

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CENTER STREET

Adopted by DAPAC on January 10, 2007

(11 in favor, 7 against, 0 abstentions)

- 1) The DAPAC supports inclusion of Center Street Subcommittee consensus points in the Downtown Plan. (See Attachment A)
- 2) Furthermore, the DAPAC supports, as the preferred option for Center Street itself between Shattuck Avenue and Oxford Street, the pedestrianization of the street and the creation of a public pedestrian-oriented open space or plaza as recommended by the April 27, 2004 Hotel Task Force Report, and as described in Attachment A. The City's planning for Center Street should focus on developing a range of designs consistent with this preferred option.

Background:

This recommendation is consistent with the first recommendation in the Hotel Task Force report, which says that the City should "create a public pedestrian-oriented open space or plaza on Center Street between Shattuck Avenue and Oxford Street". It also says:

"1.1 Close Center Street to cars, trucks and buses in a way that does not degrade transit service quality.

1.2 Design Center Street so as to maximize the usefulness, ambience, and amenities of the new public open space for pedestrians and those with mobility impairments.

1.3 Include a variety of pedestrian amenities such as benches, trees and plantings, and public art in order to make the public space an attractive place to walk, sit and linger."

See Attachment B for reasoning related to the second part of the motion.

Attachment A

GENERAL PRINCIPLES & GOALS FOR CENTER STREET

- Center Street is and should remain the primary pedestrian connection from BART to the Campus.
- Center Street should be developed in such a way that it strengthens the connection between Downtown and the Campus.
- Enrich the pedestrian experience on Center Street beyond what it is now.
- Support, as land uses on Center Street, the hotel and conference center and the proposed UC Art Museum.
- We want to help all three projects move forward: redesigned Center Street, museum and hotel.

A CITY PLAN FOR CENTER STREET

DAPAC recommends that the City should develop a plan for Center Street:

- The Museum and Hotel designs should be integrated with designs for a redesigned Center Street to the greatest degree possible
- Invite the designers of the Hotel and Museum projects to look at Center Street and come back with concepts for the design of the street that would relate to their projects and strengthen the relationship of downtown to the campus.
- The City should develop a series of designs for the street, including one that incorporates the “creek” option described below.
- In addition to a creek option, options with more limited “water features” should be developed.
- Design options for Center Street should include different mixes of hardscape and greenscape.
- Inclusion of modulated edges and pockets of open space should be considered in the design of the hotel and museum Center Street frontage.
- Multiple mid-block crossings should be incorporated in the design.
- Plans should include consideration of increased permeability of surfaces to accommodate storm water absorption and filtration that are the result of development upstream.
- The planning process should take into account the design changes necessary on the “superblock” surrounding Center Street for a successful project.

LAND USE

- Housing is a desirable land use on Center Street
- Maintain ground floor commercial on the south side of the street and encourage the addition of ground floor commercial on the north side.

HEIGHT

- Height limits in current zoning should be modified to allow a downtown hotel to exceed the current maximum height limit for downtown buildings.
- On the north side of Center Street, where the hotel and museum will be located, the maximum height at the street wall should be approximately 80 feet.
- A slender tower for the hotel should be set back from the street and should be between 180 and 220 feet in height, exclusive of mechanicals. Support for this height is based on the assumption that it will be a “green hotel” designed to the highest standards of sustainability.
- On the south side of Center Street, new development should only be allowed to reach heights that do not reduce current solar access for the street and sidewalks.

PARKING

- The supply of parking for the public underneath the hotel and conference center should be maximized to the greatest extent feasible.
- Shared use parking is supported. Parking for the hotel and museum should be integrated to the maximum extent possible, both in physical design and management.
- There should be direct pedestrian access to the hotel/museum garage from Center Street.
- Construction of different projects on Center Street should be phased in a way that assures that parking is available throughout the period during which construction takes place.

ACCESS

- DAPAC supports automobile access to the hotel from Shattuck Avenue/Shattuck Square.
- If Center Street is pedestrianized or if the westbound travel lane is removed, the City must work with AC Transit to relocate bus stop and layover space currently located on Center Street; bus service should not be degraded by the changes made to Center Street.

DESIGN OPTION FOR CENTER STREET

DAPAC recommends (as decided in a 11-7-0 vote) that the segment of Center Street between Oxford and Shattuck be fully pedestrianized, as described under Option 1 below. (Option 2 and Option 3 were advanced by the Center Street Subcommittee to DAPAC for consideration, but were not recommended by DAPAC.)

Option 1 (ADOPTED) Fully Pedestrianized Street

In this design, the street would be completely pedestrianized. Regular through traffic would not be permitted. Parking and curbs would be eliminated. The street would be designed to allow the easy passage of foot traffic to and from Campus, and provide opportunities for

people to stop and gather. Permanent and moveable amenities (e.g. trees, landscaping, benches, street furniture, public art) would be added. An unobstructed “lane” could be created to accommodate emergency vehicles. Delivery vehicles could use such a lane for deliveries at specified hours (e.g. early morning), or deliveries could be relocated entirely to a side street.

Option 2 (not adopted but advanced by Subcommittee)
Slow Street

In this design the street would be primarily for pedestrian use but would have one or two travel lanes for cars that would be as narrow as possible. The street would be designed in such a way that cars would have to drive slowly. Parking lanes and curbs would be eliminated. Cars would not be prohibited from driving onto the street; anyone who needed to could drive onto or through at any time. It was recognized that the “maximum feasible creek” option (see below) would not be compatible with this option due to space limitations.

Option 3 (not adopted but advanced by Subcommittee)
Slow Street with Parking

Under this option, the sidewalk on the north side of the street would be widened. Some space would be maintained for parking, as well as one or two travel lanes for cars. The relative mix of space for sidewalk, street and parking could vary, but this option envisions widening of north sidewalk to at least about 24 feet. Curbs would not be eliminated.

[Note: The sidewalk on north side is currently 16 feet; the sidewalk on the south side is currently 22 feet; the street, including parking is currently 42 feet]

CREEK/WATER FEATURE

There was agreement that a full-flow restoration of the creek on Center Street or “no constraints” option was not practical.

One design that should be prepared as part of putting together a plan for Center Street is:

Maximum Practical Creek

In this design, diverting a portion of the natural flow of Strawberry Creek would create a creek-derived water feature or partial creek restoration. As in Option 1, the street would be fully pedestrianized, with unobstructed space created to accommodate emergency vehicles. The size of the creek is constrained to approximately 25-30 ft wide due to the width of the right of way and current and planned development on private/UC property. The depth of the creek would be approximately 8 ft and the slope of the creek banks could vary. Creek-side vegetation using a variety of materials will add texture and dimensions to the streetscape.

Attachment B

Why the Pedestrianization Option is the best option

- 1) It meets the **need for outdoor pedestrian open space** in our downtown. Civic Center Park functions well as a location for weekend festivals and events, but its location is not well suited for daily use since it is cut off from the center of downtown and is surrounded largely by public buildings. At present, it is primarily used by high school students. BART plaza is in a very noisy location on Shattuck. Center Street is the only realistic location for new outdoor pedestrian open space in downtown. Center Street is unique in having a combination of two things: a huge flow of pedestrians and no curb cuts/driveways that can't be removed. Many other side streets either have less pedestrian traffic and/or have driveways that would be difficult, if not impossible, to remove because they provide access to garages or other uses.
- 2) It is the only option that allows for **maximum creativity and flexibility** in designing spaces that will fit well with the new hotel and the new museum and, in particular, with their entrances on to Center Street. With this option, we have the opportunity to create a world-class public open space. Right now, there is a row of parked cars alongside the south side of the printing plant where the museum will be located. If the designers of the art museum come up with a splendid design, do we really want a row of parked cars and moving cars in the foreground when the entrance to the museum is viewed from the south side of the street?
- 3) **Cars don't allow for a plaza:** options that continue to devote space for regular, around-the-clock automobile circulation, possibly with parking as well, will preclude creation of any large, open plaza area(s) on any portion of the street. The public right of way (streets and sidewalks combined) is only 80 feet wide. Maintaining 20-30 feet in the middle of the street for cars would leave too little space for designers to work with if the goal is to create a plaza. The slow street option, in particular, would effectively allow only for wider sidewalks on the north side of the street.
- 4) **Limited resources:** resources for planning for Center Street are likely to be limited. The City should focus its planning for the street on the most promising option. Within the context of pedestrianization, there are many possible designs that can include varying mixes of hardscape and greenscape; that could include a creek-derived water feature or a more limited water feature; that could include varying types and quantities of trees, benches and other street furniture, public art, etc. Setting pedestrianization as a parameter will make for a more manageable design process. With this parameter, input for possible designs should be solicited and there should be public meetings associated with the design process. Let the best design be chosen!

Other Issues

Automobile circulation and access: Center Street is not an essential street for traffic circulation in downtown. The volume of pedestrian traffic is much higher than the volume of automobile traffic on the street. Based on observation done by Hotel Task Force members, very few customers who patronize local businesses on Center Street park on Center Street now. And if pedestrian entrances to parking underneath the new hotel and museum are created on Center Street as recommended by the Hotel Task Force in the DAPAC's consensus points, then people driving to the area will have easy access to businesses on Center. The absence of cars will make it easy for people to cross from one side to the other and will make the restaurants and shops on the south side easily accessible to hotel guests, conference goers, museum goers and others on the north side of the street.

Bus circulation: closing Center Street to create a pedestrianized open space will create some problems for buses, but AC Transit has indicated a willingness to work with the City to relocate its buses.

“Streets can't be successful without cars”: This is certainly not applicable in the case of a city like Berkeley with one of the highest rates of use of alternative modes in the U.S. Berkeley ranks number 7, among all cities in the United States with populations of 100,000 or more, for the percentage of people who commute without cars. You don't have to have cars on every street for commercial success and a recent survey by one of Betty Deakin's classes found that a majority of people who work in the area don't access downtown by car. Center Street, in particular, currently does not depend on the cars that pass by for its success. It depends on the flow of pedestrians going between campus and BART and the bus stops on Shattuck and Center. This flow is not limited to weekdays or to daytime; it continues into the evening as well; so cars are not necessary to make the street feel safe. Pedestrians can window-shop and see what a restaurant has to offer or what a retail store has on display. Drivers are, or should be, keeping an eye out for the large number of pedestrians, bicyclists and other cars sharing Downtown's busy streets with them. They can't see what's in a store window as they drive by. Berkeley shops downtown generally don't have suburban or highway style signage to catch the eye of passing motorists.

Deliveries and emergencies: Designs can allow for deliveries to local businesses on Center Street and for access by ambulances. It should be noted that there are tens of thousands of restaurants and retail businesses located on pedestrianized streets in cities around the world. All of them manage to get the goods they need. Locally, the restaurants and other businesses on the pedestrian plaza between 12th Street BART and the federal building in downtown Oakland get the deliveries they need even though trucks are not able to park in front of the various businesses. This is very much a surmountable problem, if it can be called a problem at all.

“Pedestrian malls don't work”: Some pedestrian malls, such as those in Santa Monica, Boulder, Burlington, Charlottesville, Madison, Ithaca and Iowa City, have been successful. Others, such as the one in Eugene, have been deemed failures. But this is not very relevant. The goal here is to create a pedestrian open space on Center Street, not to create a pedestrian mall. Pedestrian malls are typically at least three blocks long, typically are lined

by over 100 businesses and typically have an explicitly commercial purpose. Businesses now located on Center Street benefit tremendously from the current transit-generated flow of pedestrians. Berkeley will be creating a new open space that will enhance the free flow of pedestrians between downtown and the campus, while providing more places for people to sit and linger. It should draw even more people to the street and should mean even more customers for local businesses.

“The City won’t maintain it”: Some people have expressed the concern that the City won’t maintain any new space it creates. The resources will clearly exist to pay for keeping new open space clean and well maintained. The hotel-conference center will generate over \$1 million in additional hotel tax and property tax revenue. A portion of that can be committed to cleaning and maintaining the street adjacent to the new hotel. In addition, if parking rates are increased, a portion of that new revenue can and should be earmarked toward making downtown in general, including Center Street, safer, cleaner and more visually attractive. To improve our downtown, the City will have to make a clear commitment to deploy the necessary resources.

What if it doesn’t work?: Designs for the street could allow for restoration of a lane of traffic. This would entail keeping a stretch of the street free of permanent street furniture. Such a stretch could also be used for deliveries.

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