

POP-UP DOWNTOWN WORKSHOP AND PLAN TROLLEY EVENTS COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

CITY LAGUNA BEACH
DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN
OCTOBER 21, 2015

I. Introduction

Throughout the fall of 2014, the City of Laguna Beach and MIG hosted a series of community-wide events to kick off the Downtown Specific Plan Update. A combination of Plan Trolley events and a Pop-Up Workshop were used to generate community discussion and gather input on Laguna Beach's urban design, mobility, building heights and density, and economic development challenges and ideas.

The City and MIG employed two different strategies to gather community input. One of the first events was a Pop-Up Workshop, which took place on Saturday, November 15, 2014. Pop-Up Downtown took place on a temporarily closed portion of Ocean Avenue and included a bike lane demonstration, parklets, and interactive community exercises. In addition to the Pop-Up Workshop, the City and MIG employed a series of four Plan Trolley events - through the use of a trolley typically used for transportation during peak summer months, as a mode and outreach tool for community engagement. The trolley was equipped with information regarding the Downtown Specific Plan Update process and interactive activities. It was positioned at key community events including a high school football game, Hospitality Night, Winter Fantasy at the Sawdust Art Festival, and First Thursday's Art Walk to achieve optimal exposure within the community.

II. Community Input

The following is a compilation of the community comments from the five community outreach events. The comments were taken from the interactive community exercise boards and consolidated into categories each pertaining to a specific aspect of the existing Downtown Specific Plan.

What does a successful Downtown mean to you?

- An environment that creates a safe, comfortable and enjoyable pedestrian experience
- Sustainable business year round
- Cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating
- Programmed events – such as Hospitality Night
- A deep sense of community
- A safe, friendly, interactive, interesting, helpful and fun environment.
- A village center with a vibrant night life
- A place that caters to residents before visitors
- A place where residents can be entertained by public events, public art/sculptures, attractive landscape and enjoy a feeling of camaraderie with other people
- A mixed-use Downtown that incorporates the needs of all residents
- Provides places to gather, interact, explore and engage
- Offers affordable housing opportunities
- Provides a diverse array of shops and restaurants for both residents and visitors
- A place of all ages and abilities
- A Downtown with no cars, create a pedestrian mall to increase foot traffic and sales for merchants.
- Places where locals, visitors, and businesses thrive, mingle, and build long-lasting relationships. A place that serves people of all income levels. A place that support local businesses and the arts community. A place that is distinctive and has a strong sense of place and local history.

What would you like to see more or less of in the Downtown area?

- Additional seating
- Incorporate bike lanes throughout Downtown
- Additional parking opportunities – either surface or structured
- Refurbished alleyways that are inviting to pedestrians
- Add public transit to accommodate the needs of residents
- Incorporate safe and comfortable separated bike facilities along PCH
- Provide opportunities for more “pop-up” events
- More open space for dogs to play
- Work to renovate, rather than expand the community
- Expand the park system to include pocket parks and parklets
- Less cars and less parking, expand opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Offer free parking days or lower the meter fee
- Street closure along Forest Avenue or Ocean Avenue - closures could be permanent or closed during specified times
- Reduced traffic speeds Downtown
- More street events for the community

- Programs that encourage and support Laguna artists
- Additional Hospitality Nights throughout the year
- Reduce surface parking, allocate space around the perimeter of Downtown for parking
- Incentivize craft breweries to open in Downtown Laguna
- Restaurant seating on sidewalks
- Alleyways could be enhanced to be pedestrian walkways rather than simply utilitarian
- Free parking days once a month during the off-season
- Parking should be free on weeknights to encourage a more lively Downtown experience

What are the opportunities for change, if any, for Downtown (e.g.) specific development, new businesses, additional programs/ activities)?

Village Character

- Create guidelines that help to create friendly and attractive pedestrian environments
- Encourage a cohesive and diverse village feel
- Too many boutiques – work to diversify the commercial center
- Encourage more “practical” shops in Downtown for locals
- Residents enjoy the “hole in the wall” restaurants and bars
- Maintain the small-scale feel of Downtown Laguna, particularly along Forest Avenue
- Extend the “feel of Forest Avenue” to Pacific Coast Highway + Glenneyre. The City could achieve this by installing lights and outdoor furniture - similar to the aesthetic of Forest Avenue
- Program additional Downtown events like Hospitality Night and Music in the Park
- Keep commercial chains out of Downtown
- Alley behind BJ’s Restaurant is a good example of small space beautification
- Festivals and Art Walks make Laguna unique
- Improve the movie theatre and contextual commercial areas
- Ocean Avenue should be modeled after 3rd Street in Santa Monica
- Maintain village feel
- Incentivize moderate-income artist housing to enhance artist colony feel

Downtown Commercial Uses

- Broadway has too many banks
- Create space for quality waterfront dining
- Improve the “not so attractive” store fronts by renovating facades
- Open up rooftops as spaces for restaurant bar space
- Cannot expand Downtown businesses without providing sufficient parking
- Intensify density in Downtown without sacrificing small town feel
- Adding second stories is OK if designed with a charming aesthetic

Building Character

- Continue retrofitting older buildings into new and contemporary uses
- Unique, well-designed buildings such as the Community and Susi Q Center enhance the built environment
- Maintain historically significant buildings, like Hotel Laguna
- Continue to encourage eclectic architectural styles along Forest Avenue and in the Downtown
- Protect old Laguna and embrace Southern California's Spanish Colonial History
- Introduce taller buildings into Downtown Laguna
- Encourage new building design that considers the historic context
- Ban the Heritage Committee from interfering with Downtown Issues
- Add "soft 2nd stories"- open air seating for restaurants and other activities.
- Continue to encourage eclectic styles of old and new buildings
- Activate the old telephone building next to Whole Foods Market
- Encourage the use of succulents and native plants in landscaping – similar to water district building

Alleyways

- Create incentives for local shop owners to spruce up back sides of stores along alleyways
- Design alleys that are similar to Peppertree Lane - inviting, European-feel, sense of character
- Design walkways/pedestrian facilities that are separate from the street, such as the post office walkway
- Enhance Union Bank/Laguna Drug walkway and Forest Lane Alley to be more pedestrian friendly and inviting
- Add cobblestone and pavers, less asphalt and white concrete sidewalks
- Enhance existing alley by adding lighting, art, landscaping
- Use permeable pavers in alleyways

Parking Circulation and Public Transit

- Create parking solutions that accommodate all of Downtown's parking needs
- No additional parking
- Create strategies to mitigate traffic coming into Laguna Beach along Laguna Canyon Rd.
- Add parking and access to a free trolley service at the Village Entrance - this will encourage Downtown customers, while mitigating the car and parking issue
- Extend the trolley system to service along Laguna Canyon Rd.
- Extend the trolley service throughout the school year
- Maintain all existing parking Downtown
- Ensure parking facilities accommodate the needs of visitors, worker and locals
- Take out parking along Forest Avenue, replace with outdoor seating
- Add underground or structure parking
- Close Forest Avenue and Ocean Avenue to cars and create a pedestrian promenade
- Allow parking in private business parking lots after hours
- Add scooter parking facilities

- Improve bus stations by creating friendly, inviting atmospheres for transit users.
- Year-round trolley services that include transportation to Winter Fantasy at Sawdust Art Festival
- Direct connection between the north and south trolley parking areas and Sawdust Art Festival
- Provide scooter parking

Public Park/Open Spaces

- Create a central city gathering space
- Maintain the greenbelt surrounding Laguna
- Encourage live music programming
- Add permanent shelters in community spaces
- Add pocket parks
- Design and implement a creek-side path
- Heisler Park is a resident favorite
- Fountain plaza is wonderfully interactive

Landscaping/Streetscape

- Use drought resistant/tolerant plants in landscaping and streetscape, particularly around Village Entrance
- Create a more engaging pedestrian environment along the north side of Broadway – currently no tables, or gathering spaces
- Widen the intersection at South Coast Highway and Broadway to accommodate more cars
- Improve pedestrian stairs up to Cliff Drive
- Add lights at all crosswalks
- Incorporate trees and shade structures along Broadway
- Identify priority intersections and implement improvements
- Add outdoor restaurants and shopping to activate the space at night
- Create streets that provide shops, pedestrian paths and community gathering spaces
- Improve the pedestrian experience along Forest Avenue by planting trees and adding brick pavers
- Improve landscaping along Laguna Canyon Road
- Plant more trees throughout Downtown, particularly along streets
- Incorporate bulb outs and roundabouts
- Create streets that help to foster comfortable and safe environments for both cars and pedestrians
- Enhance sidewalks for an improve pedestrian experience
- Residents enjoy Forest as a pedestrian street with no cars
- Adopt Complete Streets policies
- Enhance green canopy along streets and pathways
- The Mermaid Street sculpture garden, wall mural, outdoor seating, proximity to the High School and local feel create a wonderful environment
- The stores along Ocean Avenue are not pedestrian friendly
- More antique street lamps
- Additional landscaped areas - both small and large

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

- Enhance bike facilities to encourage alternative modes of travel
- Design safer bike facilities along Pacific Coast Highway
- Add bike facilities along Laguna Canyon Road.
- Create streets that are designed for pedestrians, rather than cars
- Create bike friendly streets throughout Downtown
- Improve the pedestrian overpass that connects to the Laguna College of Art and Design campus
- Create a pedestrian bridge across Laguna Canyon Rd to mitigate the traffic congestion that results from the crosswalk
- Improve pedestrian facilities along Pacific Coast Highway
- Improve pedestrian/bike facilities leading to El Morro School
- Incorporate better pedestrian connections

View Preservation

- Maintain the views from Hotel Laguna
- Preserve Main Beach's role as the "window to the sea"
- Preserve views of water from Downtown, no more 2-3 story buildings

Municipal Services

- Provide services for the homeless
- Help mitigate homeless issues in Downtown
- Take down or improve restroom facilities at Main Beach
- Enhance the public library

Infrastructure

- Incorporate green infrastructure – bioswales, recycle water programs
- Move power lines underground
- Add wheelchair/stroller access to connect Heisler Park and Main Beach
- Place recycling bins in Downtown

Environment

- Restore the creek
- Provide access to the creek

Downtown City Parking Lot

At a Downtown City parking lot (Lot 4 – Ocean Avenue west Lot A), a community engagement activity was conducted to gather input about what residents and visitors wanted to see at the parking lot. Participants were asked to complete the statement, “I wish this was...” for the parking lot.

I WISH THIS WAS...

- Bike lane access
- Cafes with outdoor seating
- Additional parking
- Greenspace and outdoor patio
- Small trees that require minimal maintenance
- Restaurant with outdoor seating
- Space for live music
- Small hotel with views of the ocean
- Community garden
- Park space that linked to Forest Avenue
- Not changed
- Spanish style courtyard with fountains, bench seating and small amphitheater
- A pocket park, such as Paley in New York City, which incorporates a large focal water wall, tables, chairs, and beautiful patio trees for shade.

Dichotomies

One of the topics discussed was an idea of trades offs or opposites. The City and MIG listened to feedback to identify common themes. The common themes identified by participants are listed below.

- Tourism vs. Local (retail)
- Historic vs. Modern Architecture
- Add Downtown housing vs. restrict additional housing
- More parking vs. less parking
- Street access vs. street closure
- Low building heights vs. increased building heights
- Economic growth vs. static economy
- Building regulation vs. deregulation
- Views to rooftops areas vs. private use areas
- Homeless exclusion vs. creation of social programs

Common Themes

- Maintain charm and character of a distinct beach community
- Preserve historic buildings
- Active, outdoor dining (cafes, restaurants and bars)
- Good transit
- Celebrate Art! Artistic!
- Park and street programming
- Great alley network
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety and improved bike facilities
- Enhanced open spaces and community gathering areas

Additional Ideas

- Community gardens
- Dog-friendly streets and parks
- Access for all - particularly artists and locals
- Festival, shared streets

III. Visual Preference Survey

Favorite types of buildings, alleys and open space/parks/streets as determined by the visual preference exercise at the Pop-Up Downtown Workshop and Plan Trolley events.

Preferred buildings types in Laguna Beach:



Lumberyard Mall



Water District Building

Preferred alley types in Laguna Beach:



Peppertree Lane



Seattle Night Alley

Preferred street, open space and plaza types in Laguna Beach:



Pedestrian Strolling Street



Café Square

IV. Reference to Existing Downtown Specific Plan

Each category represents one or more sections of the existing Downtown Specific Plan:

Village Character

Village Character III-1
Identity as an Arts Colony III-9

Downtown Commercial Uses

Downtown Commercial Uses III-12
Re-Use and Intensification III-17
Civic Art District III-30

Building Character

Housing III-29
Second Story Residential IV-17
Building Height IV-18
Scale and Compatibility IV-19
Materials IV-21
Windows IB-22
Roofs IV-23
Balconies IV-24
Awning/Marquees IV-25
Colors IV-27
Building and Street Lighting IB-28

Alleyways

Pedestrian access from Alleys IV-16

Parking Circulation and Public Transit

Parking, Circulation and Public Transit III-19
Parking IV-9
Parking Lighting IV-11
Loading Facilities IV-12
Interaccessibility IV-14

Public Park/Open Spaces

Courtyards IV-15

Landscaping/Streetscape

Landscaping/Streetscape IV-7

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Parking, Circulation and Public Transit III-19
Municipal Services III-23

View Preservation

Site Relationship and Views IV-5

Municipal Services

Municipal Services III-23

Infrastructure

Hazard Planning III-26
Trash, Storage and Equipment Areas IV-13

Environment

Central Bluffs (III-33)