



Staff Report

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TO: Urban Renewal Agency Board

THROUGH: Steve Powers, Executive Director

FROM: Kristin Retherford, Urban Development Director

SUBJECT:

Downtown Salem Streetscape Design Plan Update

Ward(s): Ward 1

Board Member(s): Kaser

Neighborhood(s): CANDO

ISSUE:

Riverfront-Downtown Urban Renewal Area Downtown Streetscape Design Plan Update

RECOMMENDATION:

Information Only

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:

On February 13, 2018, the City held a second open house for community members to give input on initial recommendations for improving the look and feel of downtown sidewalks. Those who would like to see the common themes expressed by the community to date may visit:

[<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/downtownsalem>](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/downtownsalem)

About 200 people have attended the project's open houses and focus group meetings, and have expressed enthusiasm for building on Salem's existing character and architecture. While some individuals have expressed interest in narrowing downtown streets, the scope of the project does not include impacting travel lanes. However, the designs being developed can always be expanded in the future.

A street's functional classification determines what type of traffic should use the street - regional, intra-city, or neighborhood. The type of traffic combined with the expected traffic volumes determines whether a street is a Parkway, Major Arterial, Minor Arterial, Collector, or Local Street.

The downtown core has a high concentration of streets with higher classifications: Ferry, Trade, and Front Streets are classified as Parkways and are also State Highways on the National Highway System. Major Arterials are high capacity streets that primarily serve regional and intercity travel. Commercial, Liberty, High, Church, State, Court, Center and Marion are Major Arterial streets.

Within this group of major arterials, Commercial, Liberty, Center, and Marion Streets carry higher volumes than High, Church, State and Court Streets. For this reason, the Central Salem Mobility Study looked to High, Church, State and Court Streets for opportunities to enhance multi-modal facilities and recommended conversion to two-way operation. Commercial, Liberty, Center, and Marion do not have capacity to serve their intended functions with fewer travel lanes. Since streets are governed through the Salem Transportation Plan, any revisions would need to be addressed through amendments to that Plan.

Additionally, the City has established a Congestion Relief Task Force to study potential ways for the City to relieve traffic congestion in the Salem core and advise the City Council on means to improve traffic flow in the downtown area. The streetscape design process is mindful of this initiative and designs are being developed in a manner that will not impact potential congestion relief efforts while trying to maximize opportunities to improve the pedestrian experience.

Trees, connections to places, street crossings, art, and aesthetics have been popular topics. People are very interested in seeing a greener and softer streetscape. They have also suggested that day and evening activities and winter vs. summer seasons have different needs that should be considered in a streetscape design. Comments have also been received about creating interest and space for various age groups and abilities to attract families with young children downtown, to recognize the needs and interest of older residents living in or near downtown, and to understand that more people are expected to live downtown in the future.

Ongoing maintenance of a new streetscape with increased greenery is a common concern. Staff have already started talking internally about maintenance of added landscaping. The Urban Development and Public Works Departments will review how ongoing maintenance can be addressed for any action or improvement and plan to understand the needs before moving forward on an individual project.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The Downtown Salem Streetscape Design Plan will help to guide improvements over time. The Plan will include the framework for improvements the community would like to see added to the streetscape or sidewalks. Construction of these improvements would need to be phased in over time using Riverfront-Downtown Urban Renewal funds. Ideally, a Plan will be adopted in late spring/early summer that outlines some initial projects. Subsequently, work will be done on the design details, costs, phasing, and construction plans. At this time it is still unclear what the initial projects will be, but recommendations will be developed over the next few months.

The next Open House is scheduled for April 18, 2018 at 5:30 pm, at the Courthouse Square Building

in the Senator Room.

Sheri Wahrgren
Downtown Revitalization Manager

Attachments:
None.