

Members of the advisory committee,

In 1967 I began graduate school here in chemistry and followed this with Post-Doctoral research in Biochemistry. I worked in Aerospace for a few years then in 1978 started my own company in Folsom making custom circuit boards, while still living in Davis. I retired from this business in 2002.

We have two children who have gone through the Davis school system and U.C.D. Summarizing, I am an experienced businessman with a background in science.

Suggestions

1. There is no summary of the Specific Plan document. The original document is hard to read online due to small font size and poor coloring. Even the printed document is hard to read due to coloring over text.
I would suggest the document should be printed by the city (off set print) and be available there for free. I would strongly recommend it be summarized. At present, the dispersal of information is very inconvenient.
2. The infrastructure of neighborhood bike paths and roads leading to downtown is poor in many places. For instance, Covell Blvd. between F Street and Sycamore Lane is in terrible shape. But it is better than the parallel bike paths. My point is biking downtown has to be supported by decent peripheral paths.
3. Discussing city infrastructure, this whole town needs fiber optic cable that meets today's standards of data transfer.
4. At present, it is economically challenging to develop in Downtown due to high land costs and a regulatory process that is lengthy and uncertain. Both are very important. I am not sure what to do about high costs. Streamlining the regulatory process is brought up a number of times in this document. This needs to be assigned a very high priority because as long as I can remember this has been a complaint from contractors. I have had several contractors not willing to even work in Davis. I continually hear complaints about permits requiring months to get approved. This has to change.

The Specific Plan

1. Building height proposed includes some 4 story buildings without minimum parking. The county of Kauai in Hawaii has limited buildings to 30' for residential and 50' for commercial. The result is very attractive without urban canyons.
2. Before actually building flat roofed, garden topped buildings, I strongly recommend getting information from functioning structures that are in use. The cost of a flat roof that can support a garden's dirt and water weight may

be prohibitive. Also, after several years of use, what is the “leak” situation? Flat roofs are notorious for leaks under good conditions.

3. Access to commercial areas is key to merchants’ sales. We need arteries to carry thru traffic to their desired destinations.

East-West Russell (5th), Covell,
North-South Poleline, F Street, Anderson,

These arteries do a pretty good job. I would have good bike paths on these existing roads. Then they need to be kept in good repair. If the focus of new and smooth paths is only downtown, will you attract customers from other city areas? New paths 1st to 5th and A to H do not bring people downtown.

4. The city needs to beware that planting large scale trees (Sycamores, Etc.) within a few feet of an asphalt bike path will not work long term.
5. The challenge the downtown plan faces is being aware of the different population segments they serve.

- a. Young Adults
- b. Families
- c. Seniors

People choosing to live downtown with no automobile must be fit enough to walk to shops and fit enough to carry their purchases home. They will need some form of transport to appointments outside the range of walking and biking. Young adults and young seniors are probably going to be the highest density residents.

Family groups and less mobile seniors are always going to prefer a parking spot near their destination and a cart to carry children, purchases. Also, electric sit down scooters would be helpful. The city needs to offer retail opportunities to these residents also.

6. In 2012 the city of Davis had sales tax revenue on retail sales on average of \$7,062 per capita. The city of Woodland had revenue from retail sales of \$12,498 per capita. What is the difference in shopping opportunities? I have never personally shopped at Costco in Woodland without seeing other fellow Davis residents there. There is a need for this style shopping and it certainly would be profitable for the city. This shopping would not be downtown but the income from it would help the city.
7. Most of the proposed “improvements”, i.e. “mixed use areas” seem to involve more buildup spaces and less parking. Davis rents are already higher than surrounding areas. We seem to be catering to a very affluent younger

- population. If that is the result, is this equitable for all tax paying Davisites? Will it raise the necessary monies to maintain our cities infrastructure?
8. I keep seeing references that enhanced surroundings for businesses downtown will justify higher rents. With this in mind one must consider what this does to a business. For a business downtown facing increased rents, unless sales income increases, material cost will not change nor will labor costs. Overhead is the only change and it will increase at the expense of profits. One of our problems in Davis is retailers staying in business downtown. Making it more expensive to operate with higher rents may make this problem worse.
 9. Paid parking is better than no parking. At least the affluent will be able to shop downtown.
 10. Retention areas for water runoff involve a host of issues: maintenance, mosquitos and water quality. There is no discussion of the ongoing cost for such a system. Has a successful system been studied? How large of an input did the system have? It seems unlikely enough could be saved to justify the expense. Where are the numbers? The filtrate will have to be removed periodically or the system will quit working.
 11. Laundry water is chemically laden. Any bleach in the water will kill plants. It should not be recycled.
 12. Roof runoff will not amount to much due to storage difficulties.
 13. Additional building costs, more plumbing, water storage, etc., makes Davis a more expensive area to do business in. Again, we see higher overheads.
 14. One stated justification, for higher landlord/merchant overhead, is that business will increase as we recover from the 2008 recession. Since a lot of the customer base in Davis is employed, or retired from a public employer, we did not experience significant job loss here at that time. Therefore it will be hard to see an improvement. The student customer base is quite affluent, but seasonal. This is another problem for businesses trying to keep operating during slow periods.
 15. Before building commercial or residential spaces downtown, cost per square foot at this time needs to be established and probable rents estimated. Davis real estate is for the affluent. Downtown prices will most likely be expensive. This information is necessary to visualize who will be able to afford these proposed spaces.
 16. In section 8.3, it discusses "pay as you go" from increased city funding due to the enhancements. This is an excellent idea and should be considered very

heavily. No one goes into debt here. It also means no disappointments if an expected increase in funds does not materialize.

17. I have a real question as to whether reducing CO₂ with solar is economically feasible. Not including gas lines and relying totally on electrical in new structures is a problematic idea. Currently solar costs, including the panels, inverter, labor and permit fees are about \$3.18 a watt in Yolo County. I retrieved this from what I can see on an internet search and it seems logical as the national range is listed several places as between \$2.90 and \$3.20 per watt. A 4 Kw system would cost \$12,720 before credits and likely around 70% of this or \$8,904 after credits. This would be a minimum size for a 1200-1500 residential structure. Commercial would likely take a larger system for heating, cooling and lights. They will not produce much in the winter.
18. My guess is that in 20 years there is a chance that energy will be produced by reforming methane (natural gas) in an online system producing H₂ and CO₂. I would expect the hydrogen to go directly into a fuel cell producing electricity and the CO₂ to be captured. A 4 or 5 Kw system will likely compete with solar and produce electricity rain or shine. This would require natural gas lines.

Suggestions from Residents we spoke with

1. More movie parking
2. Turn FedEx parking lot into a multi-storage parking facility.
3. Make 3rd street, for several blocks, a “no drive” walking area.
4. Students (~40,000 total at this point) clog downtown parking. The University needs to offer outlying parking with jitney service to central campus. Many students park downtown with bikes on their car and take their bikes and ride to campus.
5. Everyone we spoke to emphatically wanted more parking not less.

Summary

It would be helpful to be given economics facts gathered from “actual” car-free experiments in other cities. What has benefited existing merchants? What problems were encountered? How has an area like this affected the cities’ finances?

There is a lack of solid numbers on the economics for the cost of these changes.

Davis has many unique advantages already: biweekly farmers market (why a roof top garden/), and many existing bike paths and parks. Let’s build on what we have.

Lastly, all segments of the population deserve consideration.

Ross Fitzgerald