

El Paso Area-Wide Plan – Town Hall Discussion

2021-04-29 - Participant Notes

<i>Discussion Items</i>	<i>Participants' Responses (summarized)</i>
<p>What is missing from downtown that is needed to recruit customers, businesses, and new residents – while supporting existing residents?</p>	<p><i>Jennifer</i> – There is a shortage of quality, well-priced, functional, move-in-ready leasing space for businesses (especially small businesses). The buildings tend to need a lot of updating, especially in terms of utilities. This adds a disproportionate cost to owners trying to lease or interested buyers/leasees. The strategies also need to address parking in Downtown –for example, a lot of designated street parking is unavailable because development projects bag meters for extended periods of time, even when no construction is underway, or the project is stalled or complete.</p> <p><i>Sito</i> – Downtown is missing people and human activity. Construction activities and the closure of the borders have affected human activity. The Plaza [San Jacinto Plaza] used to be much more active.</p> <p><i>Marco</i> – He loves the historical and cultural aspects of Downtown. It's unique and beautiful. Gentrification is affecting Downtown – the community needs a people-oriented approach to revitalization.</p>
<p>What strategies to you prefer (new construction/ redevelopment, and/or adaptive reuse of existing buildings)</p>	<p><i>The consultant team explained that their approach may include strategies to focus on adaptive reuse of existing buildings while promoting redevelopment of underutilized properties for new uses – the participants were asked if they concur.</i></p> <p><i>Several participants agreed with the consultants' approach to prioritize adaptive reuse of existing buildings.</i></p> <p><i>Katherine</i> – Adaptive reuse is the way to go—we can take what exists and make it better. More people attend art events than sporting events—we need more advocacy for the arts. San Jacinto Plaza has attracted some energy to downtown. Aztec Calendar Park (if revitalized) could also bring some new energy to this area (<i>Jennifer also mentioned the revitalization of Aztec Calendar Park and something that could provide some benefit to downtown</i>).</p>
<p>What amenities and services would support downtown vitality</p>	<p><i>Margaret</i> – The amenities and services are dependent on which population segment we are planning for. The City has displaced a lot of community members due to redevelopment projects. Walkability and access to reliable bus service are important.</p> <p><i>Katherine</i> – There needs to be advocacy for the arts – art brings businesses and people. There is a need for basic services like food, delis, and laundry services to serve residents and downtown workers.</p> <p><i>Alderman David C.</i> – In his perception, Downtown is “sad” due to the lack of vibrancy – people are missing. Other cities appear to be livelier. The</p>

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	<p>vacant buildings could be adaptively reused through Opportunity Zoning. We need mixed-income housing. I currently do not have a reason to visit Downtown.</p> <p><i>Commissioner David S.</i>- Access to fresh, healthy food would be a great benefit to those downtown. Need a place where residents / visitors / those who work downtown can pick up fresh fruits and veggies. It's a bit of a healthy food desert and most folks have to walk south of Paisano to get what they need.</p> <p><i>Marlo</i> – There is a need for food and farmers market (to address food insecurities). People need access to healthy food. He requests that Downtown be skateboarder-friendly – perhaps add a formal skate park. Additionally, catering to the arts could have a lot of benefits.</p>
<p>What population segment/household type should we make an extra effort to plan for?</p>	<p><i>Marlo</i> – Focus on “Care Economics” not just economic development. Focus revitalization on helping people not just big businesses. Want to see more young people downtown.</p> <p><i>Jean-Carlo</i> – He lived in San Diego and experienced how development can cause housing prices to increase and displace families. We need a plan to avoid this and assist residents currently living downtown.</p> <p><i>Cemeli</i> – Preserving the neighborhood and community that lives in Central El Paso is very important. We need to address the environmental and historical racism that surrounds us.</p> <p><i>**Many participants expressed a need to serve minority, low-income, and under-represented populations. Additionally, the conversation included discussion of the Chamizal neighborhood and how to address environment injustice practices/outcomes. While the Chamizal neighborhood is outside of the downtown area-wide planning focus area, the team will assist participants interested in submitting a site nomination form for the Chamizal.</i></p>
<p>Follow-up questions or comments / additional data requested</p>	<p><i>**Participants asked the project team to provide more detail about the Diversity Index and the population trend data.</i></p> <p><i>Aldersperson David C.</i> – For San Eli, we were fortunate to receive help from this grant. Didn't cost the City anything to assess the land for brownfields. This property was donated to us and we can now take the next steps for potential redevelopment. University of Kansas could be a great resource for folks interested in additional brownfields work.</p>