

Expert Takes a Look at the Value of Downtown Turlock

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As an expert on downtown development and urban design, Joe Minicozzi stressed the importance of focusing on investing in Downtown Turlock at a special workshop held on Tuesday evening at City Hall.

Minicozzi, of Asheville, NC, holds a Masters Degree in Architecture and Urban Design from Harvard University and has served as the Executive Director of Asheville's Downtown Association.

As part of working with planning and architecture firm Urban 3 LLC, Minicozzi has also spent time traveling across the nation, visiting various cities in order to help community members and local officials gain insight on the importance of investing in downtown areas, rather than being drawn in to developing big box corporations such as Wal-Mart.

Minicozzi drew majority of his conclusions on the importance of downtown development from the success he had witnessed as part of the revitalization of Asheville's downtown area. When the City of Asheville developed a giant mall outside of the town, Minicozzi reported that the downtown area quickly died, resulting in a struggle to have community members show interest in revitalizing the area.

After much effort, the City of Asheville was capable of restoring their downtown area, which has lead to the city being named as number 5 of the top 12 Travel Destinations in America with more than 2.9 million visitors to the downtown area per year.

"The power of downtown is very economically large to our community," stated Minicozzi.

According to Minicozzi's philosophy, the success of any downtown area is dependent on educating the community on how giant store developments, however alluring in size and splendor, is not economically valuable to a city or town if viewed by a means of capita per acreage.

Should a community focus on dense development by using existing buildings and infill development strategies, rather than large stores that use tons of land space, the City could produce a higher level of value per acreage.

Minicozzi also completed an analysis of Modesto's 90-acre Vintage Faire Mall, which produces nearly \$4,500 in property taxes per acre, as compared to Downtown Modesto that could produce as much property tax revenue, if not more, as Vintage Faire Mall with just 17 acres of space. The Vintage Faire Mall is valued at \$1.6 million per acre, while the downtown area property value is approximately \$2.4 million per acre.



“More land does not necessarily mean a higher value,” stated Minicozzi.

In regards to the City of Turlock, Minicozzi also shared that Main Street’s property value is worth approximately \$1.6 million per acre, around the same as Vintage Faire Mall. Although Monte Vista Crossings is vastly larger than Main Street, its property value has less value at approximately \$1.2 million per acre.

Although some communities may be drawn to giant stores, such as Wal-Mart, Minicozzi shared that even Turlock’s Wal-Mart produces less property tax revenue per acre than Downtown Turlock. The Wal-Mart in Turlock generates approximately \$2,660 in property tax revenue per acre, while the downtown area generates approximately \$5,173 per acre.

“If the buildings are there, just fix them,” stated Minicozzi. He also stated that many of the buildings in Downtown Turlock already produce an enormous value in property tax revenue, such as 117 S. Broadway that currently produces \$14,780 per acre.

Minicozzi also emphasized how compact development that focuses on density rather than sprawl could also be economically efficient in means of services such as infrastructure, police and fire.

Although Councilwoman Mary Jackson shared concerns about getting developers in the area to do infill development, as it is more expensive and difficult, Minicozzi says to not give up on bringing infill development to the table when meeting with such developers.

“Find local developers who are willing to go the extra mile,” stated Minicozzi.

Minicozzi also stated that the Turlock community could achieve the revitalization of the downtown area due to the amount of pedestrian activity he witnessed in the area with community members walking around and shopping in the downtown area.



“You have a pretty healthy downtown,” he stated.

Should developers focus more on Downtown Turlock, however, the area could become even more valuable to the City.

Planning Director Debbie Whitmore and The City of Turlock have shared hopes of bringing in developers who have successfully developed old buildings and similar projects throughout the Valley as an effort to help Downtown Turlock flourish.

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