

Downtown Business Attraction and Retention

The City of Manteca is in a difficult position when it comes to developing a thriving, vibrant, walkable Downtown. Besides enforcing municipal codes, providing incentives, and facilitating roundtable discussions to bring Downtown stakeholders to the table, the tools at the City's disposal are limited. It will take the collaboration, cooperation, and participation of the City, property owners, and business owners to bring about change.

The sheer number of stakeholders – coupled with their different “visions” for Downtown – has stalled efforts to create a viable plan and added to the complexity of revitalization project. In the end, if there is no consensus, there cannot be a successful plan. Differences of opinion and lack of common goals hurt Mantecans who want a safe and enjoyable Downtown experience.

To contribute to the success of Downtown, the City should:

- **Take Action.** There are steps the City can take *immediately* to promote a better Downtown environment, such as:
 - Increase street sweeping frequency of Downtown streets, alleys, and parking lots. Reinstall (and enforce) “No Parking between 4 AM and 5 AM” signs so that street sweeping can be done efficiently.
 - Trim trees in streetscape and parking lots to enhance lighting.
 - Enforce codes requiring owners clean their properties (i.e. parking areas, alcoves, dumpster enclosures etc.) frequently and promptly.
 - Enforce Section 8.17.040 of the Manteca Municipal Code requiring boarded-up properties to be painted to match the color of exterior of the building. Or, encourage and recognize the efforts of volunteers working to make boarded-up buildings more attractive (as completed at 141 W. Yosemite and underway at 220 W. Yosemite).
 - Encourage property owners to get their property owners “Rental Ready” via incentives and/or code enforcement.
- **Make Residents Feel Safe.** Continue to address and solve homeless issues. Add lighting or upgrade existing lighting to LED for brighter light. Explore increasing parking. If people do not feel safe and welcome, they will not come Downtown.
- **Evaluate Infrastructure.** The strength of Downtown depends on the symbiotic relationship of businesses and restaurants / shops. Businesses need places nearby where employees can meet clients, grab lunch within walking distance of the office, or unwind after work at Happy Hour. By improving infrastructure and providing solutions to property owners, the City can take steps to incentivize the creation of a downtown business core. First, determine what services (especially internet / fiber optic) the City should provide to attract new businesses or encourage expansions of existing businesses and restaurants. Second, minimize vacant buildings by providing pathways

for owners to “upgrade” their properties, making them more attractive for long-term tenants. To encourage updates and improvements, the City could help by waiving / reducing fees and helping these businesses secure grants for infrastructure improvement.

- **Review Existing Ideas.** Over the years, City Staff has generated countless Downtown strategies – often in collaboration with stakeholders. Sometimes, we get so laser focused on creating something new, we forget to look back at the ideas Staff, residents, and stakeholders have already developed. Let’s reframe, refresh, and build off existing work by City staff.
- **Cultivate Partnerships.** Many organizations – such as the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Association – are invested in the success of Downtown. Manteca’s biggest events – Pumpkin Fair and Crossroads Street Faire – show residents and visitors the best of Downtown. The City should continue to strengthen ties with these groups and support their efforts whenever possible.

The City has limited control over the destiny of Downtown; Downtown’s fate is ultimately in the hands of its property and business owners. But, by supporting owners and continuing to facilitate roundtable discussions, the City can proactively strive for a mutually beneficial outcome. Additionally, by focusing on code enforcement, economic development, and infrastructure – items the City has more control over – the City can create a safe environment for shopping and dining in the heart of Manteca.

www.charliehalford.com @charlieforcitycouncil Charlie Halford for Manteca City Council