

Vision Themes and Guiding Principles

The Vision Themes and Guiding Principles for the Downtown Specific Plan were informed and created utilizing community and stakeholder input to date. This input has come in the form of individual stakeholder meetings, a community workshop, several Advisory Committee meetings, and a community wide survey.

Vision Themes:

Vitality, dignity, equity, preservation, safety, and innovation.

Guiding Principles:

Preserve key elements that make Downtown unique

Establish a varied choice of uses and experiences for our diverse community

Create housing opportunities for all

Promote local economic prosperity

Create a vibrant, safe, and active Downtown

Foster a healthy, inclusive, and culturally connected community where all can thrive

Re-imagine and innovate mobility options and connections

Incorporate sustainable design elements to improve community health

Guiding Principles:

Preserve key elements that make Downtown unique

- Celebrate the Plaza as an authentic gathering place and central node for the community and foster its energy to elevate community connections.
- Foster a sense of place through community driven murals and public art installations.
- Continue and build off of successful community event momentum – such as the Farmers Market, Film Festival, Wine Walk and Music in the Plaza.
- Promote the uniqueness and small town charm of the downtown as a vibrant and safe place to live, work, and play.
- Revitalize and showcase the beautiful historic architecture and urban fabric in downtown.

Establish a varied choice of uses and experiences for our diverse community

- Identify and recruit key missing uses that would help diversify the options of experiences in downtown.
- Ensure downtown offers a variety of uses and experiences that are accessible to a range of ages, income levels, and other socioeconomic status.
- Build on existing uses that provide services and support to the community.
- Activate downtown throughout the day and into the evening through strategically planned uses, programs and events that serve diverse community needs and interests.
- Improve surrounding neighborhoods' connection physically and socially to the downtown.

Create housing opportunities for all

- Encourage housing (market rate, affordable, and low-income) that supports the varied socioeconomic interests and needs of the community.
- Increase supply and diversity of housing to support different types of households including young adults, families, seniors, empty nesters, individuals or families with special needs, and people experiencing homelessness.

- Revitalize vacant historic structures into vibrant mixed-use buildings that incorporate housing.
- Promote higher density mixed-use residential near public transportation, along Main Street, and other main corridors.

Promote local economic prosperity

- Maintain and strengthen Downtown's diverse business presence supporting economic prosperity for all.
- Attract new commercial uses – retail, restaurants, entertainment uses, office uses – to Downtown to expand its economic base.
- Incentivize uses that help create an 18-hour downtown and encourage social and commercial vitality in Downtown.
- Embrace local entrepreneurship, talent, and creativity through public/private partnerships (Cabrillo College, Digital Nest, etc.) and use of available vacant space.
- Support the non-profit presence in the downtown, leveraging positive community connections and attracting residents to Downtown.

Create a vibrant, safe, and active Downtown

- Encourage mixed use with ground floor commercial uses and housing above.
- Reclaim and adaptively reuse vacant historic buildings for new, contemporary uses that contribute to the desired character.
- Establish architectural aesthetic and signage guidance for downtown businesses to adhere to - creating a distinct and unified look in the downtown
- Incentivize more housing to bring more people to downtown.
- Allow outdoor dining and seating to encourage activity and provide additional opportunities for community gathering.
- Establish continuous active street frontages to encourage a successful pedestrian environment.
- Create a complete and safe Downtown for all users with pedestrian, bicycle, and mobility-aid friendly focused design.

- Improve pedestrian safety and comfort throughout the downtown through streetscape improvements including additional lighting, shaded sidewalks, plantings, and other infrastructure.

Foster a healthy, inclusive, and culturally connected community where all can thrive

- Promote livability regardless of age, ethnicity, income by focusing on community connection, needs, and sense of belonging.
- Ensure cleanliness downtown through the investment in clean-up programs promoting a sense of community ownership and pride.
- Foster cultural pride through community planned programs and events that respect and honor Watsonville's history.
- Embrace Watsonville's rich cultural history by uplifting the past through design, art, and event programming.
- Work cooperatively with community members to help build a sense of belonging and ownership.

Re-imagine and innovate mobility options and connections

- Design safe pedestrian, bicyclist, and mobility aid facilities that invite all users regardless of age and ability to use and enjoy.
- Connect downtown to the future rail trail and commuter rail-improving regional mobility.
- Focus development momentum around downtown transit facilities creating a complete and connected neighborhood.

Incorporate sustainable design elements to improve community health

- Leverage connections to the adjacent natural environment (Pajaro River, sloughs, etc.) with bicycle and walking trails.
- Bring awareness to Watsonville's natural environment with educational displays.
- Consider establishing targets for urban greening and low-impact development (street trees, native plantings, and increase in plant materials, pervious paving, etc.)