

Purpose of report

This report consolidates and formalizes the community's vision for the development, enhancement and preservation of the Downtown Core Area into one document that can be easily read and referenced by citizens, city staff, merchants, other business owners, property owners, and prospective downtown developers.

These visions are translated into specific actions that can be taken to accomplish them. The actions, in turn, are prioritized and identified in each section of each chapter, and in Appendices 1 and 2, where they are presented in a work plan format.

It was the intent of the City Council, when it decided in May of 1999 to embark on the public participation and research effort that resulted in this report, that the report establish a work plan for the future. The City and other key downtown stakeholders are encouraged to accomplish the priority actions listed here in the next five years.

The report also contains benchmarks, or indicators, that will be used to track success. Each year the city will report on the results of the benchmark measures, and the accomplishment of priority actions.

In addition, current downtown development activities are chronicled, and planned or potential activities that will contribute to the health of the Core Area are listed. Large portions of the report are dedicated to framing the issues and challenges that currently affect the Core Area and its long-term health and viability.

Background

The City of Davis is committed to policies that strengthen the vitality and

health of the Core Area. During the 1990s the City invested considerable attention and financial resources in improving the downtown. As a result, downtown Davis is a clean, safe, active and vibrant city center where people live, work, shop, and enjoy a variety of cultural and entertainment activities.

As the City continues to grow, however, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain this healthy balance of com-



merce, employment, entertainment and livability while preserving the unique small town quality of the Core Area. To ensure the overall health and character of the downtown, the City of Davis has prepared this *Core Area Strategy Report*.

The City of Davis contracted with the Local Government Commission (LGC) to develop the *Core Area Strategy Report*. The LGC is a nonprofit organization of elected officials, city and county staff, and other leaders who want to enhance the ability of local governments to create and sustain healthy environments, healthy economies, and social equity. The LGC completed the report in partnership with California Main Street and Jeffrey Eichenfield & Associates. California Main Street, a program of the California Trade and Commerce Agency,



provides technical assistance and education services to local communities in the Main Street approach to downtown revitalization. Jeffrey Eichenfield & Associates is a downtown revitalization consulting firm based in Berkeley, CA. The project team brought with it a wealth of experience and resources on downtown issues.

Consolidating and Prioritizing the Vision

Since the City had gathered extensive public input in recent years regarding the community's vision for the downtown, the consultant team began by reviewing existing planning documents. Some of the documents were months or years in the making, and involved citizen committees and regular citizen meetings. They provide a foundation for the report, and are the source of many of the action steps identified in each chapter. They include:

- *1996 City of Davis Draft General Plan Update*
- *Davis Economic Development Strategic Plan 1995-2000*
- *Davis Core Area Specific Plan*
- *1994 Implementation Plan for the Davis Redevelopment Project*
- *City of Davis Downtown Pedestrian Amenities Survey Report*
- *Infill Potential Study for the Davis Draft General Plan Update*

A Reality Check

To gauge the community's opinions on current conditions and update citizen priorities for future actions, the consultant team checked in with community members through the summer and early fall in a number of ways.

They interviewed downtown business owners, property owners, residents, advocacy groups and people who frequently shop or do business downtown. In September 1999, a citywide Downtown Forum was held at the Varsity

Theatre. Roughly 85 people attended the presentation on downtown design and economic development, and many remained for a discussion that followed. During that time, Forum participants ranked the importance of several downtown issues, and identified other areas on which they wanted the city to focus its efforts. They also completed a detailed survey form that allowed them to rank potential future projects by level of importance.

In addition, the California Downtown Association held its semi-annual conference in Davis in September 1999. When the conference opened, consultants handed a questionnaire to participants asking for their impressions of the downtown. Later, in one of the conference sessions, the consultants facilitated a discussion of the results.

Methodology

To establish the priority actions listed in each chapter, the consultants weighed the issues based on the testimony and survey results from the Downtown Forum, interviews conducted with downtown stakeholders over the summer, feedback from the California Downtown Association conference, and input from the City, including fundamental directions already included in city planning documents. (The results of each of the public input gathering efforts are detailed in Appendix 5.)

The Davis City Council adopted the *Core Area Strategy Report* in February of 2000, thereby endorsing the community's vision and priorities as an action plan for city departments, the Davis Downtown Business Association (DDBA) and Davis Chamber of Commerce. Implementation actions will come before the Council for its approval and citizen review during the next five years.