

Item #4
08/18/20

Official Comments from Reclaiming Our Downtown

Delivered by Co-Chair, Dan Ondrasek

(Madam Mayor), Vice Mayor Hardy, Councilmembers, City Management, Planning and Staff,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak

My name is Dan Ondrasek and I am Co-Chair of Reclaiming Our Downtown.

The reason we are here is this July 29th letter in response to the request of Core members of ROD, OQRA, and multiple members of the DCTF to ask for City Staff **begin discussions** with State and County officials about the potential to relocate the County Courthouse located directly on TOP of what was **Downtown Santa Clara's original Main Street.**

The abridged answer: "During the 2020 City Priority Meeting January 31st, 2020... Council's response was 'no action (will take place) on the Courthouse; further action is not permitted unless Council has approved terms for staff to negotiate.'"

I represent our group today in a **formal** request of City Council to give explicit direction to City Management to **begin discussions** with State and County officials on the feasibility to relocate the Courthouse. We also request that no fewer than two DCTF members are in attendance at all discussions, and that they take place twice monthly.

Lastly, Reclaiming Our Downtown asks that Council has a study session and a vote on this with 30 days of today. (September 17th)

The courthouse is underutilized and the State have (this month) closed two other count houses. That building is the only thing standing in the way of Santa Clara beginning with a Six-block Downtown vs. a Two-Block Downtown. A Two-block development is a Mall. The people that I have worked beside have put in tens of thousands of volunteer hours over these 4 plus years for no other reason than to return a magnificent Downtown to their home town. We deserve more than a Mall.

We are just asking for City management to spend an hour every couple of weeks to explore this possibility. We will NEVER know the outcome until we sit down and explore all options. And we all might be pleasantly surprised.

I thank you all in advance for your continued support with Downtown in approving this request.

3:03



DAN ONDRASEK

RECLAIMING OUR DOWNTOWN



July 29, 2020

Dear DCTF, OQRA, ROD leaders, and the Community:

Thank you for your letter. The City fully believes that community engagement is an integral part of the Downtown Precise Plan process to produce a final plan that is broadly supported by the community and provides a clear common vision for the development of the area over the next 20 to 30 years. The development of the Precise Plan will include several meetings covering multiple topics with the DCTF, who serve as representatives of the community throughout the Plan process. As stated at the start of the Downtown Precise Plan planning process, the DCTF will provide guidance on key decisions for the Plan:

Role: To represent a range of community stakeholders and interests and help guide the overall direction of the Precise Plan by providing:

- ***High-level direction on the Plan concepts at key points;***
- ***Guidance on the results of the public engagement activities; and***
- ***Recommendations on key policy topics.***

In addition to the DCTF, as described in the planning process, outreach activities include separate focus groups for potential developers and other representatives of the community, and direct community input through community meetings, workshops, on-line surveys and public hearings.

The City has heard and understands your concerns regarding the format of Task Force meetings thus far. Accordingly, staff have been working with the consultant to adapt future Task Force meetings to utilize a more engaging format and to expand opportunities for input from Task Force members. In response to the concerns outlined in your letter, the City provides the following responses:

- DCTF needs transparency from City/Developers, as well as other “closed door” meetings with property owners, so they can have an understanding and answer to the “realities” each developer/landowner presents.

While staff may meet with developers or other stakeholders in non-public meetings to provide information and/or collect input, information gained at these meetings will be reported back to the DCTF and all decisions as to the contents of the Downtown

Precise Plan will be made at public meetings, including the DCTF meetings and Planning Commission and City Council meetings. Developers and property owners must determine whether they would like to meet with the DCTF. This is based on personal preference and the topic planned for discussion. We support transparency, but personal privacy, as well as, property owner rights need to be honored.

- With regards to the courthouse, we need staff to immediately reach out to County/State officials and inform them that the City plans to return the Downtown. Collectively, we need to understand what the State's plan is for the property, and what they will need from the City when we are ready to redevelop the parcel.

During the 2020 City Council Priority Setting Session held on January 30-31, 2020 a member of the Downtown Task Force, Dan Ondrasek requested that the City Council pursue a conversation about relocating the courthouse; the Council did not take action on the request. Additionally, during the review of the Council Priorities with the full Council it was confirmed that Downtown Revitalization was already in progress and further confirmed that, "New concepts [regarding Downtown Revitalization] continue to come up, and I just want to make confirmed that this assumes the City Hall is in its current location and no action on the courthouse." Real estate negotiations or further action is not permitted unless Council has approved terms for staff to negotiate.

- DCTF needs to hold collaborative meetings with all stakeholders – Schedule meetings with property owners, DCTF members, planners, and City staff to work on designs together instead of working in silos.

At the next DCTF meeting we can discuss who you would like to meet with, the purpose and agenda for each meeting, and then staff can work to schedule meetings accordingly.

- Understand that the Franklin Street Easement is indeed in the City of Santa Clara budget and a timeline for implementation.

In June the City Council approved a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget that includes funding for acquisition of the Franklin Street Easement (See attached excerpt of CIP budget for reference). This funding is only for acquisition of the easement and does not include any funding for design or construction. The City's intent is to proceed with acquisition this fiscal year, however the property will continue to operate as it currently does until a design and construction project is funded. The City's intent is to link implementation of the new street with redevelopment of properties within the Downtown Precise Plan area.

- We need to openly discuss how the Downtown's infrastructure can be funded.

This is a topic that is included as a part of the planning process. City staff and the consultant have been working on estimates of infrastructure costs and we will bring this topic to the DCTF once we are prepared to discuss. City staff agree that this is an important and unfunded issue.

- We would like to review the process and procedures of future public outreach and DCTF's involvement.

The scope of work for the consultant was determined at the start of the planning process. The scope of work detailed the public outreach process, which was provided to the DCTF for their review and includes outreach activities such as separate focus groups for potential developers and other representatives of the community, and direct community input through community meetings, workshops, on-line surveys and public hearings.

Staff will add this as a discussion item at the next DCTF meeting to hear your ideas and determine how they can be integrated into the process.

The City is committed to the development of a Downtown Precise Plan fully based upon the vision and values of our community, including a central leadership role for the DCTF to identify that vision. We ask that you understand that the process will include measured and strategic steps that take time to implement. The City has listened to your concerns and will make adjustments to the planning process as we continue with this effort, working with the DCTF and other stakeholders on the broad spectrum of interests to advance this effort. Additionally, during these unusual times the planning process for the Precise Plan is going to require new approaches for its development, which will require changing our approach with each step that we take. This includes utilizing new methods of public engagement, such as the "Meeting Out of the Box" small group discussions that were facilitated earlier this summer. We are thankful for your participation in that effort and are open to other engagement methods and opportunities as we move forward.

Sincerely,



For Andrew Crabtree
Community Development Director