

To: City Council  
From: Meg Arnold and Michelle Byars  
Chair and Vice Chair of the Downtown Davis Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC)  
CC: Community, Staff  
Date: 10/14/2019  
Re: Release of the Draft Specific Plan for Downtown Davis

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In October 2019, the City of Davis will release the Draft Specific Plan for Downtown Davis, which launches the next important phase of the process that the Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) has been advising since its inception. We write this letter to accompany the release of the plan, in our individual roles as Chair and Vice Chair of the DPAC.

### **Purpose of This Letter**

This letter from DPAC's Chair and Vice Chair provides context about the DPAC, and its process to date, to the public in its review of the Draft Specific Plan, both because this has been a lengthy process, and also because the Downtown Specific Plan is an extremely important part of the future of our community and our shared downtown.

This letter is intended as a summary of DPAC's work to date; it a) describes the City Council's creation of DPAC and the definition of its role, and b) provides a summary of the recommendations that DPAC has made since its inception.

To be clear, this letter is not an assessment of what is contained in the Downtown Draft Specific Plan. This is because, while the DPAC has engaged in substantive discussions concerning the Downtown Draft Specific Plan during the span of its development, DPAC members will only gain access to the complete draft plan itself at the same time as its public release on October 14.

The Downtown Plan is an important foundational document for the future of our shared downtown. As Chair and Vice Chair, we are proud of the work that the DPAC has done in advising the development of the plan to date – and, more importantly, we are optimistic about the vision that the Downtown Plan describes. We encourage all members of the Davis community to review it during the 90-day public comment period, participate in public meetings, and provide input about it to the City.

### **The Role of the DPAC**

The DPAC was convened almost two years ago, and has been holding public meetings at varying intervals since then.

The 19 member Davis Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) was chosen to broadly represent all facets of the community that could be affected by the implementation of the Downtown Specific Plan. Members were selected to reflect wide-ranging categories of interest from affordable housing to senior citizen advocate. Ten members represent the Davis community at large, while five represent specific community sub-sets, and a further four members are non-voting liaisons from City Commissions and from UC Davis. (See Resolution No. 17-113 for all categories of interest, and the Appendix for further specifics on the DPAC's composition.)

Together we represent Davis' interests in developing the downtown specific plan and the formal vision for the future form of downtown.

As specified by the City Council, DPAC members use their personal experiences in the community when providing insights and preferences, as well as representing their designated group. The three main functions of the committee members are to:

1. Provide *comments and feedback* on existing plans and documents related to the specific plan.
2. Provide *recommendations* to the Planning Commission and City Council.
3. *Communicate information* to other community members, encouraging their participation.

Since its inception, the DPAC has held 16 official meetings, all with a quorum and typically with almost all positions represented. All meetings were public, and the committee was subject to the Brown Act, with public notices posted as required. Agendas and minutes may be found on the City website at: <https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan/news-and-updates>.

From the first meeting, DPAC members recognized the need for community input and we guided public outreach to be broad-reaching and persistent. We helped with the outreach directly through contact with our community members and the distribution of flyers. Individually, we participated in public outreach events such as the downtown tour, design charettes, pop-up events, brown-bag talks, videos, and surveys. During these outreach events, we talked with the community and heard their ideas and concerns. The chair and vice-chair and other members attended relevant meetings of city commissions and city council to give and receive information.

To ensure the committee was well informed about the plan, we heard presentations throughout the process. Consultants and community members came to talk about universal access, historical resources, form-based codes, sustainability, missing middle housing, economic conditions and analysis, transportation, parking, and more. DPAC also formed subcommittees to dive more deeply into key topics including sustainability, affordable housing, guiding principles, and fiscal analysis. Those committees reported back their recommendations to the DPAC, furthering our knowledge for shaping the plan.

### **What happens next: the 90-day public review**

In our shared opinion, the most important part of this process is about to begin: public review and input about the draft Downtown Specific Plan. We urge everyone in our city to review the Plan, whether at a high level or in detail, and to consider how well it reflects our community – particularly, how well it establishes a vision and a foundation for how our community will develop in the coming decades.

There are numerous ways to provide your input to the City about the Draft Specific Plan, including public events, meetings of the DPAC and of various City Commissions, as well as in writing by email, online, or by mail. All public input on the plan will be made public, and will be reviewed by the DPAC at the end of the public review period in January. Public input will directly inform any changes or additions that DPAC makes to its recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council in late January.

### **DPAC recommendations to date**

In the course of its meetings from December 2017 through October 2019, the DPAC has made a number of recommendations for and about the development of the Downtown Specific Plan. These are summarized here in no particular order, with the use of bold to identify major topics per bullet point. Details of all of the DPAC's meetings and discussions can be found in the meeting minutes online at

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan/news-and-updates>:

- Unanimous support for integrating **accessibility** through universal design and more, to make accessibility a priority, and distinguishing Davis as such a place.
- Strong support for creating much **greater certainty** in the building and redevelopment process for the benefit of both neighborhoods and downtown property and business owners.
- Strong support for thoughtful **transitions** from downtown to residential neighborhoods.
- Strong support for providing the possibility of a **taller central core** of downtown. The core of downtown is understood to be between E, F, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets.
- Strong support for a **larger, more useful urban “center”** in the current E Street Plaza area, to include pedestrian priority
- Strong support for **4-sided architectural features at transitions** like at the railroad tracks along G Street.
- Strong support for proper **step-backs** with height of buildings at transitions like at the railroad tracks along G Street.
- Unanimous support for **adding housing** capacity and options downtown.
- Strong support for providing **affordable housing** downtown.
- Strong support for **maintaining local businesses**.
- Strong support for **innovative parking management**, such as parking maximums, due to predicted future changes in transportation and mobility.
- Opposition to adding a **public parking garage**, also due to predicted future changes in transportation and mobility.
- Strong support for a plan that is **economically viable**, for both the City and for property owners/developers, and therefore more likely to be implementable.
- Strong support to embed **sustainability** as a core attribute and distinguishing feature of the downtown.
- Strong support for using sustainability and food/ag as **economic drivers** downtown.
- Strong support for ensuring that the Plan helps support business opportunities to provide **local jobs**.
- Strong support for not including the **University Ave / Rice Lane** neighborhood in the Downtown Specific Plan.

**Appendix: Composition of the DPAC**

DPAC was ratified by City Council on November 7, 2017. The overall committee consists of nineteen people, with fifteen having voting rights and four acting as non-voting liaisons.

Of the fifteen with voting rights, ten are appointed to represent the community at large, and five are appointed to represent specific perspectives. Of these five, two positions represent downtown businesses (The Davis Chamber of Commerce and Davis Downtown), and three represent the neighborhoods that border downtown on three sides (Old East Davis Neighborhood Association, Old North Davis Neighborhood Association, and University Avenue/Rice Lane Neighborhood).

Of the four non-voting liaisons, three represent active City Commissions (Bicycling, Transportation & Street Safety (BTSS) Commission, Planning Commission, and Finance & Budget Commission). The fourth non-voting liaison represents the UC Davis Administration.

Information on the current composition of the DPAC is available via the City website:

<https://www.cityofdavis.org/city-hall/community-development-and-sustainability/planning-and-zoning/downtown-davis-plan/news-and-updates>