Economic / Sustainability Focus Group
January 24 | 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Stakeholders included:
Anthony Ruebner – Real estate investor; Commercial and residential on periphery of downtown.
Ashley Muir – Mom, stay at home parent and blogger (leisure blog)
Jim Stephens – VP of Browman Dev. – Commercial development in Davis, own 5 buildings downtown.
Matt Kowta – BAE Urban Econ – Downtown business owner and user of the core area

What is the heart of downtown Davis?
3rd & F – Bistro 33, semi-public interface, vibrant restaurant scene, embracing downtown vibe. Public art, rounded prototypical downtown Davis commercial activate, bike store, boutique, specialty retail, bank, that intersection is a lot of what downtown Davis is.

The park and the commons: green space, you can linger and gather and carry on conversation, it should be the E Street plaza. But it feels disconnected. Cannot look down a long street looking at that corner. Students get their lunch off arboretum, families hanging out in the evenin gs. It has gone down since whole foods left.

Park is active sat morning and wed evenings, but the rest of the time not active

No consistent place, farmers market when it’s going.
I don’t think we have a heart of downtown.

General retail comments: Downtown is losing retail. There is a decline in retail activity. It is heavily skewed to restaurant and coffee; seasonality of people; retail diversity is dying; evolving into entertainment district which is bad; restaurants with alcohol sales change rent payments. Brick and mortar retail needs help. Experiential component is right on. More fitness, theaters (gives more reasons to shop, daily habit of going somewhere sustains downtown.)

Lulu Lemon, Apple think they have covered our area with Sacramento.
Reality is you need to work with the people who want to do business in your building. The crux is a healthy downtown has a lot of variety. However, some occupancy is better than not – so you work with those who are interested. Unless we do something about recruitment; we will continue to attract businesses that are focused on students and not the permanent residents.

Would housing support retail business?
Yes, more bodies in the area. If you live around the downtown, you support the business.

If it is student housing then we would only get seasonal shopping. We need to think beyond student housing. Want to create density but it is very hard to get accomplished in Davis.
(NIMBY)

Having residents out on week day mornings. If we added housing units, it won’t make a big difference in expanding the market, but if people can just walk, it’s a huge benefit. An 18 hr. or 24 hr. downtown would be good.

**Creative thoughts to bridge the reality and desire of the small businesses are able to survive and pay the rent?**

We have sophisticated community with disposable income, but our downtown doesn’t attract them.

No adult date night in Davis. Many options outside of Davis

Embrace some of the strengths (viticulture) of UC Davis to create a destination. During the 2nd Friday Art About the retailers have much better days.

How to attract families? Meet up plans – never want to meet downtown. I miss strolling behavior. No one wants to meet with their kids downtown. During recession in NY, people spent money on kid’s entertainment. Companies weren’t losing sales on kids’ books.

**Comments on chain stores:**
No desire for big chains, prefer local chains

People say they love the independent stores but that cuts out a huge part of the local market. In Target, you will see a completely different demographic than what you see downtown. A huge market share the downtown is missing. We need to recognize if we just focus on boutique businesses, we miss a slice of the populations. Need to plan accordingly.

**Do restaurants not want to come here?**
Usually want to come in to exploit the student population. Unless we recruit, they don’t seek us out without knowing its college town

**Is there a group that is a promoter?**
Not the Davis Downtown

No one orchestrates the right mix, right business for right location. If someone went to City Hall, they could find assistance.
How much attention should go to public realm?

Tim Spencer Alley – Tim Spencer alley (between F&G and 2nd & 4th) effort to beautify the area. Could be the heart of downtown.

Alley between 3rd and second, E & D could be a space to improve – not well utilized

Amtrak – it is the back door of Downtown and we use it for parking. There is no sense of place or arrival.

What barriers do you see on a daily basis to opening a business downtown? Zoning? Business permit?

Barriers to opening to downtown: time to get permitted can be lengthy (not a deal killer);
Are there City restrictions to Pop Up or Food Truck events?
Who owns property and are they willing to redevelopment?
Homeless and parking keep people away.
Bigger barrier us attracting the businesses.
T.I.’s take longer
It’s harder to attract the right business

People don’t work in downtown, mostly students are downtown, not a professional crowd.
How do we attract people to stay downtown?

Parking Comments:
We should have had a parking structure on 4th and F

A parking structure is hugely political

Walnut Creek is a good example of parking

SLO – parking garages – everyone uses them. Need to get beyond and it and explain this is the way it is. There’s parking available and I’m going to pay this much – being okay with it

Don’t interrupt flow - convenient but on periphery.
Think of other college towns – SLO, Chico – I think Davis is better, because of our layout.
Economic Development / Sustainability Focus Group

Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Results
Dynamic shops focused on providing goods and services at reasonable prices to the consumer or business customers. Foster an environment of competition and activity where people/businesses whether start-ups or mature are willing to invest. It is wrong for us to try and pick winners and losers and particularly if we want to do a plan for 15-30-year time horizon.

Jane Jacobs, in her essay "Downtown Is For the People," writes "consider what makes a city center magnetic, what can inject the gaiety, the wonder, the cheerful hurly-burly that make people want to come into the city and to linger there. Magnetism is the crux of the problem." What we seek is "an atmosphere of urbanity and exuberance, [not] suburban amenity." In other words, it may not be the kinds of shops and businesses that lies at the crux of our problem but the feeling that they aim to extend suburbia. An urban center features "compactness, variety, contrast, surprise, character, good open spaces, and a mixture of basic activities." It’s not so much a genre of shop or business that Davis lacks, but rather that just-right, dense mix of variety and surprise. And, frankly, a bit of hip-factor. We have a bakery, a bookstore, multiple coffee shops and restaurants, clothing, music, movie theatres. But too often they are operating in isolation, as point-of-sale stops. To this variety, we need to add businesses that inspire people to linger and to make downtown a destination in and of itself. That being said, successful downtowns tend to have a few anchor tenants that patrons are willing to come into town to visit. For example: A children’s museum (e.g. ArtBeast in midtown Sacramento); An innovative or locally celebrated restaurant (e.g. Magpie, Canon, Paragary’s, Buckhorn, to name just a few); An art or music venue (e.g. The Palms); A rotating/pop-up shop (e.g. Display California in Oak Park, manned by Unseen Heroes). We have some of these assets in town (and more!), but very few which are centrally located in downtown. I also think we do ourselves a huge disservice to rely on the E Street plaza location for a surface-level parking lot, reinforcing the idea of an auto-centric shopping destination where customers come for their one stop rather than to enjoy our downtown and its walkable ambience. It should be the heart of our downtown.

Businesses that showcase what is unique about Davis. It is a college town with a world-renowned viticulture enology program, agriculture program and much more. Downtown Davis should be the place where people come great distances to experience the best of what Davis produces and the talents of the people that it educates.

This question should be going to our visitors and customers. What is your plan for outreach to this sector – particular our shoppers from “out of town”?
Quality – live entertainment – 5-7 days a week.
Quality, high paying professional jobs – affording a viable “workplace space” in an upbeat, urban setting.

That said, the sustained decline in traditional retail sales in the Downtown has a cumulative, long term effect, leading to a self-fulfilling decline in footstep counts and retail spending in the Downtown.
Question 2

What types of retail and other similar uses would be desirable in downtown?

- More spaces that bring families downtown during the day. Stay-at-home parents or caregivers, part-time employees with children, are often looking for places to be during their day. They are going to the park for the playgrounds, to grocery stores like Trader Joe's and the Co-op for the mini-carts, and to Target for a cool/dry place to roam. In many cases, these are people who would rather be downtown, at a coffee shop or bookstore. I was delighted to see Three Ladies Cafe open with the aim of including kids—though the focus is on the youngest set. But I think this is a surprisingly overlooked consumer group, considering how many residents list schools/family-friendly as one of our city's biggest draws. Whenever I travel and come across book stores that have a train table by the fiction section, or cafes with a play structure nearby, I think how Davis could benefit from something similar. Personally, I think this is largely a design issue: we need our plaza and other public spaces to give families the sense that downtown is a destination for them. It would be wonderful to see a play structure included in our downtown. If your children are under 10, there's nowhere to go downtown with your kids and carry on a conversation with friends where you're not worried about them running into the street or getting in the way on the sidewalk. From a mixed-use standpoint, I would argue that if we are going as far as considering bringing more residential space into downtown, we should also really consider the need to bring park space/play space into its center as well. Also, high on my list: Our restaurants are diverse, but they feel targeted at University students. When local FB forums discuss places to take visitors for dinner, the recommendations tend to be in Winters (Preserve, Ficelle, the Buckhorn, Park Winters, Putah Cafe, etc.) or in Sacramento. Where is the date-night restaurant in town? In terms of a place that this that would add magnetism and be a space that others might drive for, a food hall would incredible. I would imagine that some of our farmer's market vendors could fill in spaces as well as local purveyors from the Yolo and Sacramento region. It might be a way for Sacramento restaurants to test out Davis as a market. While food halls are often associated with large downtowns (Ferry Building in SF, Pike Place in Seattle) other small downtowns like Napa have seen great success with food halls as well (Oxbow market). Furthermore, spaces where several merchants share a larger space help keep individual rents affordable. With some specific losses in mind—Nestware, Outdoor Davis, Ciocolat—a gift shop/boutique, stationary/artisan goods, an outdoor retailer, a pastry-focused bakery, and the list could go on. I would love to see Selland’s come to Davis. And a number of the ideas given in this article on case studies of creative uses for buildings in small downtowns (https://fyi.uwex.edu/innovativedowntownbusinesses/files/2017/03/Creative-Uses-for-Downtown-Buildings-030317.pdf): -Community Gathering Space -Food Truck -Pet Adoption Center -Artistic Studio and Showroom -Art Space -Performing Arts School -Audio Engineering School -Retail Incubator -Outdoor Retail Market Place -Pop-up Shop -Community Marketplace -Coffee Shop and Bistro -Museum -Pet Food Store -Bed and Breakfast -Destination Quilting Business
- Apple store. High end restaurant that draws customers from outside of Davis (Like Buckhorn in Winters). REI. Drugstore. Fitness/gym. Yoga. Cycling.
- This question should be going to our visitors and customers. What is your plan for outreach to this sector – particular our shoppers from “out of town”?
  It’s all driven by the demographics. What not ask: What types of consumer, employer and employee demographics would be desirable in the downtown? What would it take to get them here? Why has there never been any advocacy for a Freeway Facing LED sign as we not find in most freeway-proximate, California communities.

**Question 3**

**Would additional housing downtown enable the kind of retail desired by the community?**

- In my mind, we need and want for environmental and economic reasons to put more housing in our downtown.
- Potentially. Downtown residents are more likely to shop local, eat local, and drink local— inherently helping spur the economy and foster the hip-factor of the district. Having more residents downtown might spur more businesses to stay open later. It’s my understanding that almost 70% of consumer spending happens after 6pm. If that’s true, that only contributes to the fact that more shopping is moving online and to big retailers like Target with longer hours. The liveliest downtowns are the ones that support foot traffic by day and by night.
- Yes. Davis needs more people living downtown to support the vibrancy of the area and keep the businesses thriving. Retail needs to be convenient to survive. The more people that live downtown means the more people that find downtown retail and services convenient.
- What type of housing? Market rate, or more student/dormitory housing? The purchasing needs, budgets and preferences would vary dramatically. Not sure that more student oriented housing would lead to “the kind of retail desired by the community”? But then again, wouldn’t we first need a community survey in order to answer this question? What demographic are you seeking to attract and how would their spending potential and purchasing preferences resonate and reinforce the local retail and services base?

**Question 4**

**Would live-work units be a good idea for downtown?**

**If yes, why? If no, why not?**

- Get dense and multi-story and the blurred distinction between work and live is going away. Don’t get focused on a plan that was an attempt to make residential and commercial be permitted in the same place. Just permit office/residential/retail/commercial service to co-exist.
- Again, potentially. We know that a sense of place in a community usually includes a pedestrian-friendly, connected location with a lively environment that encourages visitors to linger and support the local economy. Live-work units can help broaden the feeling of community in a downtown. And residents are likely to have a sense of stewardship of the downtown district that
could pay off for all. That said, I would be concerned if those units were to become purely an extension of university student housing, with a high turnover. I would be interested to know how other downtowns with live-work spaces encourage specific tenancy that would best support long-term growth and a broader appeal. I would also be curious to see other small downtowns speak to the effects they've seen. For example, what is the effect on rent for new businesses? Does having a consistent income from a residential tenant offset costs for building managers in such a way that's good for small businesses? Do these residential spaces ever convert back to commercial spaces? What are the effects on parking and transit? A wonderful example of live-work space that's taken hold recently are the Warehouse Artist Lofts in Sacramento, to which Sac Bee attributed something of a renaissance: http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/city-beat/article10972493.html The public market on the ground floor features an eclectic mix of all-local vendors, including a sushi shop, a juice bar, a vintage clothing stand, a vinyl record store, and a shoemaker.

- Not sure. I support people living downtown. Live work would need to be done really well to be successful. Otherwise it could end up looking like a few homes on top of weak retail/office. If the work component is office, it would not be a great use of ground floor space and could have a detrimental effect on the downtown.

- Good idea – sure. But, who's going to make that investment, and why? What kinds of jobs would these be? Who would be their clients? Will the jobs they house provide sufficient earning potential to “afford the rent”? To what degree would a successful strategy depend upon improved public transportation options and proliferations of well-paying, private sector jobs within the city/region?

**Question 5**

**From a previous community questionnaire about Downtown, the community expressed a preference for small, independent shops and less enthusiasm for chain stores. It’s typically harder for such small shops to thrive without large anchors. Any ideas for how to bridge this gap?**

- It’s typically harder for such small shops to thrive without large anchors. Any ideas for how to bridge this gap? Someone needs to talk about credit risk. Mom and Pop’s might thrive and Chain’s might fail; Blockbuster, Borders, Whole Foods, Fuzios are all examples of chains that fought to get into Davis and then failed…) Landlords will not get their financing to build or to contribute to Tenant Improvements if public policy begins restricting the kinds of tenants. Also let’s be realistic. See the research work from our firm that shows the kind of Global Competition that we are facing in Davis for Retailers... http://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/research-and-insight/2017/main-streets-across-the-world-2017/ and then please see our colleague and Sacramento Resident Garrick Brown’s analysis of the retail environment. http://info.cushmanwakefield.com/webmail/263412/582887551/940a90b53c112d980d719c126911c66c81cc8c68cfeb215856d1b1363372c41ad
It's understandable: Local businesses create more jobs for residents than corporate chains headquartered elsewhere. More chains in cities certainly lead to a more homogenized environment that eliminates a sense of place. One way to mitigate this challenge is by starting business incubators. These programs can remove or lower the businesses’ occupancy expenses. Downtown organizations and local governments can work with building owners to accommodate these startups, who can become permanent rent-paying occupants in downtown if they are successful. Are there incentives for supporting new businesses that we should be considering? For example, the Calling All Dreamers contest in Sacramento, which is credited with starting 16 new businesses in the last 4 years. (https://www.downtownsac.org/start-a-business/calling-all-dreamers-contest/) Additionally, we might look at whether some chain businesses act as anchors, as facilitators for growth rather than as competitors/barriers. For example, is there a chain retailer—Starbucks is a frequent example, but we have that—that tends to draw local entrepreneurship around it? Urban Outfitters, Apple, Le Pain Quotidian? A recent article in City Lab noted that San Francisco used a multi-pronged strategy "where it kept mom-and-pop stores a visible part of the city’s fabric. The plan includes support for the SBJSA; “formula retail zoning” that allows chain stores only by permit, not by right; disincentives to landlords for keeping spaces empty, plus incentives for filling them, even with temporary uses; fairer taxation; new data collection; and creation of a Legacy Business Registry...which helps to raise the profile of historic old restaurants and shops (and in SF, to direct some money to them as well)." Admittedly, SF is a much larger city, but I believe their case studies are typically in neighborhoods like Hayes Valley that might still lend us insight. Do we have any civic lease-supports favoring small businesses? On the other hand, while we want to avoid downtown losing its unique appeal, becoming corporate-dominated like Santa Barbara’s State Street, some national development activity is a vote of confidence and creates the perception of activity and can bring out shoppers. That's not always the case. There's an interesting article about a local home-goods shop that sits opposite a Williams-Sonoma in downtown San Luis Obispo: http://www.sanluisobispo.com/news/business/article117434008.html Another idea is to look to small local chains to bridge that gap. They have the operating capital in place to make it through the first year, but still more feel unique to the region than, say, Panera. And public opinion seems open to these more regional chains, e.g. Paragary Group, Burgers and Brew, Crepeville, DeVere's, Shop Cuffs, which are all Sacramento chains.

Davis needs a mix of both. Small shops thrive on foot traffic, but foot traffic is usually generated by high volume stores which are typically chain stores. I support residents voting with their dollars which means that they shop at the stores they like and not at the ones they don’t. It creates an environment where the great stores survive, and the weak ones do not. In Davis, many local operators have survived where big chains have not. There are also chains that are supported by Davis and thrive there. Let the market work and Davis will have a stronger downtown from it.

To what degree did this survey capture statistically significant and accurate cross section of the Davis “community”? How was the list of respondents established and verified? Yes, it is harder for all retailers to operate successfully without a certain critical mass of large, footstep driving anchors. In this day and age, particularly in light of internet sales, how many small, independent
shops can afford to pay rents that would be required of a newly redeveloped Downtown building constructed in 2017 in Northern California?

Question 6
What do you see as barriers to a sustainable (successful) and a fiscally strong local Downtown economy?

- Too much conflict in the zoning documents. Too many efforts to pick winners and losers. Not enough large parcels we need to get vertical.

- High Rents. Are there policies to mitigate this and to encourage innovation? See above for some thoughts on helping small businesses still move in. Design. We currently have excessive "dead spaces" that disrupt the downtown core—surface parking lots, in particular, but also large office buildings and vacant retail spaces that take away from the sense of proximity. It may also be a disadvantage that our central gathering place (central park/farmer's market) is on the outer edge of downtown's retail district. Perception. Parking comes up time and time again as the chief complaint about downtown's accessibility. And yet, in Fall of 2012 the City Council appointed a Downtown Parking Task Force to measure occupancy and found that the problem is not an empirical one but one of perception and habit: "Downtowns feel 'right' because they are first and foremost walking environments. Yet, because generations of consumers (both local and external) are accustomed to the suburban shopping experience, downtown Davis appears inconvenient, if not chaotic for driving and, subsequently, parking." In fact, many civic studies suggest that the most successful downtowns have restricted parking. Cities that removed the minimum parking policies for retailers saw gains in changing the culture from one of driving to walking. Cities thrive on proximity and excessive parking creates dead spaces which keep the culture one of cars.

- Lack of convenience. Downtown Davis' parking problem has worsened, and it is having a negative effect on the downtown businesses. Retail needs to be convenient, especially with the bigger role that the Internet is playing in retail. People in Davis generally want to support their local businesses, but they have a limit as to the amount of hassle they are willing to put up with. If they can't find convenient parking, they will avoid going downtown. Also, there is an increasing impression that downtown is not safe due to theft, panhandling and assaults occurring in the area. People don't want to shop where they don't feel safe.
• Absence of critical mall of daily footstep drivers (operating 9-5) with a sufficient percentage of those shoppers possessing significant discretionary disposable income. Barriers to overcome include an existing and growing community population cohort of functionality unemployed students and grad students who now comprise more than 50% (and growing) of the 18 and over adult community (excluding seniors 55+ and also growing segment). Moreover, the majority of this student demographic typically spends more than 50% of their time “on campus” during normal business hours and therefore not in the Downtown. Combine those stats with easy access to three on-campus Amazon fulfilment centers – with all those lost potential footsteps and local taxes revenues accruing to the County rather than the City of Davis.

Question 7
What opportunities should be considered to improve and create a sustainable local downtown economy?

- We should get focused on the areas around the Amtrak station. Make much more inviting and dynamic. Also, can we make major transportation enhancements between Amtrak and UCD? Need to figure out how to strengthen pedestrian and bike connections to the on-campus Housing and CBD. Let’s leverage and enhance our downtown and make even more inviting and dynamic!
- Our community is our biggest strength in Davis. People want to gather and support our town. When I talk to other residents, they love Davis. They value the Farmer’s Market, events like our tree lighting and Celebrate Davis; they show up. They want to bring their children out with them. Look at our Wednesday nights in the park! They need an opportunity to do that downtown. Build a playground. Offer more events downtown. Are our existing events (like Farmer’s Markets) sending traffic to downtown businesses? [From New Jersey, a survey showed that 80 percent of the 1,000 weekly market customers also visited local businesses while at the farmers’ market. If we aren’t seeing similar benefits, what is preventing that? Clearly, our community wants to come out to Picnics in the Park and Saturday markets and if that traffic is not converting, we need to reassess. Is there an Agile approach we can implement? (In short, the most effective solutions to improve a public space are often cheap, non-permanent interventions that can be accomplished right now. E.g. food truck event, https://www.pps.org/blog/the-power-of-food-trucks-to-calm-a-turf-war/ or a no-car Saturday once a month. Pop-up and temporary businesses are also an agile approach. See answer below.
- Make it safe, clean and convenient. Build a parking structure. Encourage and support property owners’ redevelopment endeavors.
- Declare the community of Davis as a Destination Employment Research Hub and develop land use, planning priorities, and transportation policies accordingly to suit that vision. The evolution of the Downtown will follow as a logical outgrowth.

Question 8
From your perspective, what else should be considered?

- More ways to have rotating occupants to fill vacancies. More experiences brought to downtown: For example, --What if the Shrem Museum brought their family art lab downtown on a rotating
basis? Their Saturday/Sunday labs are fantastic! --Could we have one permanent space reserved for a rotating food truck/visiting concept restaurant? --Is the post-office still considering relocating? I would love to see our South Davis Montgomery Library branch move into that space or another branch of our library—something that encourages foot traffic to remain downtown. Better yet if it hosted family programs in that space as well. They have to hand out tickets to library story time, it's so popular. People are turned away! --Could we get any sort of children's museum downtown? I noticed that the Rancho Cordova location (again, something I know many residents are driving out to) was founded by the city and the Junior League. Many of the businesses are sponsoring exhibits. Something like ArtBeast would be incredible here and could serve some of the same function as a playground in terms of bringing out families during the day. --Are there other local museums and learning spaces (Explorit, for example) that would make a good partner with retail? --Could we ask the Art Center to hold some classes downtown using temporary retail spaces? A clay studio or art class, for example? --Communities can help subsidize or facilitate co-working spaces just as they do retail incubators. Would a co-working space facilitated by the city encourage growth? Other questions: What other civic models (in cities comparable to ours) can we look at to see what has worked and what has not? I'd be curious to compare our downtown to those in cities with similar population sizes, like San Luis Obispo (approx. 40,000). What other spaces are available for development that could create a greater sense of an intimate downtown? Alleys, etc. Are there any government buildings available for private development? Does our public transportation serve our downtown for residents as well as students? If consumer spending is largely happening after 6pm, should a shift in operating hours be encouraged?

- Support efforts to generate more professional jobs in Davis. Jobs will create a demand for housing downtown. Housing will support the retail and restaurants downtown. Housing will also create a larger trade area for retailers to serve and will entice the Apple Store, REI and the like to come to Davis. Currently they believe that they are already serving Davis from Sacramento. Until that view changes, Davis will not have the retailers that most residents want.

- The same challenges and issues which confound the local Downtown retail scene are also directly reflected in the City’s underperforming stream of municipal tax revenues – both sales tax and commercial property taxes. The reluctance of the City, the University and their respective leadership to grapple with the underlying causalities in symptomatic of a larger, cultural and institutional resistance to analyzing and wrestling with the revenue challenges facing the municipal enterprise operations as well as the local business economy. The issue of underperformance is fundamentally baked in by the high incidence and anticipated continued proliferation of student residents and seniors (without any countervailing presence of a large tourism trade or permanent class of local, well-paid private sector employment), by virtue of our land-locked geography and proximity to other larger, developed destination retail centers, and by our own lack of affordable, developable land to sustain continued growth. Without some findings, acknowledgment or recommendations by the City’s expert consultants – these issues (common sense as they may be) are unlikely to see the light of day given the community’s seeming disinterest in and/or unwillingness to address these issues.
Environmental Sustainability Focus Group
January 24 | 3:45 – 4:45 p.m.

Attendees:
**Kevin Perry** – Landscape architect with Urban Design Green Infrastructure – we retrofit existing buildings with green infrastructure – Head of student club at UC Davis

**Larry Greene** – Retired from the Sacramento Air Quality District. We did Green House Gas evaluation and testimony with all projects in Sacramento county, sustainability with planning and funding and green vehicles

**Sid England** – Retired Assistant Vice Chancellor for Environmental Stewardship for UC Davis

**Stephen Wheeler** - Stephen Wheeler, Professor of Landscape Architecture and Sustainability

**Michael McCormick** – Cool Davis

**What are challenges to implementing environmental infrastructure?**

Have you looked at the history of projects that this city has looked at in the last 5 years? The history speaks to the problem areas.

We do case by case planning – each individual site is a fight. We can’t do a case by case approach – we need to have form based code

I want Davis to see itself as a green city or sustainable city. We need to communicate it so people understand how everything relates: Green streets, Bike/pedestrian planning, affordable housing, drainage, cooperative business

In an ideal world, people don’t use a car. Whatever we can do to make people not use a car or to encourage people so that once they park downtown, they do not re-park. We need to provide facilities so there is a place to leave car more than 2 hours.

We should consider strategies to get people to park once and leave it.

Because Davis is a university town, there are many rental properties. These rental properties never get updated. There’s no reason to. There is a near 0 vacancy rate. We need incentives to update houses. Need action that would require homes to update heating, etc. unless you get a permit with the city, you don’t get an inspection.

**What should be done to make downtown more environmentally sustainable and what do you see as barriers to this?**

I look at the downtown core through the eyes of my mother in law. My wife my kid and I will ride our bike to farmers market, but my mother in law doesn’t have the ability to ride her bike. She will drive and meet up. She is concerned about the number of pedestrians and bikes. Driving is a challenge for the elderly, and also for very new drivers (college students)
If you are looking at the street network – all streets can be retrofitted with something with storm water. We need a plan – when the times right and G Street is ready, we need to add a green infrastructure layer. Davis is primed to be the lead in this. Storm water management is key. It would be good to have plan in place.

In the 1970s, Davis was a global leader in environmentalism. We were a platinum bike city and had housing projects. We are poised to re-assert that position. We should be the next 21st century leader. The University should be seen more of a leader in terms of education and campus sustainability.

We need to consider higher density projects. There is a huge demand for more urban style of living. We need to be able to add housing options for all ages, especially younger people who are not in college but want to stay in town. We need to provide them options to live in the core. There is funding at state level for more density projects. It is a current unmet need.

UC Davis couldn’t recruit minority students well because nothing in Davis felt urban Maybe residential commercial in downtown would help.

We need to speed up the rate of change. Nothing is green – solar panels aren’t visible

The City of Davis wants to be a carbon free city by 2050 – We need to be able to look back and ask ourselves, what about the 2018 downtown plan made it happen?

We need to start doing zero net emissions development now. It will increase the cost of building, but not by much.

As a homeowner, I have done a lot of things to make my house more green, but what will motivate me to do more changes? It gets more expensive as you go down the line. How do you get existing stock to use less energy? How to incentivize people?

With existing buildings, we need to work towards outlawing gas. In some time frame, we have to require that gas be switched out for electric heat pump. Needs to be 100% green source of electricity.

If dealing with density, we don’t need to deal with solar rights. If we have 6 story buildings next to one story buildings, that becomes a problem for solar.

We have a vision, but need a plan for them to get there. We need to remove barriers. Need clear path to entitlement process. Land value increases more than 10% when build new net zero buildings.

People want a walkable place to retire place

Looking at 2040 - if I was looking back, I would think “what took us so long”?
If it took 30 years to get Davis to have a small area of green streets, I would be surprised. We need to be bold in what we chose to do in the time line. It shouldn’t take 30 years

Regarding parking, “couldn’t find parking” means I couldn’t find it close enough to the establishment I am going to. There is more demand to find parking on Saturday mornings

A parking garage would make a lot of sense. With autonomous vehicles, that facility would make a lot of sense. Easily accessible is the key. G Street is 65% full at most

What is the one thing the Downtown Davis Plan must say or do?

Branding – messaging coordinating –we need to brand Davis as a green city

Improve the energy efficiency of existing stock through redevelopment

We need to look a how we manage transportation – we need to decrease number of trips out of Davis so that people do not have to travel to get things

We need to deal with the amount of barriers to building green.

We need a green infrastructure plan or overlay for public space in a short, medium, and long term time frame – eventual green infrastructure. True green infrastructure is managing water on site – as soon as it hits the ground. The argument to mimic the natural conditions quickly. Green Infrastructure can have multi-benefit of greening and shading a vibrant downtown. We can’t get that if you just take it to one centralized space. A lot of cities want to do this, but it’s the maintenance. It might seem a challenge, but we need to brand it as new model for infrastructure. We are maintaining in a way that is sustainable.

We need to generate our story about how we are doing these things!
Environmental Sustainability Focus Group

Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Results
Question 1

How do you feel about green infrastructure?
(e.g. rain gardens on D Street near arboretum gateway garden)

- Green infrastructure is healthy for the immediate environment, adds beauty to the area and is a subtle educational tool for enhancing this type of area.
- Great. It’s a wonderful feature.
- Yes. I’d like to see Davis brand itself as a worldwide best practice of sustainability, and greening streets is one way to send that message.

Question 2

The 2010 Climate Action Plan (D-CAAP) is an inspiring document, with an aim to comprehensively reduce GHG emissions. In your review of the document, what do you think are the challenges to implementation?

- Please give me a way to access this document.
- Implementation requires requirements and regulatory oversight by the City. Political capital needs to get expended to standardize and institutionalize. Density is also critical for reducing VMT and NIMBYs have already created a real problem with being able to densify appropriately.
- I’m not sure that the CAP was ever formally adopted (at least I haven’t been able to find a final version on the website). Community Choice Energy has been by far the biggest success so far. Probably the biggest barrier is behavior change on the part of both residents and businesses. Much of that behavior relates to transportation, esp. people commuting in and out of Davis.

Question 3

What are your main concerns regarding the water quality of nearby water bodies?

- Not concerned about water quality.
- Runoff
- No huge concerns there, compared to climate change. I doubt the downtown plan will have a big effect on water.

Question 4

What should be done to make downtown more environmentally sustainable and what do you see as barriers to this?

- Davis must sort out the mix of people, bikes and cars downtown into a more balanced solution.
- Some streets should be closed to cars during certain times, or perhaps permanently. Density should be streamlined and prioritized. NIMBYs are the primary impediment.
• More infill, including both residential and office. Various types of greening (streets, roofs, walls, etc.) Native/drought-tolerant vegetation. On-site drainage as much as possible.

Question 5

**From your perspective, what else should be considered?**

• Parking meters for one thing with the funds going into improving downtown over time.

• Form over Euclidean zoning. We want to make our community feel intimate, warm, small. We need to consider this in design decisions. We also should think about coming forces in land use such as autonomous vehicles, the sharing economy, and in Sacramento, the region as a foodie hub.

• Stronger city policy requiring zero-net-energy construction. Market-rate parking charges to reduce vehicle use. Proactive efforts to encourage owners of underdeveloped parcels to improve them. A concerted effort to redevelop the PG&E corps yard for both residential and business space. An overall strategy to brand Davis as a worldwide best practice in sustainable development, with educational signage and other forms of messaging, linked to an economic development strategy that emphasizes green businesses.
Social Sustainability Focus Group  
January 24 | 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Stakeholders included:  
**Sue Barton** – 35 year resident – now live in downtown Davis, apartment project across from Davis community church, active community participant, national night out,  
**Emily Griswold** – recreational and park commission, central park gardens, UC Davis arb & public garden, Davis manor creative action team  
**Zachary Bouchard** – student at UC Davis – advisory committee with chancellor, board of directors for central park gardens  
**Gloria Partida** – inclusion and diversity – building community – human relations commissions  
**Helen Roland** – Davis Opportunity – homeless and celebration Abraham  
**Chris Neufeld-Erdman** – live in old north, pastor of Davis community church  
**Bill Pride** – director of Davis community meals and housing, chair of homeless and poverty action community, community action board

**What creates more public opportunities downtown?**  
Activities that are aimed around art and music tend to bring people downtown, we need more space to do that.

Programming, not spaces. Art About, ceramic art conference around town, whole Downtown turns into gallery

Central park is such a jewel, people gather for all reasons, but it can shift from farmers market to protest to music venue, to welcome day.  
It would be nice to have another space that includes activities

Resurrect the fountain in central park. It is gravitating for families and would make E Street Plaza less lonely and quiet.

Our downtown is vibrant due to our restaurants, theaters and coffee.

**Please provide additional ideas on how these can be implemented.**

Given the number of people in Davis, we need more housing downtown. We need to build up to 4 stories. If people live downtown, they will be downtown.

We need a better mixed use space for all kinds of activities on ground floor and housing above.

We need to build inclusion and diversity. We want to bring in different types of people to participate downtown. It is not accessible. We need to design and make an effort to include people who are marginalized.
There are a lot of amenities downtown, but it feels like it’s all for students. The places we can go to eat are not geared towards families. We need diversity of activities that are more family oriented.

More signage in more than one language. Cultivate people to bring stores and services that are relevant to people besides college oriented people

**What kind of community does the community want?**

Downtown doesn’t have bones to build attractive community. The structures are very mid-century, not interesting spaces. The bank buildings are awful, we can create a more interesting downtown that is affordable, mixed-use, parking, create space for people to hang out.

I like the idea of activated alleys - I’d like to promote more little spaces, but they are not always surveyable. If more people are going to those places, it is not a problem. If you want vibrancy, you have to allow for life.

E street plaza is ideal, but needs to be rethought

The parklet on E street has been successful – I like that its public, it’s successful, near the lofts. I can sit in the parklet and enjoy the spillover.

Burgers & Brew has a parklet, but it feels private. You cannot sit unless you are a customer.

**What communities are currently being ignored downtown?**

Latino community is not represented in the arts or big public gatherings, or programming. The event with Davis Community Church at Christmas, Las Posadas, integrated immigrants and refugees and brought the Hispanic community together. We could do a “bring your flag from the country you immigrated from” event.

A possible resource to tap into is the Department of Community Development and Land Use on UC Davis campus. Students are doing different studies, they may have students who have a good idea about communities here.

**How important do you think creating a downtown that allows residents to ‘age in place’?**

Yes, we need to have diversity downtown – age and ethnicities. There is a benefit of baby boomers living in smaller places. It also frees up other homes in the community so families can move in.

There is an advantage to seniors in community. Downtown is a good place for that because it’s walk-able. We need more places for people to downsize and age in place
The aging community wants to live in Davis, but find that they can’t – they are relegated outside of downtown. I want to explore a community where families, elderly and young can live flourishing movement – where elderly read to young people, young people take elderly places. Elderly want to communicate with the younger population too.

**Barriers to development**

Layers of regulation make it hard and expensive for people to build – expensive because it’s really risky. It makes it hard to do the right thing. We need to reduce barriers. If it meets the vision, it should be a simple project. Most people won’t wait around for years to get their project done.

**What is your opinion on locating affordable housing and/or transitional housing downtown?**

Homeless and panhandling is a big problem for businesses in downtown. Nimbyism is stronger in this community than ever – and it’s getting worse – Davis is extremely affluent and people here worry about affecting property values. Housing is a critical need in Davis, - good idea to located homeless in downtown, but not practical.

Nishi property – There were plans to do student housing, but there are people camping on that property. It’s close to downtown and convenient for low income to live. It’s a big open space, people do not need to squeeze in, and it could be a good place for low income or transitional housing. There is not an existing affluent population at the property which means less nimbyism. People are worried about the traffic impacts to Nishi – homeless living there takes away that fear – they don’t drive.

Downtown also seems like a place for low income to live – if you can’t afford a car, you don’t need one because you can walk everywhere.

Economically, it seems right to have a nice condo for seniors, but also a place for low income.

**In terms of social sustainability – what would be a win?**

There needs to be a requirement for social impact assessment for anything done downtown. We need to look at it and ask ourselves if it fits various requirements. Are there vulnerable populations that this is going to affect? Will we gentrify a community? We need to be able to say there is a positive social impact for our projects. It should be part of our planning process. We need programs to increase inclusivity, there is no community center expect Davis Community Church.

At one point, Davis was supposed to be a retail hub. Now most retail is gone. We need life to downtown – an arts offering, theater, maybe a meeting convention center? We could also do to convert spaces, similar to the E street plaza.
We need to build upwards, we need more space – I would like to see us do more mixed use, housing for lots of people. We need to change our view of ourselves. We are no longer a small town and need to grow up responsibly. We should allow space for people to meet up and walk around.

Homelessness is a front and center issue. We need to create better facilities to support that population.

I can feel the divide between students and non-student residents in Davis. The University is not going anywhere – How do we integrate students with the residents of Davis. How do we intermingle? The campus is their community - how do we integrate.

We need to increase mixed use housing downtown – diversity of people including families – we need a higher population downtown and bring in different business as new people will be there.
Social Sustainability Focus Group

Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Results
Question 1

Which opportunities would facilitate more social interactions in downtown? (pick top 3)

1. Provide additional public gathering locations
2. Develop more residential units with spaces to socialize
3. Develop more activity areas for children
4. Apply universal standards to access points for outdoor park and plazas
5. None of the above

Q1 Which opportunities would facilitate more social interactions in downtown? (pick top 3)

Comments:

- The lack of accessible parking in and near downtown inhibits many from going downtown frequently.
- More programs and events, not all based on commerce - the Ceramics Conference is a great example
- More infill...replace useless bank buildings (and the AT&T building) with mixed use structures...better restaurants

Question 2

Of the top 3 selected in the previous question, please provide additional ideas on how this can be implemented in downtown.

- More residential units mean developing housing up into multi story housing. More emphasis needs to be on providing activities for families with young children. The lack of parking is a huge impediment for many to come downtown.
- Public gathering - consider adding additional parklets, sidewalk widening, additional public furniture Residential units/new development should have space for retail on ground floors - how can we do this and ensure that commercial spaces will be affordable to local businesses? Boost arts and culture programs and events to draw more people from the region to downtown
• MUST shorten and simplify the process developers must go through to approve plans. Davis has such a grueling process and such resistance by the Nimby-residents that solid developments go elsewhere. Who'd really want to jump through so many hoops and fight so many fights?

Question 3
What are the biggest challenges to creating positive social interactions in downtown?
• Lack of space, over reliance on the student population, nimbyism to vertical growth.
• Empty storefronts growing homeless contingent relatively narrow sidewalks, few street furnishings - public benches etc.
• Resistance in Davis to growth and change. The Nimby mentality. Lack of truly creative structures and spaces. Too many regulations that prohibit innovative retail.

Question 4
What communities are currently being ignored in downtown?
• Young families with children and the elderly.
• Perhaps people with limited mobility due to parking challenges. I haven't given this much thought.
• True farm to fork culture...foodies...our restaurants are largely behind the cultural shifts taking place elsewhere. Innovative food/drink establishments foster gatherings.

Question 5
What is your opinion on locating affordable housing and/or transitional housing downtown?
• Locating affordable housing or any other multifamily housing in the downtown area would be a plus.
• It makes sense to me, because transportation costs should be low for downtown residents. I think there should be a mixture of housing types downtown to accommodate a range of different income levels.
• Absolutely yes! More mixed-housing downtown.
Question 6
How important do you think creating a downtown that allows residents to ‘age in place’?

Question 7
From your perspective, what else should be considered?

- Beauty - can we make downtown more beautiful and inviting with upgraded plantings and street furnishings?
- Why are we unable to attract a restaurant like Preserve in Winters or even Sellands in Sacramento? Sac Midtown has a myriad of interesting micro-neighborhoods. You'd think Davis-ites would adore similar places. Also, we MUST do something with the Northeast corner of the core--the Coop and adjacent dilapidated strip mall and empty field at G and Sweet Briar. This could be a wonderful anchor to the downtown if developed thoughtfully...housing and retail/office.
Housing Focus Group
January 25 | 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Stakeholders included:
**Steve Sherman** – local builder, occasional developer 33 years in Davis
**Chuck Roe** – home builder, real estate development, aggie village, own some mixed use buildings downtown – main interest in Davis is the Downtown. Wants more housing downtown.
**Don Morrill** – live on 4th and D, worked with four couples who were partners in this building, not intrusive, significant obstacles
**Mary Jo Bryan** – lived in Davis since 1973, reconnected with community in 2000, choices for healthy aging, want a senior oriented community at corner of Cavell and pole line but it didn’t happen, now learned that the public needs to get involved early to make a difference. Families first was demolished, currently running for city council because it’s a social issue, we need to plan for the future
**Alex Achimore** – 17 years in Davis, background in architecture, ELS – former urban design company in Berkeley, worked as executive director for redevelopment authority in Hawaii – made affordable housing, managed building projects for UC Davis (ARC, Stadium, Pool, created 6 townhouses for students (got sued) – the worst Nimbyism – now teach science and art to a small school, do architecture on the side.
**Kemble Pope** – real estate dev on B Street, Trackside center, mixed use building recently approved, open space and habitat commission, climate action team, chamber of commerce, strongly about infill housing, densification, longtime resident of old and north Davis, speaking in the same language (using same words)
**Georgina Valencia** – moved back to Davis 3 ½ years ago. Long history of housing in Davis 20 years ago, worked at Wild Horse – sold houses for builders, my career is in the home building industry. Serving on social services commission. 30-year career in housing, work in for sale housing (not rental)

**What does the Downtown Davis Plan we carefully assess or reconsider in terms of housing?**

We need densification, we want more neighbors in downtown.
Please review the following:
**Historical review**
**Requirements for houses downtown**
- Porches
- Slopped roofs
- Need for retail
**Fire Marshal requirements**

We need to simplify and coordinate the documents, they are complex and disagree with each other. We try and be too specific and run into problems. The General Plan, neighborhood design guidelines, specific plan all disagree. What is overarching goal? Not clear goals of last 10 year that have to do w climate change, preserving open space, residents
downtown, walkable, bikeable – adds another layer. Too many layers of conscripted thoughts on how we should do housing. We need to start fresh. Zoning layer – there’s inconsistencies on how we talk about things in each section of the downtown – biggest one is height. There is not specific height, feet floors as a maximum, it’s FAR (Floor area ratio)

Being a small downtown in a small city should mean we have the ability to change. No one would have seen the desire for downtown housing 10 years ago. We need to react to this.

There are not incentives to build downtown. We need less hurdles.

**What kind of housing would you like to see in downtown?**

With drought in student housing, it’s difficult. The university keeps adding students. We need more housing in downtown.

If I want to downsize, where do I go? We all want to be in downtown so we can walk. The community is coming around, council is right there, city staff is right there, this process will help – I’m encouraged by Trackside.

You don’t have the citizens with you yet, we go by the general plan, and it’s outdated. The Sterling project is horrendous, if you want Davis to stay Davis, it’s not saying no, but it’s saying where can we put this? We have got to work on the citizens, Davis has to change

There is a demand for variety – housing crisis for all. We should focus on 1 floor units because they offer maximum flexibility and serve all user types.

It is much more expensive to produce anything downtown than what’s happening on the periphery. Consider building on the downtown periphery.

Parking requirements need to be cleaned up. There should be incentives for less parking. No parking should be at ground level.

Anything is viable because there is demand, but that doesn’t mean it’s the best use.

Designation of mixed use should be looked at carefully – Think about the Amazon effect. We don’t really have the demand for retail. We need to look at office space. We need to take dirt that is downtown and put higher density products on it. A better use of dirt is more density.

Landlords are renting crummy places for high rents. We need to provide incentive for people to fix up houses that are currently in downtown. We can’t offer them money, but need to get those properties to turn-over.
Additional Considerations?

Need more mixed use – housing will keep the retail going because you have more people in downtown. Keep other groups in mind (beyond students) – young couples, seniors.

Be mindful of parking restrictions on small units – if it’s still 1 parking unit per unit we will have a ton of parking spaces.

We just have rental housing. We need to have an eye towards condominiums.

We have really good architecture – we should be asking people to do something that is exceptional – our downtown is rare, we don’t have a lot of projects and there is too much encouragement to blend in. We are a university town with energy and in California, we need to do something exciting! Encourage it! Be creative. Honor the present time. Historical commission – why aren’t we creating buildings that are noteworthy? We don’t need to be thematic.

The Downtown design guidelines say to look like your neighbor. Get rid of downtown design. The more hurdles you eliminate, the more creativity you allow. There are good architects in town.

Affordability: we need to make permanent affordable units – similar to aggie village. When you compare that with costs to build in downtown, the dirt is expensive and it’s really hard to build affordable. There is a difference between capitally affordable vs. actual affordable

Density is measured by number of front doors, not by number of rooms. The density regulations need to be cleaned up.

Ordinance policies need to reflect that need to reflect what the community wants to do and wants to see.

Rental units are better for the elderly age group.

We can get under 500 sq. feet. for both homeless and young professionals.

Create incentives for people to come downtown, like “day of free parking” – we want to be downtown.
Housing Focus Group

Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Results
Question 1

Would additional housing downtown help enable new and expanded retail desired by the community?

- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- It would support existing downtown retail and also support new adjacent retail. I'm not exactly sure what "new and expanded retail" is desired by the community.
- Yes, the more people that live downtown the greater the foot traffic is for retail.
- Yes

Question 2

Would live-work units be a good idea for downtown?

If yes, why? If no, why not?

- Yes, I think it’s a sensible use of space to increase occupancy as well as businesses
- Sure, but I think it's a pipe dream that there's much demand. Makes the units more expensive. Anyone can set up an office in an extra bedroom if they want.
- Yes, any and all types of housing is very important. I caution about trying to plan the specific type of housing. Let's see what the marketplace brings.
- Possibly...but grocery stores might be important to someone living and working downtown. Planning about needs for live-work units in downtown and looking at what other communities are doing and have experienced would be important to conversation around this question and question #1. We get caught up in this town with what we have. A field trip to Santana Row in San Jose or another town that has gone through this kind of change.
- Yes. It is efficient use of space, critical in the small area.

Question 3

What kind of housing would you like to see in downtown? How tall?

- 4 stories are fine with me. I’d like combination residential above but maybe 2 floors of retail in first then maybe professional in 2nd, and apartments in top two floors
- Rental and ownership. 6 stories
- 3 stories over retail.
- I would love to see owner occupied housing and I'm fine with 5 stories. Saying owner occupied is the best is easy, but it is very difficult to produce so I would also consider all types of housing.
- Kind? Affordable & Market Rate, mixed ages and economic stages of life.
I think four stories is possible, and probably necessary in some cases.

Question 4
What do you see as barriers to additional housing opportunities being provided?

- Downtown neighborhood residential standards
- Owners of old apartment buildings have no incentive to upgrade or rebuild. They've paid off the mortgage, students will live in crummy apartments and pay high rents.
- The biggest barriers are lack of consistent political will and the extensive entitlement process.
- Median price of a home in Davis...costs are very high which leaves a lot of people out, diversity of ages and needs is good to have for vitality in a community.
- Parking is always an issue. Increasing cost of both rentals and purchase. Look forward to hearing others’ concerns.

Question 5
From your perspective, what else should be considered?

- A parking structure just outside core area.
- Pressure PG&E to consolidate their facility to the eastern half of their property, so downtown can be expanded east of L street. That property is way too valuable to park trucks on. Their real estate people will get that if the city gives them a push. Same thing with the DJUSD offices on 5th and B. They should be pressured to do another deal like they did at the Grande site--stipulate that an affordable housing component only be sold to school employees.
- How can we create incentives for housing rather than barriers? Planning exercises seem to focus on creating a web of challenges for developers rather than giving them incentives to create what we want as a town.
- The city should have programs in place to help young and less financially fortunate people have an opportunity to own/or rent downtown. There should be consideration to encourage retaining business in the downtown and to encourage (i.e. business development/search) for new business in the downtown.
- Traffic flow. Perhaps closing some streets downtown would make sense.
Community Design Focus Group  
January 25 | 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Attendees:  
**Kevin Perry** – Green infrastructure  
**David de la Pena** – architect and urban design – teacher at UC Davis – historic resources commission, focus on participatory design  
**Rand Herbert** – retired architectural historian, historic building surveys, adaptive resource, historic resources management commission  
**Allen Lowry** – architect in Davis – university projects, historic resources commissions  
**Ashley Muir** – online publisher, travel leisure blog

**What is the heart of downtown?**

Core area and conservation districts.

E Street plaza is the everyday heart beat – not beating strong right now. It is very central. We have family-friendly needs. E Street plaza should be the heart – but there is a parking lot. Getting rid of the parking lot would double the plaza in size.

Saturday morning farmers market.

G Street could be a heartbeat, it is currently big for students.

The hardware store is a beating heart of downtown.

Certain intersections, like 3rd & F.

There is no connective tissue between the many hearts.

There is no central focal point – a lot of residents don’t come downtown, but they may come to central park.

The City should create a second focal point that is obvious in the downtown.

The focal point can change if the link to campus is changed

Downtown is not big enough to support the focal point

**What types of public spaces are needed?**

There used to be a mini park next to varsity – where Mishkas is. I think we need more spaces like that. I wish there were shaded places in downtown where you’d like to go and sit and eat lunch.
E Street Plaza needs shade. We should put up big sail cloths.

There used to be a teen center at 3rd and B. There is no place for teens to be.

A cool hip public library – with lots of glass. A place to be and be seen.

Downtown needs a grocery stores.

A family space with a small climbing structure. We need activities for families. If there are amenities that draw in families, there will be a feeling of safety.

Side-walks and street conditions need to be updated – they feel and look tired. A lot are not ADA compliant because of tree roots.

**What defines Davis? – What elements should be built upon? What makes Davis – Davis?**

Davis is nice because everyone argues over everything. Things are fairly well thought out. The public gets to have their say.

**What should be protected? How should it inform new development, infrastructure, and public art?**

Regarding the approval process – you need to make something anonymous to get it approved – take all edges off. Districts have design guidelines -

Only one or two have come through recently that are controversial. I wish people would try harder to do more. People worry about being disapproved. I would like to see a more assertive style of design that still has historic features

Denser and more interesting – People should try harder – historic commission is not an obstacle to development. Design guidelines should not be a negative.

New development needs to honor the neighbors who made the rules. Architecture needs to make the effort.

Want the historic to stand out. We don’t want little house by big buildings

The City of Davis / UC Davis relationship isn’t supportive - Davis cannot be separated from the University. The more the city grabs that opportunity, they more they will get out of it. There is a huge opportunity – our City should offer more here – people leave on the weekend

We are still the same place 30 years later. People are moving from more urban, diverse place – how can we be the place we want it to be?
What role do you think trees and public art might play in giving downtown a unique identity?

Tree Network could be filled with seating.

Tree canopy is pretty strong but a finite resource. We've lost a lot of trees. We need a plan to reinforce the canopy.

Davis has a landmark tree ordinance. It is one of the charming things about Davis and Sacramento both. The center just has little street trees.

Davis would be uninhabitable without trees. 3rd street makes into an avenue of beautiful trees Make a big deal with trees on 3rd street.

Emphasize people being outdoors. We should be removing any roadblocks to outdoor seating/cafés.

Which parts of downtown do you NOT like, and why?

We can’t get the active street life without the housing.
We need to encourage 3–5 stories residential.

We need places for people to walk – Davis has secretive alleyways which is really special.

Rail line to Woodland could be relocated and made into a wonderful urban green belt.

One change removing surface lot at E Street; placemaking into a place for people to linger would energize downtown. It would help with Davis identity and walkability. It would make it more like an urban park. A place to see and be seen. I like the vision of E Street plaza as an urban plaza, but one fear is that we become Walnut Creek. There is sterility to Walnut Creek. The scale of the buildings take an entire block and then filled with chains. How do you keep it scaled appropriately? We also need to think about putting a nice paid toilet in the E Street plaza. If there is a sense of stewardship, it would be better maintained. Maybe a kiosk in the E Street plaza?

Need better connection with Arboretum Role of housing in the core area

There is not good “connective tissue” between our “hearts.” The materials that are there don’t feel cohesive and well designed. The walks aren’t visually appealing - at night – Davis is a dark place – it doesn’t feel connective – the bones are there but the materials aren’t suited for a strong urban plaza.
Additional comments, submitted after the meeting through email.

To further the idea of downtown as a magnet for people, we should not overlook its latent function as a transit hub/intermodal hub.

Downtown Davis is in the center of a very vital and diverse area that needs a center. The UCD campus, Central Davis neighborhoods, peripheral neighborhoods, South Davis, El Macero, Woodland, all lack a focal point. As a default, they are viewed as outliers of Sacramento. They are there ready to orbit a stronger nucleus which ought to be Downtown Davis.

The downtown should be a transit hub for Yolo County!

Amtrak to Sacramento and the Bay Area (more parking!) Light Rail to Woodland from the Davis station (Amtrak, 5th Street, 8th Street, Covell stations) Interstate 80 to Atlantic City and SF (add Park and Ride east of the station) Unitrans, Yolobus and Amtrak Buses (add Amtrak/light rail express routes) Special local transit for elderly and handicapped people (promote more visits) Bicycle route to Sacramento and Woodland, local bike network (improve Amtrak bike parking) Decent automobile accommodations to City area with desirable downtown destinations (theater, food, retail) Established pedestrian links to UCD and central Davis (add sex appeal).

Downtown is at the center of all of this! Make it a transit hub. People passing through will support businesses. (think UCD faculty going home to Woodland via light rail).

Review of the awful new Nishi Strip proposal, cut off from everything can remind us of the need to see Downtown planning in a larger context. Planning efforts should view downtown as the nucleus for Davis, Olive Drive, Nishi, and Solano Park UCD housing which will soon be redeveloped. Show these links! We may not get another shot at this.
Community Design Focus Group

Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Results
Question 1

What is the heart of downtown?

- Central Park and our Farmer’s Market feel like the heart of downtown, which poses a problem, as it sits outside of the bounds that most patrons currently consider walkable. (The perception that this isn’t connected in a walkable manner from the other side of downtown is its own issue.) The literal heart of our downtown is probably E Street Plaza and the surface parking lot. I think this is a shame, as it reinforces the idea of an auto-centric shopping destination where customers come for their one errand or meal rather than to enjoy our downtown and its walkable ambience. I’d like to see the E Street plaza be better utilized, and look at ways to transform that parking area into a useful park that makes our downtown feel like a destination with a central square. Without activities in this space, the plaza tends to sit empty. While this seems at odd with what many see as the central dilemma facing downtown—parking—these lots create a sense of dead space between retailers. Rather than focus on optimizing our current parking lots, let’s keep our focus on optimizing our commerce and culture—do the central surface parking lots support those goals? This is not to say that the space should feel spacious or uncrowded. On the contrary, a downtown should feel densely packed. From Jane Jacobs on downtowns: "It is not the nature of downtown to decentralize." ... "The whole point is to make the streets more surprising, more compact, more variegated, and busier than before—not less so."

- 3rd and F

Question 2

What would give downtown Davis a unique identity and a ‘sense of place’?

- A pedestrian-friendly, connected location with a lively environment that encourages visitors to linger and support the local economy—this is what gives a downtown its sense of place. In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, the Project for Public Spaces found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit. A destination downtown has a focus on activities: outdoor dining, live music, sidewalk sales, art walks, block parties, etcetera. I’d like to see play spaces incorporated where possible, to promote downtown as a destination to linger for families. I feel like this is a consumer group being oddly overlooked in the downtown design. On an anecdotal level, I attended a birthday gathering in E Street Plaza with a group of 3-year old’s the other day, and observed that there was nowhere for the kids to go or play. Parents could not linger with their coffee, as the little ones needed to be protected from car traffic on all sides. When I see parents at the playgrounds at Central Park, I see a boost to our businesses if there were a play/climbing structure in the plaza that promoted downtown as a place for families to gather, and go on to browse or dine. Many cities try to integrate play structures within commerce districts for precisely these reasons. They capture a demographic who might be home during business hours and who are looking for activities. And adding playgrounds in public squares in larger cities, as in New York’s Union Square, has been
shown to add a feeling of safety for all to gather—something that translates directly to increased commerce. When we think of mixed-use space, we need to include this kind of recreation in our conception.

- More and better protection for historic sites and buildings

**Question 3**

**What should be protected? How should it inform new development, infrastructure, and public art?**

- We used to live across the street from The Grove in Los Angeles. In essence, a developer created a “lifestyle center” (essentially an outdoor mall) as an extension of the old Farmer’s Market on Fairfax. It has been hugely popular, and functions like a small, romanticized downtown. There’s reason why traditional malls are losing out to these “lifestyle centers” that recreate the urban street, often modeled on the European city’s cafe culture. For pure shopping efficiency, a big-box discounter is cheaper, a drive-up center is faster, and an online retailer doesn’t make you leave your desk. The appeal is the community space—with children’s play areas, public eating spaces, opportunities for gathering and relaxation—that’s separate from home and work. The LA Times called it “the Starbucks strategy: provide an appealing environment so that people will make it a part of their daily life and spend money while they're there.” If the goal is to recreate a small, romantic downtown—we already have that! We need to protect the small-business culture that makes our downtown unique. We need our retail spaces to be dynamic and experiential. As more retail moves online, this becomes more important than ever. Our public art should rotate; our downtown should host events and pop-ups. There needs to be that community appeal, with the play areas and opportunities for gathering that make downtown a part of daily life.

- Neighborhood scale and massing, historic buildings

**Question 4**

**What role do you think trees might play in giving downtown a unique identity?**

- Trees make any place more beautiful, and can create a focal point or give the sense of a promenade. That said, a promenade needs people. They shouldn’t take away from space for people to exist. And one has to be careful that they don’t block views down the street, in which case other businesses can feel less accessible. And by all means, they should all have decorative (twinkle) lights after dark!

- Crucial

**Question 5**

**What role do you think public art can play in giving downtown a unique identity?**

- Our commitment to public art is certainly a strength of ours, and the value of public art does not need argument. Why does one go downtown? It’s not to feed yourself. It’s for the sense of place
and community and public art is part of that. But I do wonder about the permanence and selection process of some of our installations. We have a new, world-class art museum, a University with a distinguished art program, and several art centers in town, but not all of our public art seems of the same caliber. I'd love to see us consider more rotating exhibits and juried competitions. Would something like Wide Open Walls (http://www.sacbee.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article164001922.html) be possible in our town?

- Minimal

**Question 6**

*Which parts of downtown do you like in terms of look and feel, and why?*

- There are things I like about most parts of downtown, but I most appreciate the space between The Varsity Theatre and Mishka's on a sunny afternoon. People are sitting out at the sidewalk tables, the trees glow in the sun, and there are rows of bikes parked in front of a historic theatre. You look across the street and see a bookshop. It feels like a real downtown space. There’s a similar sense when you’re outside of Temple Coffee—looking toward Bistro 33. The thing they have in common is sidewalk seating. In fact, all of what I consider the most pleasant places in downtown Davis probably have this in common (Bernardo’s, Bistro 33, Burgers and Brew, the alley beside Peet’s Coffee...).
- The area between A and L, 1st to 8th

**Question 7**

*Which parts of downtown do you not like, and why?*

- The large surface parking lot that sits in the middle of downtown. There are some aesthetic issues I have downtown: the mattress shop, with its large footprint and painted window signs comes to mind. The large hotel sign that was just added outside of Cafe Bernardo was very disappointing as it emphasized the national chain’s presence. I think the more we can do the help chains blend in with smaller, local shops the better. Signage guidelines may help. Carmel-by-the-Sea is at the far end of the conservative extreme on this issue, and I wouldn’t suggestion their stringency for a town like Davis. Still, it’s interesting to see their signage guidelines (https://www.carmelchamber.org/sign-ordinance) and consider that some of these might be good considerations for a more attractive and cohesive downtown feel. I would advocate for some shop signage guidelines (e.g. blade signs that hang down at uniform heights). I wish phone stores and other more occasional shops were situated outside the core walking district. Related: we took our family downtown to visit the shops participating in the holiday decorations contest during the month of December. We brought a map and score cards and made an afternoon out of it. I have to say, however, that we were mostly disappointed by the lack of effort put forth. It made me think about something I see lacking in general downtown, and that’s an interest in beautification by current store owners. One hears much about the importance of "instagrammable moments" for businesses—particularly with the college-age demographic, but
really with everyone. Where does one see those downtown? Where does one not? I wonder what help or incentives can be offered to existing businesses when it comes to beautification.

- None

**Question 8**

**Where do you like to go when you’re in downtown?**

- I probably frequent the businesses along 3rd street most of all: from Fit House to Temple Coffee and Zuma Poke down to Bernardo’s and the park. But my favorite afternoons tend to involve Avid Reader, The Varsity Theatre, and Mishka's coffee. Those blocks still feel the most stroll-able. We also frequently go to Our House or Seasons for dinner, or Paesanos if the kids are with us—they love the dough balls. We were at the Commons more often when Whole Foods and Habit were there. But that space is a big draw in the summer because of the green space for the kids to run around while we eat outside at Mikuni’s or Pluto’s.

- Main shopping and restaurant area

**Question 9**

**From your perspective, what else should be considered?**

- I’d like us to look at holding more regularly occurring events downtown. We were at some of the Winters’ First Fridays this summer and everyone I encountered from Davis wondered why we don’t have events like that in our downtown. For example, Gather (put on by Unseen Heroes in Oak Park), where communal tables for out-door dining, a craft beer area, artisanal food vendors, designers, food demos, interactive art, live music and a modular kids park, are set up for weekly events in the summer. Or we might look to the new space The Barn, in the Bridge District, which likewise brings together different vendors and businesses into an open-air event space, with the help of Off the Grid. In Oakland, the museum of California also makes use of Off the Grid to host a food truck and music event on Friday nights. I’d also like us to look specifically at more pedestrian-only events. A car-free Sunday once a month, for example, as New York does in the summer City Streets. These opportunities reinforce the walkability of downtown and remind residents of their downtown services. Activated alleys have been mentioned. From Jane Jacobs again: "The real potential is in the street, and there are far more opportunities for exploiting it than are realized. Consider, for example, Maiden Lane, an odd two-block-long, narrow, back-door alley in San Francisco. Starting with nothing more remarkable than the dirty, neglected back sides of department stores and nondescript buildings, a group of merchants made this alley into one of the finest shopping streets in America … Maiden Lane is an oasis with an irresistible sense of intimacy, cheerfulness, and spontaneity. It is one of San Francisco’s most powerful downtown magnets." Other ideas would include signage and naming of our downtown core district; wider sidewalks and the installation of more parklets; more exterior dining. And, most definitely, downtown play space.

- Height
Transportation / Parking Focus Group  
January 25 | 2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Attendees:

Introduction prompt:
What is the biggest transportation problem now?  
What do you anticipate to be the biggest transportation problem 10 years from now?

Lea Rosenberg – Davis for 46 years and have 2 activities that get me downtown. It’s hard to find parking. Ten years from now, I expect there to be more electric vehicles and Uber, getting out of the car and into self-driving cars.

Anthony Palmore – Recently retired General Manager of Unitrans, resident who is car free  
Susan Handy – professor at Davis. A problem now is that there are not enough EV chargers.

Michael Goffman – Student at UC Davis. The biggest issue now is that we have more residents than we’ve ever had, and we have to make sure infrastructure can keep up.  
Ten years from now, we will need to be sure that we are able to adapt infrastructure to the alternative modes

Rosaria Berliner – Grad student at Davis. Problem now is lack of transit in the area. In ten years from now, we will need to be sure we are prepared for autonomous vehicles.

Lynne Yackzan – Resident for almost 50 years, live downtown, own property downtown, and own a parking structure downtown.

Biggest challenge today is finding parking during certain times. I think if we move employee parking to off the street, it would make a big difference. Ten years from now, I hope we have adapted to be using alternative transportation.

What would you like to add to downtown transport system?

Improving, fixing, modifying. We need a parking management program, and to add management of parking we have.

You should be able to pay all day. Take those folks that are working in downtown and moving their car a couple hours – they should be parking in a parking structure.  
The G Street parking structure has on average 80 to 100 empty spaces.

Parking meters – while the city is trying to work on that plan, we shouldn’t piecemeal it the way they are proposing. 1st – 5th, B St. – G St.

Are there adequate loading zones for businesses?

We need more 30 minute spaces. Many of the people who work there are the ones who are parking and moving their spots.
For people who attend meetings at the Odd Fellows Lodge on 2\textsuperscript{nd} street, the biggest complaint is that there is no parking.

**What would you change with transit?**

On Unitrans busses coming from West and North to downtown, you need to transfer at university. Coming from South or East, you don’t need to go through campus. People might ride the bus more if it didn’t go through campus.

Even with a frequent bus service, in that amount of time, you could ride your bike faster – The bus isn’t competitive with driving and riding your bike – there is no traffic to get downtown. The bus service could run later at night – on weekends and during week.

We once had a shuttle that took students from campus to downtown, but no one rode it. It ran from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and ran 4 times an hour. If you’re that close that you can walk, you won’t shuttle.

**What are challenges to bike travel?**

Finding bike parking.

Intersections that need to be fixed up.

Lots of construction.

1\textsuperscript{st} street is not conducive for biking. It is always empty.

2\textsuperscript{nd} street is good because you want to be where cars can see you – angled parking helps with that.

All of the mixed modes of transportation work well together with an unmanaged approach. There is enough balance in the volumes of different modes. Driving, biking and walking.

Trucks parked in the middle of the street is natural traffic calming

There are a lot of negotiations at intersections – bikes only stop occasionally and recreational cyclist rarely ever stop. It’s hard to tell when it’s your turn to go.

**What are your thoughts on protected bike lanes?**

Good. Most streets people are biking on are not above 25 mph. So anything to make faster streets more safe is a good thing. The thick bike lane paint helps 5\textsuperscript{th} Street.

**Thoughts regarding the depot area?**
It used to be big problem finding bike parking

If you get off the train at a busy time, there is no place for lyft and uber. We need designated drop off area.

**Thoughts regarding the Richards’s Blvd. underpass?**

It’s dirty, but safe and easy to bike and drive through. It would be nice for it to be widened.

**Travel between campus and downtown**

90% of students are biking and walking.

**Uber and Lyft vs Cycling**

Students don’t uber unless partying.

**What do you think about charging to park downtown?**

If it’s less than what it costs to park at campus, students might still park there.

X permit is the downtown commuter parking permit. It does not guarantee parking. Cost $120. People working on campus are not eligible. If you are a student with a downtown job – you are eligible.

Need to be mindful of low income employees who then cannot park at their jobs. A possibility would be to grandfather in people who currently have a permit and charge future people.

In high paying jobs have their own parking lots, it is low income who incur this charge. Downtown jobs have a large turnover in employees. Grandfathering permits wouldn’t make a difference. In Boulder, CO there are free transit passes if you work downtown.

**Parking kills projects**

We need to create an X permit type space – that is subsidized by the City to get people to park in the parking structure. It will be cheaper for the city to subsidize the spaces than to build a new garage.

On the E Street parking lot, people park in the pedestrian lot. It is always full.
**General Comments:**

Regarding autonomous vehicles, we need to ask ourselves how will it affect infrastructure - There is a lot of uncertainty around autonomous vehicles so it’s hard to physically plan.

As downtown evolves, hard to plan, because it is evolving depending on what our demand is. Currently, it is entertainment, not so much retail.

We should be wary in adding parking – we need to have flexibility in design – curb space will be an issue.

We should market the empty parking lot. We need a real time signs that says “80 parking spaces available”
Transportation / Parking Focus Group

Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Results
Question 1
What would you like to add to the downtown transportation system?

- Parking, parking, parking. We need 2 or 3 mini parking structures (with paid parking so it pays for itself in time) on the east side of the downtown serving Central Park, the Farmers Market, the Odd Fellows and the Pence.
- Work with others passionate in this field to help make our system more sustainable
- More Parking availability. Employees cannot afford to live in Davis, they commute. Better traffic flow into and out of the downtown. Bike riders that respect the laws of the road.

Question 2
What would your top priority transportation investment be?

- We haven’t added more parking spaces for many, many years. In fact, we have removed parking spaces. Any solution which fails to add parking structures - even paid parking - would be a failed plan.
- Ensuring Unitrans gets the funding it needs to cope with the wage increase
- Parking structure. 99% of our customers come in a car.

Question 3
What’s working well with parking and transportation demand management programs and services?

- The signs on our F Street parking garage indicating the number of available spaces is great. Lack of parking causes people to drive around and around wasting gas and hurting the environment. No parking and they leave the downtown, particularly elderly. Need traffic signal at B and Second Street.
- A good public transportation system
- Nothing. we have not implemented extended enforcement hours, added staff to implement, nor added supply. Customers repeatedly tell us they do NOT come downtown. They avoid it.

Question 4
What’s not working well? What could be improved?

- Need more parking structures. We built two large parking structures years ago, but haven’t added one since that time. We need a parking structure (or two small ones) on the east side of downtown.
- Lack of parking in downtown areas
- Extended enforcement hours and staffing. Employee parking supply and communication to businesses and property owners.
Question 5

What outcomes would you like to see as part of the Core Area Specific Plan related to parking and Transportation Demand Management (TDM)?

- Paid parking structures (mini automated structures for 50-60 cars) will pay for themselves in time. Other cities have them - so can Davis. The City and UCD keep adding population and projects and have provided NO new parking in the downtown - this is unsustainable and will strangle our downtown.
- Still on the fence
- A new parking structure, enforcement to 9 pm, free parking for a minimum of 1 hours preferably 2. No meters. More communication with business owners and property owners about getting us out, and customers into the downtown.

Question 6

From your perspective, what else should be considered?

- Work with the school district to effect a land swap. The city could give land to the school district to replace the Susan B. Anthony admin building and put in a mixed use project with lots of public parking.
- No paid parking. Improved Access to the downtown with better traffic flow from every direction - 5th Street, B Street, Richards, 1st, F Street.