



DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES PUBLIC WORKSHOP SUMMARY

January 18, 2018, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Benicia Public Library, Dona Benicia Room

1. Welcome & Introductions

Suzanne Thorsen, Principal Planner, welcomed those in attendance.

Noré Winter, Winter & Company, provided an overview of the project and introduced the activities for the meeting.

Seven community members were in attendance.

2. Individual Exercise

Participants were invited to complete individual worksheets for discussion. The participants' feedback is summarized in 3., below.

3. Facilitated Discussion

Preservation Goals for the Downtown Historic District. Participants discussed goals for the downtown district, including commercial and residential areas, and made the following key comments.

- Preserve the integrity of historic architecture. Historic buildings should be restored or preserve their original look.
- The integrity of the district should be preserved while allowing for practical use, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability
- The character and style of non-contributing buildings should be recognized; they should not be forced to be something that they aren't.
- Work with what is there and recognize the character/style of non-contributing buildings. Changes should be compatible.
- Present information to the public in such a way that people are inspired to take on preservation/restoration projects.

Character Areas. Participants discussed geographic areas of the historic district which may have a unique character. Several areas were discussed, but there was not strong consensus on a distinct architectural character.

- Upper First Street has more offices and less pedestrian traffic.
- J Street to D Street has more pedestrian usage.
- West J - West K – East H have lots and alleys

Identifying Successes and Issues. Participants identified recent successes and issues with renovation and new construction projects.

- New house at corner of West I Street and West Second Street. Some participants felt that it is in keeping with the style of the neighborhood

- particularly on the front facade; while others commented that the length/mass of the house is out of proportion with the area.
- The challenge of encourage creative/contemporary design versus compatibility with historic homes was discussed.

4. Visual Preference Activity

Commercial

Styles identified as compatible with the First Street commercial district were generally two stores in height with a scale and form that complements the surrounding area.

Architectural styles identified as compatible were suggestive of a historic style and invited pedestrian activity from the street. Features noted as appropriate included traditional materials (stucco, lap siding), clear customer entries and storefront awnings; simple overall detailing; windows along the lower and upper story facades facing the street; framing around windows; and “modules” reflecting traditional storefront width.

Modern and single story buildings were identified as incompatible. Features identified as out of place in the downtown include: Deep overhanging eaves that are inconsistent with the downtown; buildings that emphasize vertical elements or exceed two stories; contemporary louvered awnings or flat canopies; lack of windows, particularly at the street level;

Multi-Family Residential and Live/Work

The participants were asked to evaluate transitional buildings for multi-family use or live/work. These types of buildings would typically be located immediately to the east or west of First Street.

Styles that employ traditional rooflines, scale and residential features (such as porches and balconies) were preferred. While simple detailing was viewed favorably, bland and repetitive facades received a negative response. Landscaped setback areas were preferred. As with commercial buildings, participants commented that contemporary buildings and buildings with a vertical emphasis were out of character with the district.

Single-Family Residential

The participants were asked to evaluate single family/duplex buildings that would be located in the residential area of the historic district. These types of buildings would typically be located immediately to the east or west of First Street.

Styles that employ techniques to reduce the appearance of mass (building modulation, covered porches, recessed garages and gable or hip roofs) were identified as appropriate. Simple architectural design and variation in materials and form were identified as appropriate. A strong vertical emphasis, street-facing garages and height exceeding two stories were identified as incompatible.

5. Adjourn