

SCHEDULED PRESENTATION 7D
Parks and Recreation Commission
November 5, 2024

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Kelly Gonzalez, Parks & Recreation Director

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SUBJECT: Central Business District Vision Plan Informational Item

PROJECT SUMMARY

The purpose of the Central Business District Vision Plan process is to establish a vision and identify priorities for future district improvements; identify guiding principles for future public and private project proposals; illustrate conceptual solutions to transform the district over time; and to identify implementation steps to achieve the future vision. The Central Business District Vision Plan does not propose specific projects, nor does it rezone any land within the city. No specific development proposals are part of the Vision Plan project.

Transformative ideas have been identified and illustrated to improve the Central Business District and to distinguish it from other areas of the city. Any and all future project implementation steps and proposals will be subject to compliance with the City's General Plan, Zoning Code, and environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Of interest to the Parks and Recreation Commission is the fact that Lembi Park is within the boundaries of the Central Business District. The Plan identifies this as an important amenity and recommends improved connectivity to the rest of the District across Riley (and Glenn) to encourage those attending sports events at the park and aquatic center to access and utilize the commercial district.

BACKGROUND

On April 12, 2022, the City Council approved the use of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to prepare a plan for the Central Business District. Following a request for proposal (RFP) process and interviews, the Council approved two resolutions on August 22, 2023, to allow the project to move forward: 1) authorizing consulting services contract with Jacobs Group for an amount not to exceed \$260,000 to prepare the Plan; and 2) a resolution forming the Central Business District Plan Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

As indicated, the Project covers the Central Business District (see Attachment 1 – Vicinity Map), an area located between East Bidwell and Riley Streets and Sutter Middle School to Blue Ravine.

Public Outreach

Public engagement in the planning process began with the 17-member city council-appointed Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC was made up of stakeholders representing businesses, property owners, housing developers and advocates, residents, recreation and tourism, transportation and accessibility advocates, students, economic development and schools. The CAC met 8 times from October 2023 through October 2024. to discuss a wide range of topics and provide input and recommendations to transform the district.

The CAC identified the following key objectives that the Vision Plan should support:

- Commercial Corridor Revitalization/Economic Development (develop funding incentives and sources)
- Mixed-Use Residential Development creates a buffer with existing single family residential.
- Placemaking and Design (to create a thriving destination)
- Improve Circulation/Mobility (improve streets for all to maintain or improve capacity and movement of traffic flow)
- Safety
- Lighting and landscaping improvements
- Infrastructure improvements

AIM Consulting coordinated outreach efforts which included provided pop-up events, an online survey, newsletters and handouts and other opportunities for public engagement included:

Information from the public mirrored what the CAC would like to see in the district, including additional personal services and economic development opportunities for shopping, dining, and recreation. They would like to see enhanced landscaping and more entertainment opportunities, public gathering spaces and play areas for children. Mobility improvements included continuous sidewalks, enhanced traffic calming and reduced cut-through traffic and better street and pathway lighting.

POLICY/RULE

Numerous General Plan Policies support new mixed-use development throughout the Central Business District, particularly along East Bidwell Street. Mixed-use zoning allows for individual or combined set of uses including office, retail, entertainment, civic, and/or housing. Mixed use development creates nodes of activity that support walkable, urban lifestyles. Mixed-use districts typically provide a diversity of housing types, the kind that often attracts young, educated workers, a demographic critical to the continued economic vitality of Folsom. Empty nesters, who want to stay in their community but no longer want the maintenance or costs associated with a detached home, are attracted to mixed-use districts. Mixed-use designations give property owners additional flexibility. If they choose to redevelop their property, they can choose a range of uses to meet existing or growing market needs. Or they can maintain the existing site uses until the market demands more diverse and intense land use. Attachment 3 includes the General Plan policies pertinent to the Central Business District.

ANALYSIS

The Central Business District was originally called a Master Plan, but at its October 21, 2024 meeting, the Committee unanimously voted to change the name to a Vision Plan. This is similar to the River District, which also renamed their document to a vision plan. The Central Business District Committee felt the change better identified what the document is intending to do and acknowledged that additional work will be needed to implement the plan in the future.

The Vision Plan chapters are organized into existing conditions, transformative ideas/key opportunities for improvement with examples from other jurisdictions or design features and implementation strategies/recommended actions. No specific development is proposed at this time. As development is proposed in the future, it is envisioned that staff will use the document for guidance to ensure that development supports the community's vision for the area.

The CAC vision for the district is for a unique and vibrant destination District that is economically sustainable with events, entertainment, art and a mix of uses including mobility enhancements to support safety, traffic flow and all modes of travel.

Guiding principles outlined in the Vision Plan include

- Sustainable Revitalization
- Destination oriented
- Multi-modal connectivity
- Identity and Placemaking
- Housing

Economic Analysis

As part of the Vision Plan, Bay Area Economics (BAE) provided an economic analysis that showed that the continued growth in the city, and the high spending power of residences provides an opportunity to capture additional spending in the district.

The document identifies market opportunities and discussion of positive influences on tourism, providing better connections to Lembi Park, and potentially establishing hotel use that can support sports tourism. Similarly, various implementation strategies and measures are suggested to initiate community enhancement projects and public/private development opportunities. Ultimately, these are policy decisions that must be directed by future City Council actions.

Land Use Concepts and Design

One transformative idea that the CAC identified to establish a unique identity in the District to set itself apart from the Historic District or the Palladio is to consider a mid-century retro theme. Examples include the South Congress District in Austin Texas and the Funk Zone in Santa Barbara. As part of this, unique sign standards and a retro sign park could be established that show cases retro neon signs. This could assist with branding and identity by:

- Supporting tourism
- Support local business
- Act as an event venue
- Increase community engagement
- Provide creative and artistic expression.

Future Funding

Without redevelopment dollars that were available in the past, funding of the potential improvements is constrained. The City will review its Capital Improvement Program on an ongoing basis to determine mobility and infrastructure improvements. The Appendix includes a table of a list of potential grant funding opportunities that could support some of the implementation measures. In addition, potential future funding could include private/public partnerships, or private funding such as formation of a Business Improvement District, or Business Association that could fund marketing/special events etc.

Mobility and Access

The CAC expressed concern that any future mobility improvements prioritize maintaining through traffic, and were concerned with proposals that might reduce travel lanes. The Vision Plan includes the following:

- Utilization of roundabouts consistent with Council direction and the Roundabout Feasibility Study.
- Conduct a district-wide traffic operations analysis to allow for on street bike lanes, on street parking and or gateway features/pedestrian refuge areas.
- Restripe Wales Drive and Glenn Drive to add on street bicycle lanes
- Enhance District walkability by closing sidewalk gaps, reduce curb cuts and enhance landscaping.
- Evaluate middle school pedestrian safety and access.

Placemaking

The City polled both the public in an online survey and the CAC to determine a better name that would resonate for the district. Many people continued to support the Central Business District name and no single alternative name was supported by the Committee. Therefore, a recommendation of the Vision Plan is that the City hire a Design/Branding consultant in the future, to better articulate branding and place making for the district, and identify signage and wayfinding in support of the retro theme.

Infrastructure

Constraints were identified to both the sewer capacity and infrastructure in the area and storm drain facilities. As funding becomes available the City should upgrade sewer connections and storm drain facilities to facilitate future densification opportunities.

The following are specific recommendations related to Lembi Park:

- New hospitality/hotel uses in the district could support sports tourism This could include a beer garden on public park site with flexible outdoor space for temporary recreational amenities (corn hole, portable pickle ball, skate area etc.
- Capitalize on Lembi park- a design consultant should look for ways to improve connectivity and marketing to take advantage of this important resource and draw visitors into the Central Business District
- Riley Street needs to be improved between the Middle School past Lembi Park for safety purposes
- Develop an Action Plan to ensure implementation of the Vision Plan. The Action Plan should identify measurable goals and milestones, establish annual review/monitoring and reporting by dedicated staff, and engage City Council in setting funding priorities as appropriate.
- Consider phasing roundabout improvements on the Riley Street corridor first before the East Bidwell Street corridor.”
- Improve access to Lembi Park/connectivity to the District. The City should consider additional opportunities to improve access and connectivity between Lembi Park and the rest of the District. As part of District traffic analysis, capital improvement projects qualification, or grant opportunities, evaluate the frontages along Lembi Park to on Riley and Glenn to establish additional controlled crossings for bicycles and pedestrians
- The City should commission a landscape and open space plan or guiding document for the district to guide and enhance the aesthetic beauty and branded experience of being in the District. The plan should establish standards for public realm areas including streets, sidewalks, plazas, pathways, trails, pocket parks and rights of way.
- Partner with local sports organizers and sponsors to explore potential for partnerships with District businesses for post-game events. Expansion of sports amenities, temporary or permanent improvements to Lembi Park-such as street soccer, or sand volleyball or other measures particularly in off-season times of the year to further bring folks into the District.
- Explore the neon park concept by identifying a project champion and determine the scope of the sign project, potential locations, and preliminary costs and funding sources.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Staff provided email notices to more than 80 people requesting notice of Central Business District public meetings and hearings and posted a notice in the Folsom Telegraph. At the time of this staff report, City staff received no additional comments. All material public comments throughout the planning process are posted on the Central Business District Vision Plan webpage: Central Business District Revitalization Efforts | Folsom, CA

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

As described in this report, the City Council appointed the CAC which met throughout the course of the project and provided input, direction, and ultimately recommendations to create the Central District Vision Plan. On October 21st, the CAC considered the Central Business District Vision Plan and provide comments on the Vision Plan (Attachment 3). With these changes the

CAC unanimously recommended to the City Council approval of the Vision Plan. A copy of the Vision Plan with the CAC's comments incorporated is found as Attachment 4.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff has determined that the project qualifies for a Statutory Exemption in accordance with Section 15262 – Feasibility and Planning Studies of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. As a visioning document, the Vision Plan does not alter existing zoning, development standards, or other regulations that would have a legally binding effect on later activities within the Plan Area. No specific project is proposed at this time. As future development/redevelopment is proposed in the District, environmental review would occur at that time for any specific project in accordance with CEQA.

RECOMMENDED PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION ACTION

This is an informational item and therefore, no formal action is required. This item was referred to the Commission for its information since Lembi Park is included within the boundaries of the District. This differs from the River District which identified more specific actions related to Parks and Recreation, including open space, recreation improvements and trail access. No specific projects are identified as part of the Central Business District Vision Plan to Lembi Park.

The City Council will consider this project at its November 12, 2024 meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Summary of General Plan Policies related to the Central Business District
3. Community Advisory Committee Recommendations 10-21-24
4. Central Business District Vision Plan (Public Hearing Draft Dated October 23, 2024)

ATTACHMENT 1



ATTACHMENT 2

General Plan Policies Related to the Central Business District

The following are specific goals and policies that help provide guidance to the Central Business District:

LU 3.1.1 Mixed-Use Nodes Encourage mixed-use development in nodes located at major intersections that include housing, open space, and offices. This development pattern should reflect best practices in mixed-use development, in contrast to strip retail developments along corridors.

LU 3.1.2 Districts and Corridors Encourage development of diverse mixed-use districts and corridors that address different community needs and market sectors, provide a variety of housing opportunities, and create distinct and unique areas of the city.

LU 3.1.3 Mixed-Use Design Encourage mixed-use developments to limit the number of access driveways, minimize building setbacks, and require active edges on ground floor spaces adjacent to sidewalks.

LU 3.1.4 Compatibility with Adjoining Uses Encourage development and redevelopment of higher-density mixed-use development within districts and along corridors to be compatible with adjacent land uses, particularly residential uses

LU 3.1.5 East Bidwell Street Encourage new development along East Bidwell Street by creating a stronger mixed-use development pattern, both horizontal and vertical, with an emphasis on medium- and higher-density housing, while also addressing local and citywide demand for retail and services. RDR Central Commercial District

LU 3.1.6 Central Commercial District Encourage development of mixed-use projects that create a walkable, vibrant district along East Bidwell Street between Coloma Street and Blue Ravine Road.

LU 3.1.5 East Bidwell Street Encourage new development along East Bidwell Street by creating a stronger mixed-use development pattern, both horizontal and vertical, with an emphasis on medium- and higher-density housing, while also addressing local and citywide demand for retail and services.

LU 4.1.6 Parking Management Develop long-term parking management approaches that decrease the amount of land dedicated to surface parking while maintaining parking capacity. Solutions may include parking structures or shuttles to nearby parking.

Goal LU 6.1 Allow for a variety of housing types and mix of uses that provide choices for Folsom residents, create complete and livable neighborhoods, and encourage walking and biking.

LU 6.1.1 Complete Neighborhoods Encourage the establishment of “complete neighborhoods” that integrate schools, childcare centers, parks, shopping and employment centers, and other amenities.

LU 6.1.3 Efficiency Through Density Support an overall increase in average residential densities in identified urban centers and mixed-use districts. Encourage new housing types to shift from lower-density, large-lot developments to higher-density, small-lot and multifamily developments, as a means to increase energy efficiency, conserve water, reduce waste, as well as increase access to services and amenities (e.g., open space) through an emphasis of mixed uses in these higher-density developments.

LU 6.1.10 Enhanced Walking and Biking Where volume-to-capacity analysis demonstrates that bike lanes and pedestrian improvements can be included in the public right-of-way, encourage opportunities to promote walking and biking in existing suburban neighborhoods through improvements such as:

- introducing new pedestrian and bicycle connections;
- adding bike lanes and designating and signing bike routes;
- narrowing streets where they are overly wide;
- introducing planting strips and street trees between the curb and sidewalk; or
- introducing appropriate traffic-calming improvements.

LU 7.1.1 Standards for Commercial Uses Require new commercial uses to be subject to design and parking standards for:

1. The number and location of allowed curb cuts;
2. Landscaping or parking areas;
3. The location, size, number, and construction of signs; and
4. The configuration and design of commercial buildings.
5. Provision of designated, defined bicycle routes from public right-of-way to bicycle parking/pedestrian corridors.

LU 7.1.2 Enhance Vitality of Commercial Areas Encourage development of underutilized and vacant parcels in commercial zones to improve the aesthetic appearance and enhance the vitality of commercial areas.

LU 7.1.7 Hotels Encourage the development of hotels and related convention facilities within commercial and mixed-use districts, with an emphasis on high-quality development.

Goal LU 9.1 Encourage community design that results in a distinctive, high-quality built environment with a character that creates memorable places and enriches the quality of life of Folsom’s residents

LU 9.1.1 Combine Driveways Encourage property owners in retail corridors to reduce the number of driveways along arterial roads. When possible, property owners should cooperate

through reciprocal access and parking or similar agreements linking parking lots to minimize traffic congestion on the arterial road.

LU 9.1.2 Retail Development Design Standards Develop, maintain, and implement design standards for retail development to ensure retail districts have well-developed landscape buffers, decorative treatments to building facades, and a variety of building heights and roof lines

LU 9.1.3 Eliminate Large Blocks Encourage the insertion of new streets or pedestrian ways in large “super blocks” that do not have public streets bisecting them. These large blocks are common in retail corridors and can reduce pedestrian and bicycle connections to these areas.

LU 9.1.4 Gateways Continue to establish key gateways to Folsom through landscape design, appropriately scaled signage, building form, and historic themes to create a unique sense of place.

LU 9.1.5 Pedestrian-Friendly Entrances Encourage automobile-oriented business districts to provide clear and legible entry features, connected by pedestrian friendly walkways.

LU 9.1.6 Community Beautification Encourage the landscaping of public rights-of-way and planting of street trees to beautify Folsom consistent with water-wise policies.

LU 9.1.7 District Identity Encourage efforts to establish and promote district identities (e.g., urban centers, East Bidwell Street) through the use of signage, wayfinding signage, streetscape and building design standards, advertising, and site-specific historic themes.

Goal M1.1 Provide a comprehensive, integrated, and connected network of transportation facilities and services for all modes of travel that also incorporates emerging transportation technologies and services to increase transportation system efficiency.

M 1.1.1 Compete Streets Develop its streets to serve the needs of all users, including bicyclists, public transit users, children, seniors, persons with disabilities, pedestrians, motorists, and movers of commercial goods.

M 1.1.2 Adequate Rights of Way Ensure that all new roadway projects and major reconstruction projects provide appropriate and adequate rights-of-way for all users including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists, except where pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited by law from using a given facility. Dedication and improvements of full rights-of-way shall follow City design standards by roadway classification except in existing developed areas where the City determines that such improvements are either infeasible or undesirable. Other deviations from these standards shall be permitted upon a determination that safe and adequate access and circulation are preserved by such deviations.

M 1.1.3 Accessibility Strive to ensure that all streets are safe and accessible to people with limited mobility and other disabilities. New and reconstructed facilities shall meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act

M 1.1.4 Existing Streets Retrofits Actively pursue funding to update existing streets and intersections with new bikeways, sidewalks, and exclusive transit lanes, where these facilities are designated in the Bikeway Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, or Transit Master Plan.

M-9 Safe Routes to School Coordinate with the Folsom Cordova Unified School District to pursue Safe Routes to School grants to fund programs and projects that ensure Folsom children can walk or bike to school safely

M 1.1.5 Connected Neighborhoods Require the continuation of the street network between adjacent development projects to promote walkability and allow easier access for emergency vehicles

M 2.1.4 Sidewalk Network Strive to fill gaps in the city's existing sidewalk network

M 2.1.15 Funding Identify regional, State, and Federal funding programs and attempt to secure as much funding as possible for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and programs

M 2.1.16 Safe Routes to School Encourage the construction of facilities and provision of programs that ensure Folsom children can walk or bike to school safely through coordination with school administration and parent organizations and participation in State and Federal grant programs.

M 4.2.3 Shared Parking Consider the use of shared parking programs as conditions of approval in mixed use and transit-oriented neighborhoods and districts as a part of the overall parking management strategy. Shared parking may reduce the amount of parking spaces needed in new developments

EP 3.2.2 Infill Sites Coordinate with interested developers and relevant public agencies to develop infill sites identified in the land supply inventory.

EP 5.1.3 Existing Commercial Centers Support the viability of commercial corridors (e.g., East Bidwell Corridor) and community retail centers by promoting a business mix that responds to changing economic conditions and provides well-targeted services to surrounding neighborhoods and businesses

EP 5.1.6 Retail Appearance Encourage property owners and businesses to improve the appearance of aging retail shopping centers and buildings, where needed.

EP 6.1.2 Outdoor Recreation Promote new outdoor recreation facilities and maintain existing facilities (e.g., trails and water-sport facilities) and promote existing outdoor recreation facilities at a high level to solidify Folsom's position as a leader in outdoor recreation

SN 7.1.2 Comprehensive Cool City Strategy Develop and implement a Cool City Strategy, in coordination with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, to reduce the impacts of the Urban Heat Island effect through various measures including increasing the urban tree canopy and use of cool roofs and cool pavements as well as increasing green space in the city

PFS 5.1.4 Green Stormwater Infrastructure Encourage “green infrastructure” design and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for stormwater facilities (i.e., using vegetation and soil to manage stormwater) to preserve and create open space and improve runoff water quality.

Implementation

LU-4 Property Owner Outreach on Overlay Designations Reach out to property owners within the East Bidwell Mixed Use Overlay and Transit Oriented Development Overlay areas to explain the options available to property owners and developers in this area, and provide technical assistance, as appropriate, to facilitate development within these areas.

Attachment 3

Final Committee Recommendations for the Central Business District Vision Plan (October 23, 2024)

Attachment 4

Central Business District Vision Plan (Public Hearing Draft Dated October 23, 2024)