

Open House #3 Summary

April 18, 2018

Introduction

The third and final open house for the Downtown Salem Streetscape Plan was held on Wednesday, April 18 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. in the Senator Hearing Room of the Courthouse Square Building.

The purpose of the open house was to share a draft framework for downtown streetscape improvements including materials, elements, and themes. A presentation was given to review the scope of the project, describe the framework of streetscape types and functions, and show what the streetscape looks like now and images of how it could look in the future. Several unique concepts were shown for additional landscape, Front Street crossings, alley entrances, and parklets. Attendees were asked to give specific feedback to assist the team in preparing next steps for the concepts.



Over 50 people attended to learn about, discuss, and give feedback on ideas for the downtown sidewalks.

The project team acknowledged that many public comments and concerns from previous meetings still need to be examined before improvements move forward. Concerns and questions from previous meetings included maintenance, water needs, tree and plant selection, implementation and cost, coordination with businesses and property owners, and locations.

Event Promotion

Open House invitation postcards were mailed to downtown properties. An email invitation was distributed to attendees from the previous open houses or those who provided email addresses online. A press release was sent to Salem-area media, and the event was promoted through the City's website, Facebook page, and Community Connection newsletter. City staff also invited various boards, committees, and interested stakeholders to attend.

Participation and Additional Outreach

Over 50 people attended the open house and talked to staff and the consultant team. Of the 52 attendees who signed in, 40 submitted comment forms. A few other attendees emailed comments after the meeting. Prior to the adoption of the Streetscape Plan (anticipated in fall 2018), additional feedback will be sought through business outreach, community and neighborhood presentations, and an online survey about the concepts.

Coordination with downtown stakeholders would also occur as design and construction of site-specific improvements move forward.

The following pages summarize public feedback from the open house.

What we heard

Based on discussions at the open house, there is broad support for the four streetscape types (promenade, civic, parkway, and urban) with consistent streetscape elements. There is overwhelming support to make improvements that create a better environment for the pedestrian and create a simple and consistent streetscape. There are still questions about funding, timing, locations, ability to provide water, and necessary infrastructure to ensure improvements will function and be maintained. There continues to be concern about trees and balancing the desires for shade, protecting buildings from damage, and not hiding the historical architectural character of downtown.

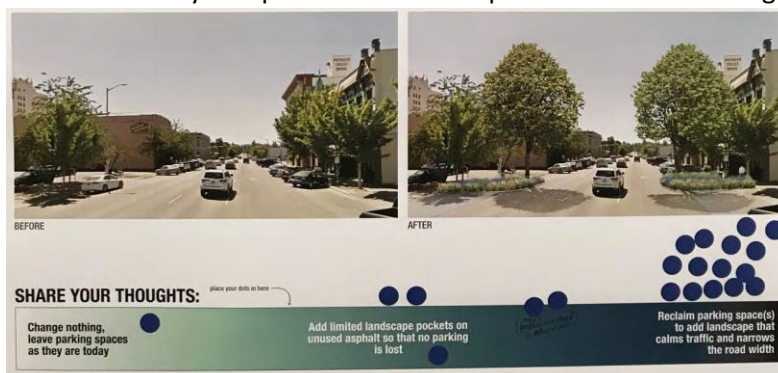
Community Feedback on the Concepts

Four specific concepts were shared. The following describes the concepts and a summary of the feedback received.

Midblock landscaping pockets, shown at possible midblock locations on Commercial and Liberty Streets – Landscape pockets are small landscaped areas in the public right-of-way that could visually narrow the roadway and provide space to add trees or other vegetation, and buffer pedestrians from traffic. The space would remove a single parking space at each midblock “pocket” location to add landscape, a tree, and possibly seating and historic interpretation depending on location. Attendees were asked to give feedback on the concept.

Summary of feedback on midblock landscape pockets:

- Over half of those who submitted comment forms were supportive of the idea of adding midblock landscape pockets, knowing that a parking space would need to be removed. Some recommended other amenities that could be included in the landscape pockets. Some encouraged better use of existing parking structures.
- About one-third supported the idea if no parking spaces were removed, or on a case-by-case basis. The visual impact of added landscaping is generally supported, but loss of parking is a major concern for many. Some offered ideas about adding parking elsewhere. About half of those concerned about loss of parking were from downtown business or property owners. (Note: other business and property owners fully supported the concept.)
- A few did not specify a preference, but they commented on trees or ideas for parking.
- Only one person indicated a preference for no change; parking was the reason.



Attendees were shown images of the visual impact of adding landscape pockets in the middle of blocks (Commercial and Liberty Streets) and were asked to give input on the trade-off of increasing landscaping by removing a parking space. Feedback was collected using a “dot exercise” and also through individual comment forms.

Front Street crossing improvements – Images for improvements of the crossing of Front Street at Court Street were shown. The City is also working on the Riverfront Park Master Plan update, which would influence movement between the park and downtown. The sample rendering shown was compatible with ODOT standards, park planning, and the private development in progress.

Summary of feedback on Front Street crossing improvements: Crossing improvements at Front Street (shown at Court Street) to the park were broadly supported. People commented on safety, buffering pedestrians from traffic, and improved aesthetics. Suggestions included making the crossing area fun and bright, using color, adding signage for the park, incorporating color changes in the road pavement, adding lighting, adding landscaping, incorporating art (footprints in the pavement between downtown and park), adding bicycle improvements, improving signal timing at the crossing to give time to pedestrians, flashing beacons, and addressing pedestrian safety issues caused by vehicles turning north from the Carousel lot.

Alley entrances – The concept of making safety and visual improvements--as well as incorporating amenities for social space--at the alley entrances was well-supported at previous open houses. Concepts for improvements at alley entrances were shown, and attendees were asked to give feedback on various elements and amenities that could be included. Elements shown included overhead lighting, landscaping, electrical outlets for pedestrian use, seating, alley names in pavement, and accent lighting.

Summary of feedback on alley entrances: Improvements to the alley entrances are broadly supported. The elements of adding lighting, landscaping, and adding alley names are popular. Several people indicated not liking the addition of electrical outlets for public use. A few people did not like adding seating. Some said these elements, especially seating, could be looked at on a location-basis. Current concerns about homelessness may be a reason for these responses.

There were some suggestions to include art, animal sculptures for art and play, inward facing seating (not toward alley) for safety, arched entries into entertainment or business areas, areas for business signage, lighting, stop signs for pedestrian safety, and truck and service vehicle safety to eliminate tree and landscaping damage. Many commented that this idea was positive since it did not require any reduction of parking.

Parklet Program – A “parklet” is an extension of the sidewalk that converts on-street parking to create temporary public space or other amenities, such as seating or a mini-park. Nearby businesses and property owners would be involved with any location for a “parklet.”

Summary of feedback on a parklet program: Of the 35 people who commented on parklets, 28 supported the concept. Eight of those 28 indicated they were business or property owners. A temporary or seasonal program was preferred, likely due to weather. Five people, most were business or property owners, did not support parklets due to concerns about loss of parking.

Next Steps

The City will continue outreach to businesses, community and business organizations, and share information on the website when considering next steps for these four concepts and the draft plan. The City anticipates incorporating public comment into designs and then adopting the Downtown Streetscape Plan in fall 2018.