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DATE: January 14, 2020  
TO: Downtown Plan Advisory Committee  
Eric Lee, Planner  
Sherri Metzker, Principal Planner  
FROM: Cheryl Essex, Planning Commission Liaison  
SUBJECT: Downtown Davis Specific Plan Public Review Draft Comments

I have appreciated the trust placed in me as the Planning Commission liaison to the DPAC. While I cannot speak on behalf of the Commission, I share these personal ideas and observations based on my expertise as an urban and park planner and landscape architect. These comments are in addition to the multiple written and verbal comments I have made over the course of the planning process. I have tried not to repeat comments offered by others or offer my opinion of others' comments.

The Downtown Davis Specific Plan is a big lift—a challenge for our town to reach consensus on a vision for a vibrant downtown as the hub of economic activity in a changing world. There is a lot to like about this plan, even as we discuss and debate what we might not like. I look forward to further public input on this plan, the opportunity to discuss at the Planning Commission, the environmental review process, and finally, the City Council's final direction which will allow this plan to be implemented.

**Topic 1—Mobility**

Transportation infrastructure has been the driving force behind development throughout the world and is likely the single most expensive and important investment of city funds in downtown redevelopment. I have several concerns about the transportation infrastructure plans presented in the draft. Unfortunately, the BTSSC liaison to DPAC has changed several times, so I'm unsure whether adequate and consistent input has been provided. I offer these observations and ideas:

- A. The estimated number of street parking spaces should be shown for each block based on the street sections proposed. A simple table comparing existing vs. proposed can provide clarity to plan reviewers.
- B. I support efforts to strengthen funding for transit and increase street parking for business patrons. Downtown employers might be required to provide a flexibility subsidy to underwrite either a Unitrans, Yolobus or Amtrak pass, not just for Unitrans.
- C. A stronger, more robust transit system will be necessary to meet the goals of the mobility plan. Now, Intercity Route 42 comes no closer than the Fifth and F Street intersection. Routing Yolobus into the Heart of the City and closer to the train depot would make transit more attractive for our Woodland neighbors. Should F Street

become a Transit Priority Corridor? Would YCTD consider routing buses further south on F Street as demand increases?

- D. To enliven the train depot area, improve convenience and offer value-added services which generate sales tax revenue; the west side of H Street seems to be a good location for sidewalk cafes, restaurants and bars. Storefronts (and maybe 90° parking stalls) could be required along this stretch during redevelopment.
- E. Third Street is proposed to be a “shared street”, yet it carries bus and vehicle traffic from east Second Street into downtown. Third Street is an important connector to east Second Street businesses, South Davis (via Mace Blvd) and potentially the ARC. Increasing transit options along this corridor will become necessary over time to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use, yet the “shared street” concept will increase congestion. Should Third Street become a Transit Priority Corridor between Old East Davis and E Street? The EIR should clarify the traffic impacts and consider an alternative for Third Street which accommodates smoother vehicle traffic flow.
- F. Delivery trucks need easy access in and out of downtown. Right now, delivery trucks block streets and don’t seem to use the abundant designated loading zones (maybe too small?). What if we provided larger loading zones along E and F Streets, and along Third Street between Old East Davis and E Street, to provide central access and easy connections in and out of downtown?
- G. E Street between First and Third is proposed to be a “shared street”, even though it is a major vehicle entry point to downtown from the freeway and from South Davis. Reducing street width and vehicle speed along this stretch will likely increase congestion and frustration for downtown shoppers and residents, as well as hinder emergency and transit vehicles. The EIR should clarify the traffic impacts and consider an alternative which accommodates smoother vehicle traffic flow.
- H. As the university develops further, vehicle traffic where First Street meets A and B Streets is likely to increase congestion within an already awkward circulation pattern. A traffic circle in this area might ease circulation. May it be beneficial to reset A Street traffic to one way southbound? Creating a southbound bicycle route along A Street from Eighth to First might reduce traffic conflicts, especially along a narrow stretch of B Street between Eighth and Russell.

## **Topic 2—Economic Development**

I continue to be concerned about the lack of focus on economic development in the plan. Creating an Entertainment District might help focus and prioritize downtown economic development. This District should require higher quality building and paving materials along the streetscape with a defined style or theme (for example, an agriculture theme could support food tourism such as that envisioned in the [Food and Economic Development in Davis](#) report). Placing one edge/end of this district at the train station could help support train tourism, so either Second or G Streets might be most appropriate for this use. One consideration is having the ability to close off the street for festivals and street fairs without disrupting transit services.

**Topic 3—Trees**

For large shade trees to thrive and provide the benefits of cleaner air, cooler pavement, reduced heat loads, and healthier people, they need room to grow. As a landscape architect, I recommend either increasing the minimum size of street and parking lot tree planters to 6 ft x 8 ft or requiring structural soil and/or suspended pavement so roots can stretch out. The City needs to make a long-term funding commitment to maintain its urban forest.

**Topic 4—Building façade**

Allowable building façade materials along the streetscape should be identified.

**Topic 5—University/Rice Lane Neighborhood**

I recommend that the large, dated apartment complex at the southwest corner of Russell and B Streets be rezoned Neighborhood--Medium.

Thank you for considering these comments.

*EnD*