desired flexibility of the plan.

As previously mentioned, it was desired that this plan be developed with grass roots input. The process, which was dubbed “The Road to Vibrancy”, sought to construct a plan to capture and discuss aspirations, ideas and concepts, develop and expand concepts jointly through workshops and meetings, debate and refine the Vibrancy Plan to make sure it was done right, and gain broad-based support so that the plan can and will be implemented. As depicted in Figure 1-1 the Road to Vibrancy consisted of four stages of plan development:

- **In Learning From the Past**
  Time was taken to review the history of downtown, past improvement and planning studies, best practice in mobility, parking, and revitalization. This process included a survey and a community meeting and several guest speakers. This stage could best be described as sharing, listening and discovering. The process culminated in the following project vision statement:

  *While preserving the connection to history, downtown Salinas will offer a vibrant place where the City’s past and future come together to create a healthy mix of residences, businesses, civic institutions, recreation and culture in a fun, safe, family-friendly setting.*

- **In Planning for the Future**
  More hands-on featuring workshops, presentations, and debates all aimed at developing concepts and ideas for inclusion in the Vibrancy Plan. Workshops discussing parking, mobility, parks/plazas, and development sites were held with the DST and with the public.

- **Developing the Plan**
  More iterative in nature. The consultant and City staff developed draft chapters of the plan for the DST to consider. These chapters were presented and debated using a process called “Gradients of Agreement”. This process successfully drew out critical discussion and critique of the plan that helped further develop concepts and recommendations. Some chapters of the plan were sent back for further work. Eventually, the DST reached a consensus on the plan.

- **Implementing the Plan**
  Will be a long process that will outlive the Vibrancy Plan. This process has begun and will continue for the next decade. The plan has received nearly universal support, which is not surprising as most all of the expressed concerns have been addressed as plan components. Many “fast-track” improvements have already been built and some grant funding has already been secured.
1.2 generating input

1.2.1 Vibrancy Plan Meetings

To gain broad based support, an extensive outreach process was developed, including the following components:

- Formation of the Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST) as the primary advisory group for the plan. The DST met twenty-five times and was instrumental in generating outside support for the plan.
- Hosting three community events to provide input and feedback.
- An electronic survey was used to gain input and identify concerns. This survey was completed by over 500 individuals, including many downtown workers.

DST meetings are shown in Black. Community and Council meetings are shown in Green. Other meetings are shown in Red.

Learning From the Past
- Kick Off - 09/25/2013
- Land Use and Boundaries - 10/02/2013
- Street Configuration and Transit - 10/09/2013
- For the Love of Cities - 10/16/2013
- Mobility Part 2 - 10/23/2013
- Parking - 11/06/2013
- Outreach Planning Session - 11/20/2013
- Holiday Cafe - 12/18/2013
- Vision for a Vibrant Downtown - 01/08/2014
- Preparation for Community Workshop - 03/05/2014
- Community Open House - 03/07/2014
- Downtown Merchant Meeting: Retail Doctor - 04/10/2014
- City Council Status Report - 04/22/2014
- County Plans For Capital One - 06/18/2014

Planning for the Future
- Discussion on Catalyst Sites - 12/04/2013
- Traffic Circulation Concepts - 01/15/2014
- Parking Model - 01/22/2014
- Parking Workshop - 02/04/2014
- Parking Workshop Day 2 - 02/05/2014
- Presentation of Parking and Mobility Concepts - 02/19/2014
- Meeting with Property Owners (not a DST meeting) - 02/26/2014
- Community Workshop #2 - 03/08/2014
- Form Based Code, Festoon Lights, Salinas Sign - 04/02/2014
- Ballpark and Vibrancy Plan - 10/15/2014

Developing the Plan
- Destination Downtown Draft Chapter and Discussion - 04/16/2014
- Managing Parking Resources Draft Chapter - 05/07/2014
- Destination Downtown Discussion and Approval - 07/16/2014
- Building the Heart of Salinas - 07/30/2014
- Managing Parking Resources - 08/13/2014
- Stimulating Development Activity Discussion and Approval - 09/17/2014
- Plan Implementation - 10/15/2014
- City Council - 10/21/2014
- Vibrancy Plan Final Draft - 01/28/2015
- Review of Final Vibrancy Plan - 02/04/215
- Final Changes to Stimulating Development and Implementation - 2/18/2015
- City Council Approval - 3/17/2015

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DST meetings are shown in Black. Community and Council meetings are shown in Green. Other meetings are shown in Red.
1.2.2 Downtown Stakeholder Team (DST)

While input and ideas for improving downtown came from hundreds of individuals, the heavy lifting in developing the Vibrancy Plan was done by a group of about 30 stakeholders that served as the project DST. This group shared their own time, experiences and passions to build the foundation of the plan. They offered critique and challenged the management team (City staff, County staff, and consultants), and actively participated in shaping recommendations. Members of the DST have been and will continue to be crucial in forming the public and decision makers and selling the virtues of the Vibrancy Plan so that elements of the plan are implemented. The DST consists of business and property owners, citizens, civic group representatives, government staff, and design professionals. The DST met 28 times in just over a one-year period.

Relationship to Economic Development Element (EDE)

Several members of the DST and three consultant team members were also involved in the development of the EDE for the General Plan. As the EDE and Vibrancy Plan were being developed concurrently, ideas flowed between the efforts to ensure consistency. The Vibrancy Plan provides more detailed and site-specific recommendations within downtown Salinas; while the EDE focuses on over-arching City goals and strategies.

Agency Interaction and Tech Advisory Input

The DST process was designed to include key agencies as team members so that their input and feedback could be considered in developing concepts and plan components. Monterey County, Monterey-Salinas Transit, Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC) staff all participated in the DST. A handful of additional meetings were held with Monterey County and TAMC staff to better understand their programs and to delve deeper into agency issues and concerns. The Historic Resources Board (HRB), the Salinas Downtown Community Board (SDCB), and the Arts Council all also participated in the DST process and the creation of Vibrancy Plan.

Project Storefront

A majority of the DST meetings were held in a project storefront located in a vacant bank space at 307 Main Street. The space allowed for a project office in a neutral space away from City Hall where deliberative materials and meeting results could be left on interior walls and referenced at future meetings. The space was used for related meetings and individual outreach with interested property and business owners who weren’t able to participate in the DST. As shown in the photo above, the storefront windows were decorated with Vibrancy Plan materials, to stimulate interest from passerbys.
1.2.3 Public Engagement

**Holiday Café**

The Holiday Café was the first community meeting and was held on the evening of December 18, 2013 at the National Steinbeck Center. This meeting was designed as a community dialogue with the purpose to answer four general questions: What is it you most like about downtown Salinas? What are the five things you would change about downtown Salinas? What is your vision for the future of downtown Salinas? What are the themes and patterns you see running through the information that has been generated? The ninety participants brainstormed answers to each of the questions as rotating groups sitting at round tables. A summary report and the following word clouds were developed after the meeting. This input was used by the DST and at a later community meeting to help shape the plan.

**Second Community Workshop**

The second community workshop was held on March 7th and 8th at the National Steinbeck Center. The first day was an open house held at the same time as the First Friday Art Walk. This event attracted some people who love downtown, but were unaware of the Vibrancy Plan effort. Members of the DST hosted an interactive orientation and opinion station that featured draft design of concepts, streetscapes, catalyst sites, public art, parking options, traffic flow patterns, bicycle concepts and public transportation options. The next day an intense workshop was held from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Participants drilled into key Vibrancy Plan subject areas including parking, mobility, public spaces, art, and ideas for the redevelopment of catalyst sites. Forty-four people attended either one or both days of the workshop.

**Community Survey**

An online community survey was conducted early in the process to gain feedback from the broader community and those who may not have had the time to participate in meetings. The survey, which was offered in both English and Spanish languages, was completed by 530 participants. Of those responding, a majority (54%) work downtown. Other respondents included merchants, property owners, residents, visitors and students. The survey sought opinions regarding parking, mobility, safety, and reasons for visiting downtown. Survey results were used to shape plan components.

**Facebook and City Web Pages**

A Facebook page and City web page were established to get the word out of upcoming events and to share preliminary information on the Vibrancy Plan. Meeting results, survey results, and links to draft materials and meeting minutes were posted on the Facebook page. The Facebook page also contained a portal for community dialogue with the project team.
1.3 Developing the Plan

With the four themes as the base, the Vibrancy Plan was developed through an iterative and collaborative process. Ideas and concepts from all contributors were continuously collected, debated, and expanded. Critical discussion and critique of the plan as it related to the four themes helped to further refine the concepts and recommendations. This patchwork-like process enabled the creation of an interconnected vision for a vibrant downtown. Figure 1-2 is the collective outcome that incorporates enhancements in mobility, parking, downtown activity, and land development.

Improvements identified on the map include:

- Bicycle Facilities
  - Bike Lanes (Class II facility): A bike lane is defined as a portion of the roadway that has been designated by striping, signage, and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike lanes enable bicyclists to ride at their preferred speed without interference from prevailing traffic conditions. Bike lanes can be colored (green in this case) to increase the visibility of the facility and reinforce priority to bicyclists in conflict areas.
- Bike Routes (Class III facility): Bike routes provide shared use with motor vehicle traffic within the same travel lane. Bike routes can be designated by signage or striping. “Sharrows” or shared lane markings are recommended to be used in downtown to delineate that the road is a shared-use facility.
- Pedestrian Facilities
  - Midblock Crossings: Midblock crossings are a response to pedestrian behavior and can be installed at high pedestrian activity locations. In downtown, midblock and/or alleyway crossing are proposed at several locations to improve pedestrian walking distance, pedestrian connectivity and safety.
  - Proposed Pedestrian Connection
  - Existing Pedestrian Connection
- On-street parking
  - Parallel Parking: On-street parallel parking has a large effect on roadway conditions and operations. It also takes up less surface area per car compared to off-street parking.
  - Angled Parking: Angled parking may be used on low-speed and low-volume commercially oriented roadways. It uses less linear curb length per parking space than parallel parking and therefore provides the opportunity to fit more parking spaces along a curb line.
  - Transit
    - Curbside Bus Stops: Curbside stops can either be incorporated into the existing sidewalk or be extended out into the street as a bulb out. Bulb outs are best used on streets with on-street parking.
- Intersection Control
  - New Traffic Signal: Traffic signals offer the maximum degree of control at intersections. New traffic signals are recommended for the intersections of Alisal Street at Capitol Street and Monterey Street at San Luis Street if traffic and pedestrian volumes, crash experience, roadway network, and/or other factors warrant installation.
  - Roundabouts: A roundabout is an alternative recommendation for the intersection of Alisal Street at Capitol Street. Roundabouts offer a potentially cheap, safe, and aesthetically pleasing traffic control alternative.
- Managing Parking Resources
  - Public Parking Sites: These sites should act as supplements to on-street parking. Public parking facilities can be incorporated into the design of commercial developments to increase development potential.
  - New Parking Structures: Parking structures are recommended to be used as a tool to revitalize downtown Salinas by consolidating parking and creating sites for new development.
- Stimulating Development Activity
  - New Office/Residential Developments: Office buildings that accommodate professionals and residential developments (market rate or upscale) are recommended for priority development.
  - New Mixed-Use Development: Mixed-use developments blend a combination of residential, commercial, cultural, or institutional uses.
  - New Retail Development: Urban grocery store or other targeted retail use are recommended for priority development.
  - New City Hall: The New City Hall will be part of a new Government Center campus that will help join City and County agencies with downtown.
  - Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC): The area near the Salinas rail station is being upgraded to accommodate an ITC. This site has a huge potential for transit oriented development and new connections with the rest of the City.
  - New Taylor Farms Headquarters: The Taylor Farms corporate headquarters building is currently being constructed on the 100 block of Main Street. It represents a significant investment in downtown Salinas.

This plan proposes to Stimulate investment in new development through the creation of catalyst sites. These new developments identified on the map include:

- New Office/Residential Developments:
- New Mixed-Use Development:
- New Retail Development:
- New City Hall:
- Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC):
SALINAS DOWNTOWN VIBRANCY PLAN

FIGURE 1-2 DOWNTOWN VIBRANCY MAP