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Rising Water Street

City plans for downtown transformation

by Buford Davis

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If city planners have their way, the downtown Water Street Redevelopment District may be nearly unrecognizable within a decade.

Architect Windom Kinsey of the firm Tate Snyder Kimsey Architects presented results from a recent Downtown Henderson Redevelopment Charette to city council Aug. 6, offering a vision of the district radically different from the one that exists today.

"The idea is to spark some thoughts about Water Street and maybe discuss some things that haven't been discussed before," said Kinsey. "(Water Street) has had a lot of investment by the city and I think there's a lot to build on."

The focus group suggested the creation of a district gateway at the corner of Water Street and Lake Mead Boulevard, as well a public market complex placed near the Henderson Convention Center, which hosted the June 19 charette.

Development models offered by Kinsey included Pike Place Market in Seattle, Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade and Abbott Kinney Boulevard in Venice, Calif.

"One of the things that hasn't been looked at before was the opportunity to have a public market," Kinsey said. "They are in a lot of civic areas downtown all around the country. That's one thing we came up with I think everybody really gravitated toward."

Challenges to development, according to the focus group, include few destination points along Water Street, limited available incentives to attract large projects, a lack of strong identity and pride among residents, lack of



A glimpse of the future? This computer rendering offers a possible view of the new Water Street District in coming years.*photo byCity of Henderson.*



Windom Kinsey of Tate Snyder Kimsey Architects presents results from June's Downtown Henderson Redevelopment Charette, Aug. 6.

population density and poor public perception of the district.

Kimsey said Chamber of Commerce representatives are actively trying to recruit retail business investment to the region. "Part of that recruitment process is producing some imagery and some enthusiasm about Water Street that will get developers interested in investing in the area.

"We have a lot of great events on Water Street, but I think the challenge is to get some of these folks who attend to linger a little longer."

Kimsey pointed out that the firm's renderings include extensive sidewalk dining. "I know The Coffee House has some seats outside, but I think, if you think of existing restaurants, the idea to have this outdoor dining experience is a real positive. The scale of the street really lends itself to that."

The group suggests creating more welcoming public spaces, the addition of anchor destinations and a mix of businesses, including retail, food and entertainment, additional public art and the addition of residential housing along Water Street.

"A lot of revitalization includes mix use and multi-family housing," noted Kimsey.

"I feel like we're getting some momentum here," said Mayor Andy Hafen. "Let's not let the ball drop here. Let's make sure we follow through."

Kimsey suggested that extensive redevelopment has occurred in other cities within a three year time frame.

"We have an unofficial committee that's actually going out and marketing Water Street," City Manager Jacob Snow reported to the council. "There are interested parties that are looking at Water Street and we are working with them now.

"We will take the results of this charette and we will start developing our own marketing materials so that we can go out and talk to people with deep pockets. My calendar is full now with meetings with

prospective developers."