

# **Redevelopment Proposal:**

## **Downtown Core**

Fullerton Downtown Core and Corridor Specific Plan

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# Executive Summary

The Fullerton Downtown Core and Corridor Specific Plan (DCCSP) was drafted to create connectivity between Fullerton’s different neighborhoods and the Downtown Core that is shaped by attractive, sustainable, and economically sustainable in-fill development. The study site chosen for redevelopment is located in the Downtown Core. The opportunities for redevelopment within the study site include large surface parking lots, dilapidated local landmarks, sites with prohibited uses under the DCCSP, and an alley. Proposed developments include a mixed-use retail/office and theater district, a renovated historic art center and public market, a mixed-use retail/residential transit-oriented development, a community garden/park, and a connective alley. The decision upon these types of developments came from community needs and concerns, as well as the feasibility and profitability of the land development. The overall goal is to enhance the study site to match the historic Fullerton downtown feel and connect it to neighboring Downtown Core sites.

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### References

## Site Description

The City of Fullerton has recently drafted the Downtown Core and Corridor Specific Plan (DCCSP). The main goals are to create connectivity between Fullerton's different neighborhoods and the Downtown Core that is shaped by beautiful, sustainable, and economically sustainable in-fill development (City of Fullerton DCCSP 2014). This redevelopment proposal is for a block in the 'Downtown Core' area, hereby known as the study site. The streets surrounding the study site are W Commonwealth Ave to the north, S Malden Ave to the east, W Santa Fe Ave to the south and S Highland Ave to the west. A couple landmarks are Bootlegger's Brewery, which is located in the southwest corner of the study site and Opus Bank, which is located in the northeast corner of the study site. The study site is located near Fullerton City Hall, the Fullerton Police Station, Amerige Park, Malden Station (a soon to be luxury apartment complex with ground floor retail), and is adjacent to the parking structure and the SOCO district. The study site has a couple of open parking lots that can be developed into more efficient land uses. A large alley runs east and west in the middle of the study site and can be revitalized as it suffers from litter, graffiti, and aged building surfaces. Also, the study site has a couple of historic buildings that can be renovated and converted into more beneficial uses. Overall, the study site seems drab and out of place next to the SOCO district within Fullerton's historic downtown.



Figure 1. Map of Study Site with Existing Uses

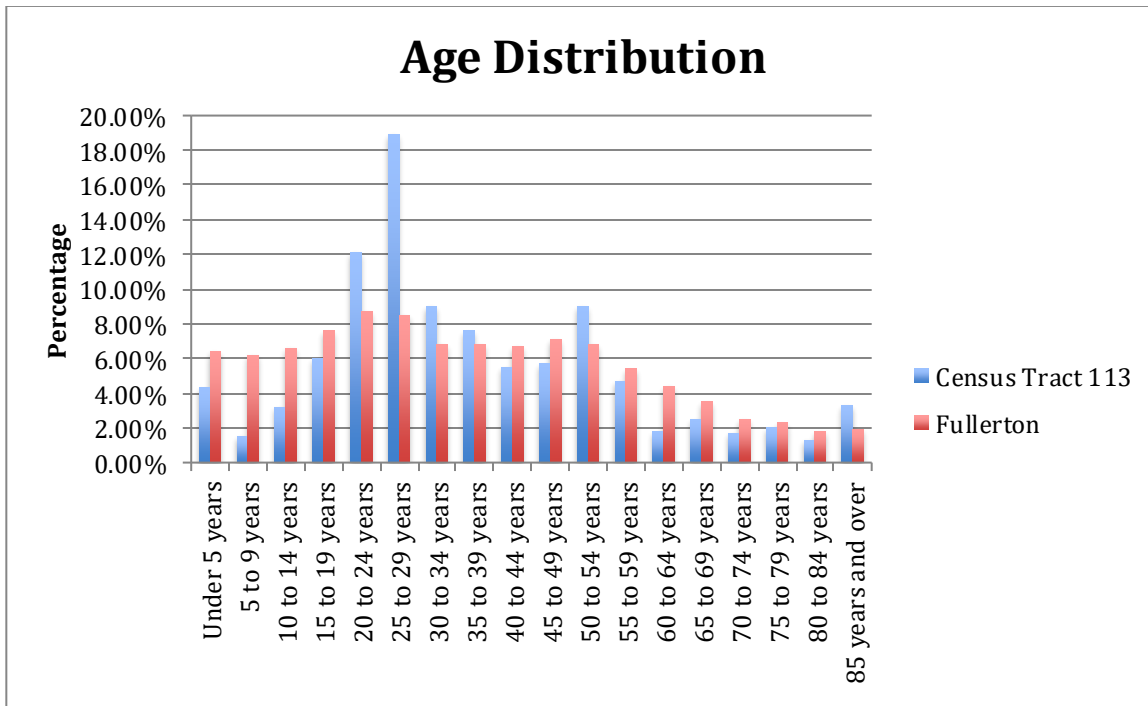
Demographic Information

Table 1. Basic demographic information for the County, City, and study site Census Tract show that the study site has a younger, slightly male dominated composition that has smaller household sizes and a larger income than the City and County (ACS 2013)

## Basic Demographic Information

	Orange County	Fullerton	Census Tract 113
Total Population	3,051,771	136,702	4,720
Median Age	36.4	34.4	31.1
Male Population	49.50%	48.30%	51.90%
Female Population	50.50%	51.70%	48.10%
Median Household Income (\$)	75,422	67,384	76,703
Average Household Size	2.97	2.91	2.25

Table 2. Age distribution shows a larger percentage of 20-29 year olds living within the study site than in the City of Fullerton (ACS 2013)



Employment Data

Table 3. Employment data by industry and occupation provide additional, mostly small differences between the City and study site. Management, business, sciences, and arts occupations make up the majority of occupations.

**Employment Data by Industry**

Industry	Census Tract 113	Fullerton
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.50%	0.30%
Construction	9.00%	5.80%
Manufacturing	13.80%	12.70%
Wholesale trade	3.40%	4.50%
Retail trade	10.50%	11.30%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2.30%	3.80%
Information	2.40%	1.80%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5.60%	7.80%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	14.20%	12.40%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	15.30%	19.40%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	10.60%	12.60%
Other services, except public administration	10.70%	5.10%
Public administration	1.60%	2.50%

**Employment Data by Occupation**

Occupation	Census Tract 113	Fullerton
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	48.40%	39.50%
Service occupations	13.70%	16.60%
Sales and office occupations	24.40%	27.50%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	8.20%	6.40%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	5.30%	9.90%

Historic Preservation Concerns

The Downtown Core, along with the study site, is a part of the original townsite of Fullerton, so most of the current historic resources have already been evaluated. The Downtown Core features a mix of commercial, residential, and institutional sites with a wide range of construction styles and dates. The study site contains two buildings recognized by the City of Fullerton as Local Landmarks and two buildings that have not been inventoried (Fullerton DCCSP Historic Resources Report 2013).

The first Local Landmark is the Sanitary Laundry Building (Figure 2) on W Santa Fe Ave, which is a brick commercial building with a complex façade and a saw-tooth roof. The building was used as a laundry facility from the early 1920s to the 1940s. The second Local Landmark, the Fullerton Dye Works Building (Figure 3), is adjacent to the Sanitary Laundry Building. The Fullerton Dye Work Building is a one-story brick commercial building that housed a cleaning and dye business from 1922 to 1936. The



Figure 2. Sanitary Laundry Building (*Fullerton Through the Years*)

building's current disorganized façade is the result of piecemeal alterations to the building over time (*Fullerton through the Years*). Both Local Landmark buildings are currently used for small commercial and industrial operations with multiple tenants.



Figure 3 Fullerton Dye Works Building (*Fullerton Through the Years*)

The non-inventoried resources are two buildings on W Commonwealth Ave noted by the Fullerton Heritage Board. The first is the historic



Figure 4. Fullerton Civic Light Opera Co.

Fullerton Community Bank, a mid-century modern bank building with a high quality of design, and is presently Opus Bank. The second non-inventoried resource is the current Fullerton Civic Light Opera Co. (Figure 4) housed in a distinctive automobile showroom building (Fullerton DCCSP Historic Resources Report 2013). Each of these historic resources has been noted in the DCCSP and should be preserved and/or restored in any redevelopment plans.



SWOT Analysis

Table 4. The Downtown Core SWOT Analysis shows many opportunities for development (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013).

**Downtown Core SWOT Analysis**

	Helpful	Harmful
	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Attractive historic setting, functional with parking provided</li> <li>&gt; New residential with transit center</li> <li>&gt; Restaurant use core</li> <li>&gt; Proximity to Fullerton Transit Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Many mom and pop retail tenants, no national retailers</li> <li>&gt; Number of alcohol serving establishments</li> <li>&gt; Aging infrastructure</li> <li>&gt; Lack of bike routes/ infrastructure</li> <li>&gt; Lack of street cleanliness</li> </ul>
	Opportunities	Threats
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; More residential and other uses added to mix can help area achieve threshold for higher-order goods/services</li> <li>&gt; Development of consistent signage, landscaping, and amenities</li> <li>&gt; In-fill development on large surface parking lots</li> <li>&gt; Transit Oriented development</li> <li>&gt; Increased outdoor dining</li> <li>&gt; Improved pedestrian crossings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Commercial uses not sufficient in quantity/quality to give area life of its own</li> <li>&gt; Restaurants /bars /nightclubs not always compatible with other uses</li> <li>&gt; Heavy vehicular traffic along main arterials</li> <li>&gt; Graffiti</li> <li>&gt; Homelessness</li> </ul>

**Local and Regional Connections**

Site History

The Amerige brothers founded the original townsite of Fullerton in 1887. Most of the original wooden structures from the start of the community in the 1880s through the early 1900s have been replaced. However many buildings built after Fullerton’s incorporation in 1904 to the 1940s are largely intact and a source of pride for the community. There is a large range of architectural styles that can be tracked through decades of development including Colonial, Victorian, Mission Revival, and Spanish Colonial (*Fullerton through the Years*). Since the study site is within the Downtown Core and original townsite, special care should be given to new construction so that it matches the character of historic Fullerton. Having an authentic historic downtown that can compete with Anaheim’s Downtown Disney and Brea’s Birch Street without their artificiality is a priority for Fullerton. This would create stronger regional ties to Fullerton (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013).

### Community Concerns/Needs and Active Interest Groups

The Downtown Core has a unique set of interest groups that include residents, students, families, seniors, visitors, retailers, developers, and other economic interest groups. The community has strong concerns about the look and feel of the Downtown Core in terms of both commercial and residential development. They want to see an overall theme in the Downtown Core with tree lights, attractive storefronts, tree-lined streets, and wide sidewalks as well as consistent themes in street furniture, signage, and landscaping. Maintenance of sidewalks and overgrown vegetation is also a concern. Architecture and the materials used are critical when designing new construction in order to preserve the authentic historic downtown feel that makes Fullerton competitive in the regional shopping and entertainment district market. Pedestrians and cyclists were largely ignored in past planning exercises, so they should be a priority in all future planning. Most of all, the community values uses that support the future economic vitality of the downtown over housing (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013).

The community likes the redeveloped SOCO district, but feels that too many bars and nightclubs hurt the family appeal of downtown. The community feels that there should be a mix of retail uses to encourage family and senior use. Examples that the community felt was missing are florists, garden stores, bookstores, butchers, and home ware stores. There is also a need for day-to-day amenities like small grocers and drugstores to serve the residents of new housing developments. Mom and pop establishments characterize the ‘charm’ of Fullerton’s small town feel, but some are more successful than others. Community members noted that there should be a mix of unique national retail store such as Urban Outfitters and mom and pop stores to attract more people. Finally, the community encouraged the allowance of food trucks and street fairs at certain times (Design Fest Summary 2013). The Downtown Core and Corridors Specific Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) added that boutique bed and breakfasts and outdoor community spaces like paseos and plazas would benefit the existing character of Fullerton’s downtown (DPAC 2013).

### Transportation and Parking Impacts

The Downtown Core has three major arterials: Harbor Blvd, Commonwealth Ave, and Chapman Ave. There is a mix of parking structures, large surface lot parking, and metered and non-metered street parking. Pedestrian mobility is generally very good and most sidewalks are in good condition and well maintained. A pedestrian and multi-purpose path also crosses Harbor Blvd, paralleling the train tracks. The Downtown Core is also adjacent to the Fullerton Transportation Center and Metrolink Station. The Transportation Center is also a hub for the Orange County Transit Authority (OCTA) including service to bus routes 26, 43, 47, 147, 213, and 91 (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013). There are currently a few

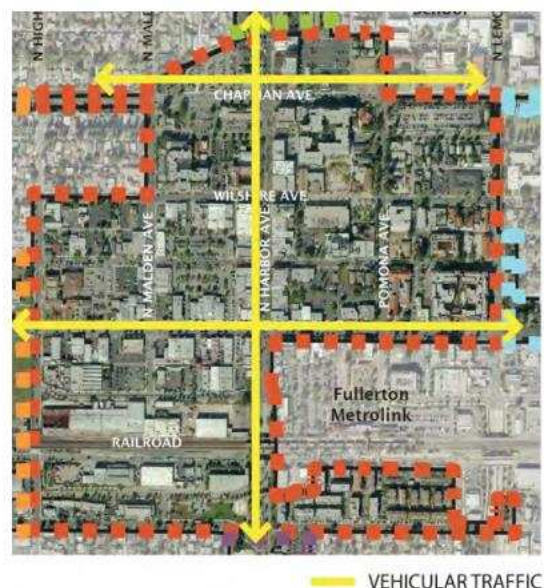


Figure 5. Major arterials in the Downtown Core (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013)



mostly isolated bicycle lanes and paths in the Downtown Core, however, there are plans to increase connectivity and signage for these bicycle paths and increase bicycle-parking racks along Commonwealth Ave and Harbor Blvd (Bicycle Master Plan 2011).

The study area features Harbor Blvd and Commonwealth as the main arterials. There is currently parking available in the adjacent SOCO district parking structure and marked on-street parallel parking spots. Any new development on site would likely need additional parking and traffic mitigation measures. The study site is also attractive for transit-oriented development as it is within ½ mile of the Fullerton Transit Center. There is also direct access to bus line 26 on Commonwealth Ave.

### Local Economy

The Downtown Core contains an assortment of land values. Restaurants and bars are high in value, while some retail is low in value. The Downtown Core economy is centered on the art, dining, and entertainment industries. The market may be saturated with mom and pop businesses that do not employ a large number of people. A large number of potential redevelopment opportunities exist due to many underutilized surface parking lots (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013).

### Housing Concerns

The DCCSP has the potential to encompass a portion of or Fullerton's entire Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requirement. The RHNA requirement for Fullerton from the years 2014-2021 is 1,841 households. The DCCSP's build-out potential is 3,308 units (City of Fullerton DCCSP 2014). A major feature of the study area in terms of housing is the adjacent Malden Station development on Santa Fe. The development will feature a 200-unit luxury apartment community with approximately 5,200 sq. ft. of ground floor retail (Figure 6). Because of this large housing development, another large housing development is not necessary in the study area. However, since Malden Station is being marketed as a luxury community, any smaller scale residential developments within the study area should be sensitive to affordable housing needs.

### Political Climate

The Fullerton DCCSP has still not been adopted by the City Council, mainly due to political issues. Even though the plan was a community-wide effort, community members had problems with the focus on high density and prohibited uses. Prohibited businesses in the Downtown Core include tattoo parlors and auto service businesses (City of Fullerton DCCSP 2014). These businesses would either be forced to move or blocked from



Figure 6. Malden Station Construction Site

ever expanding. Also, single-family detached residences are prohibited throughout all of the DCCSP, causing concern for residence of losing character in historic neighborhoods (Wolfe 2014). The plan is currently being worked on to address the community's concerns. With the election of a new Mayor and a new Planning Director for the city, the plan still has a chance to be adopted.

## **Proposed Redevelopment Plan**

### *Proposed Changes to Enhance the Built Environment*

The study site contains two large surface parking lots on the corner of Malden and Santa Fe. This is the perfect site for in-fill development. Since the new Malden Station development will have a large number of apartments, the focus should be on retail and office space. I propose a two or three-story development that includes a small independent movie theatre, dining with outdoor patio space, a unique national retail anchor, other smaller retail space, and an attractive plaza on the ground floor. The second and third floors of the development would house office space and/or retail. This space could serve both day and night purposes with office and retail emphasis during the day then dining and theater emphasis during the evening. Adjacent to the lots is a single-family detached residential lot. If the developer bought out this lot the office/retail space could be expanded further.

The study site also contains the historic Sanitary Laundry and Fullerton Dye Works Buildings. I propose to restore the facades and turn the inside into an art and public market space. These buildings have the perfect older industrial feel that would support a use like this. There are currently rolling garage-type doors on the backside of the buildings (Figure 7) that could be opened during business hours to bring light and air into the space and allow more accessibility. In the



**Figure 7. Rolling garage doors behind the Sanitary Laundry Building**

buildings current state of disrepair, they are not making a good use of their Local Landmark classification. The art and public market could be a day and evening draw for the study site.

The alley that runs through the middle of the study site parallel to Commonwealth and Santa Fe is currently a sore spot for the site. The alley has the potential to be a continuation of the alleys in the SOCO district to increase connectivity between the adjacent sites. Beautification and lighting would both be

necessary to make the alley more attractive, however, they would most likely need to be limited to

lights on the buildings themselves and more attractive walls. The alley does serve a functional purpose for deliveries to current businesses, so it would need to be used for that purpose and not impeded by light poles. However, on weekends when there are no deliveries, the alley would be a great space to host small street fairs with food trucks. It could even be an alternative location for a farmer's market.

Another potential redevelopment site within the study area is on the corner of Highland and Commonwealth. Currently, there is a pizza shop, law office, auto-repair shop, hobby shop, and small warehouse on site. The auto-repair use will be prohibited in the DCCSP. This section could be turned into a two or three-story mixed-use residential and retail development, which would maximize the value of the land. Also, since the area is within ½ mile of the Fullerton Transit Center, it could be a transit-oriented development.

There are currently two single-family detached houses within the study area next to an empty lot being used as the construction office for the Malden Station development and the Fullerton Dye Works Building. Once the owners move, the use will no longer be permitted. This part of the land would be perfect for a public use as mitigation for the new developments in the area. It could be turned into a community garden and small park or open space as an escape to bustling city life.

Other improvements to the area would include an enhanced streetscape with street trees and a median with native vegetation on Commonwealth, which is wide enough to support that use. The sidewalks on Commonwealth and Santa Fe could also be widened to support outdoor dining, street furniture, and art installations. If the sidewalk on Santa Fe was widened, the street parking should be eliminated to ease any potential congestion. Pervious ground materials should be used as

much as possible to promote groundwater recharge. The signage, landscaping, and any street furniture would need to be consistent with the rest of the Downtown Core. The architectural style should also fit the historic downtown theme. Spanish Colonial Revival should be used on the Commonwealth and Highland development, as it is on a major arterial and across from the historic Police Station. On the Santa Fe development, red brick accents should be used to match the theme of the Parking Structure, SOCO district, and Opus Bank (Figure 8) as well as fit in with the industrial style of the art and public market.



Figure 8. Red brick structures and accents on and near the study site





Figure 9. Map of proposed development

### Economic Development Opportunity

The proposed redevelopment supports the future economic vitality of the Downtown Core, as is in line with public needs and concerns. The created retail and office space would add jobs and tax revenue to Fullerton, both short-term in construction and long-term in day-to-day business. There was an identified need for higher quality retail and office space for the Downtown Core. The proposed development would address these issues by providing brand new spaces. Also, since the retail and office space would be near the Transit Center, it could support both local and regional employment opportunities.

### Compatibility with City General Plan

The Fullerton Plan identifies specific planning goals for the Downtown Core including: (1) preserving the character and historic resources; (2) encouraging diverse businesses to promote day and nighttime activities; (3) increasing multi-modal transportation options; (3) promoting pedestrian activity through sidewalk improvement, plazas, and other public spaces; (4) including hardscape and softscape features that promote sustainability; and (5) providing connectivity with other areas of the city (Fullerton DCCSP Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis Report 2013). The proposed redevelopment would restore and repurpose a local landmark with the art and public market. The theater and retail/office development would promote day and nighttime use. Since the study site is within a ½ mile of the Transit Center, multi-modal transportation and connectivity would be enhanced. The proposed plaza and wider sidewalks

would promote pedestrian activity. The hard and softscape would be sustainably built with native landscaping and pervious surfaces.

#### Compatibility with the Proposed Specific Plan

The DCCSP prohibits certain uses in the Downtown Core including: adult businesses, tattoo parlors, auto-service businesses, smoking lounges, hospitals, outdoor vending machines, medical marijuana dispensaries, and single-family detached residential (City of Fullerton DCCSP 2014). The proposed development will convert an auto-repair shop and single-family detached residences into non-prohibited uses. The DCCSP also identifies design guidelines for the Downtown Core. The plaza and connecting alley fits with this vision, as it will add public space and connect the development to the SOCO district. Also, the architecture, especially on Commonwealth will match the historic downtown theme. The outdoor lighting and signage will also fit this theme and fit with the consistent vision for the Downtown Core.

#### CEQA Concerns and Considerations

Potential environmental impacts for this project include aesthetic, cultural resource, air quality, noise, public service, and traffic impacts. Using architectural styles that complement current and historical adjacent structures will mitigate aesthetic impacts. Watering construction zones to eliminate dust can mitigate the air quality impacts from construction. The pedestrian character of the development as well as the proximity to multi-modal transit options will mitigate the air quality impacts from increased vehicle traffic. Restoring the local landmarks and matching architecture to the historic downtown will preserve cultural resources. Noise during construction will be mitigated by strict construction workday hours. New or expanded public services will likely be necessary for the residential development. Traffic and parking will have the largest impact on the environment. This can be mitigated by subterranean parking lots and encouraged use of nearby transit options. The developers will also need to adhere to Traffic Impact Fees as required by Fullerton's municipal code (City of Fullerton DCCSP 2014).

#### Proposed Costs and Feasibility

Costs for the redevelopment would include renovation for the art and public market space, and new construction for the retail/office and retail/residential/TOD mixed-use developments. Based on similar projects, the renovation would cost around \$1.5 million. The new mixed-use developments would cost around \$11 million and \$14 million, respectively (Pyatok 2014). This would bring the total redevelopment costs to around \$ 26.5 million, not including any improvements made to the median on Commonwealth. According to the DCCSP, a balanced approach to development and uses will be sustainable long-term. Stand-alone office projects are currently infeasible, so they should be paired with restaurant and retail to become profitable. Multifamily residential and retail mixed-use projects offer the most profitability. Flex use of industrial spaces can also be feasible (City of Fullerton DCCSP 2014). This data supports the proposed development as being both economically feasible and in-line with the DCCSP vision of long-term economic vitality.



### Case Study Examples/Similar Project Success Stories

A project similar to the theater and mixed-use office and retail is the Claremont Village West. The development includes multistory retail and office space, an interior plaza, outdoor dining patios, and a small independent movie theater. Claremont also turned a historic citrus packing industrial building into the Claremont Packing House, which includes live-work lofts, restaurants, retail, and an art museum (City of Claremont 2008). Together, these developments revitalized historic downtown Claremont and serves as a planning example for other nearby communities (Redlands Conservancy 2015). Another example of a successful historic building renovation is the Anaheim Packing House. The Packing House is another converted historic citrus packing house that now houses a mix of culinary uses remnant of Old World food markets. It has quickly become a hot spot for foodies in Orange County (Luna and Valdespino 2014).

## **Conclusions**

### What the Community Wants and Needs

Due to the location of the study site, it is not a question of whether it will be developed; it is a question of when and how. The Malden Station development is a game-changer for the area. With 200 new residential units and over 5,000 sq. ft. of residential space, adjacent run down industrial buildings and empty surface parking lots don't stand a chance. Two hundred new residential units can bring a lot of revenue for surrounding businesses, especially if they are within walking distance. Having a theater and retail/office district as well as an industrial themed art and public market across the street will be a large draw for the residents of Malden Station. These two development projects also address what the community wanted to see more of in the Downtown Core.

Community members stressed the importance of future economic vitality over housing and the need for more high-class office space. The retail/office development fills these needs. One inconsistency in the DCCSP was that the community said they wanted to have more unique national retailers, while the plan stressed that the character of the Downtown core was due in part to many mom and popshops. The project should therefore have a mix of these types of retail businesses to appease both sides. The community also noted that there should be more day-to-day amenities like drug stores and grocers. The renovated art and public market could fill the need for some of the grocery needs of nearby residents. In terms of other retail space, the retail/residential would be a good fit for a drugstore, bookstore, or coffee shop.

While housing was not a priority for the community, Fullerton still needs to maximize build-out to fulfill its regional housing requirements. The retail/residential development also will be the most feasible and profitable for the developers. It seems like some community members understand that higher density brings more economic opportunity, but others do not like the idea of multi-story buildings in their community. For this reason, the developments should be kept in the two to three-story range. Another advantage of adding housing to the development is that it would be transit-oriented development since it is within ½ mile of the Transit Center. This promotes a walkable community that can take advantage of mass transit options and decreases the reliance on the automobile.

The hardest sell of the project is probably the community garden/park aspect and the alley integration. Community gardens can help build stronger communities by enhancing nutrition and

physical activity, as well as promoting the role of public health in improving community health (Twiss et al. 2003). Therefore, an investment in a community garden is actually an investment in public health and community character. In addition, the location across the street from Malden Station makes it a good site, as none of the residents would have access to a garden otherwise. Alleys are often underutilized, as they are perceived as dirty and unsafe. However, alleys represent unrealized community assets that can be transformed by urban planners into 'green infrastructure' to offer benefits including urban walkability and mobility (Wolch et al. 2010). The rejuvenated lit alley will not only serve as a walkable connection to the SOCO district, but also as a public space for street fairs and community murals.

#### *Sustainability of the Proposed Development*

In terms of sustainability, the proposed development is not simply concerned with Fullerton's economic sustainability, but also its environmental sustainability. The transit-oriented development is a prime example as it encourages use of mass transit to cut down on use of automobiles. Also, improved bicycle connectivity from the Bicycle Master Plan will help link the Downtown Core to the rest of Fullerton. The community garden provides the opportunity for people to grow their own food and appreciate nature and the outdoors. Native vegetation would be used for all landscaping in the development, as to not stress Fullerton's water resources. Finally, any lighting will incorporate night sky friendly designs to reduce light disturbance to nocturnal species and create better star gazing opportunities for the community.

#### *Suggestions for Further Research*

Transit-oriented development has emerged as a hot trend in urban planning, but its effectiveness in creating greater use of mass transit options has been poorly studied. In addition, the quality of life in transit-oriented developments, and whether or not living in a transit-oriented development leads to more environmentally responsible behaviors has not been researched.

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