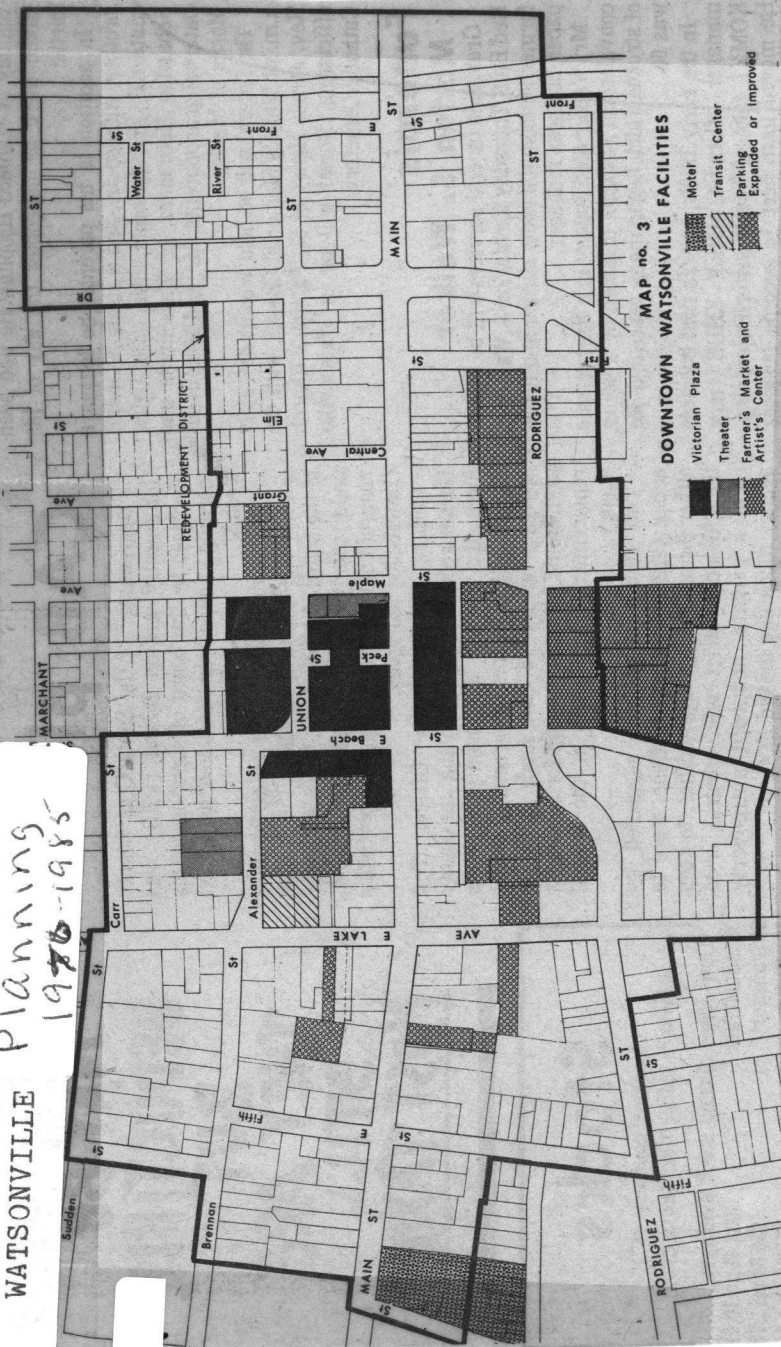


WATSONVILLE
Planning
1976-1985



Map shows suggested locations for projects in downtown of future

City group outlines

plan for dream downtown

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

A dream blueprint for Watsonville's downtown will be outlined tonight to the city council by the Citizens Advisory Committee for downtown revitalization.

Perhaps the most glaring aspect of the wide-ranging report — which the committee will probably have to explain to the council — is the lack of suggestions for implementing the imaginative ideas proposed for redevelopment of the city's core.

Committee members, however, maintain they never intended to present a "how-to-do-it" report.

"This is a program, not a plan," asserts committee chairman Roger Hoffman. The difference, he says, is that a "program" gives workable ideas, while a "plan" shows how they should be carried out.

It would be hard to imagine how the group's proposals could be more ambitious. Among other things, the committee's plan for downtown calls for a "Victorian Village," a "farmers and artists complex," a "performing arts center," and a motel and a twin theatre.

The committee suggests that three acres of land be allotted for the Victorian Village, which the group feels should include antique stores, a museum, restaurants, an historical

display area, an information center and banquet rooms. The prime location for the village, says the committee, is "around or close to" the city plaza.

Structures such as the Marinovich Building, Post Office, Stoesser Buildings, the group points out, would provide an excellent architectural framework for the village. Other Victorian buildings, the committee suggests, could be moved to the plaza area to replace other structures and help "frame" the park.

The farmers and artists complex, says the committee, should be located west of the Grand Auto store and Crocker Bank. The group recommends that the complex consist of an art gallery, amphitheatre, central courtyard area, bandstand, refreshment stand, food booths, farm association offices and arts and crafts workshops.

The best way to provide the community with a performing arts center, says the committee, would be to renovate the Fox Theatre. The theatre, the committee suggests, could be used for first-run movies and, on occasion, plays and other live productions.

A new twin theatre, says the report, "could conceivably be located appropriately almost anywhere in the central business district," but the best spot would be in the middle of the east side of Alexander St. The best place for a new motel, according to the committee, is the north end of the 500 block of Main St.

One thing that's not needed in the downtown now, says the report, is a "sports complex." The development of Ramsay Park and the city's mini-park system, the committee maintains, will be "adequate" for recreational needs. However, the report says that "suitable semi-active game areas such as horseshoes, bocci ball, and badmington should be interjected into the farmers and artists center."

To handle the additional cars that downtown revitalization would generate, the committee has four main suggestions:

—Build a parking structure on the city's Alexander St. lot, and tie the existing Let-tunich-Borina lot together with the municipal lot.

—Develop another municipal lot and-or parking structure behind the 300 and 200 blocks of Main St.

—Encourage Ford's department store and Long's Drugs to build a parking structure which could possibly be combined with a facility serving as a warehouse and office.

—Construct a parking lot near Grant, Union and Maple Sts. (The committee considers this recommendation optional.)

Although some of the committee's ideas might seem exotic, Hoffman contends that through shopper surveys and analysis of economic conditions, the group has determined a "definite need" for each suggested project.

Because the study was in part funded by the National Science Foundation, Hoffman points out, the committee was able to do its research methodically.

To determine the best site for each project, for example, the committee used a decision-making technique known as "impact analysis." The group was helped by Los Gatos consultant Harold Chatland, who has worked with the committee since its inception three years ago.

Basically, the technique involved weighing "positive impacts" of a given site against "negative impacts."

For instance, one positive result of locating the Victorian Village in the city plaza was determined to be "the restoration and preservation of many of the traditional architectural monuments to the history of Watsonville, thereby accenting its cultural past."

But the committee also determined that the plaza would be a bad site for the village since a "multitude of landlords" would be involved, possibly making cooperation and coordination "difficult in terms of achieving the total concept (of the village). The site was chosen, however, because the "positive" points far outweighed the "negative" points.

The committee's report to the council tonight is expected to last about 15 minutes. At the end of the presentation, Hoffman says, the group will request a future study session with the council to discuss "where we go from here."

REFERENCE