

Downtown Antioch Association

Community Safety and Development Meeting

Date: August 19, 2026 **Location:** El Campanile Theater **Hosted by:** Debbie Blaisure, President, Downtown Antioch Association

City and public safety officials present: Mayor Ron Bernal, Mayor Pro Tem Don Farias, Councilwoman Tamisha Walker Torres, City Clerk Michael Manley, Sergeant Fachener and Officer Amiri of the Antioch Police Department. Acting City Manager Amber Cortez was referenced as present.

Absent but engaged: Brian Pitts (Public Works) and Kevin Scudero (Acting Economic Development). Both asked that any issues raised be recorded so they can follow up.

Why this meeting happened

The DAA called this meeting in response to a sharp rise in downtown incidents over the past month. Debbie Blaisure opened by naming what businesses have been reporting to her directly: burglaries, assaults on the street, theft, vandalism, graffiti, and a fire. She has run a downtown business for twelve years and said this stretch has produced more incident reports than any she can remember. Three downtown businesses have closed recently, and others have told her privately that they are not sure they want to stay.

Her framing set the tone for the evening. She asked the room not to place blame on the city, the police department, or individual staff, all of whom are working short-handed. Her point was that businesses carry more weight when they speak as one group, and that individual complaints get further when they are organized into shared priorities and brought to council together.

She grouped the concerns into five areas: working with APD, downtown security guard coverage, new lighting and cameras, cleanliness, and economic development.

The theater question

Sharon Sobel, president of the nonprofit that operates programming at El Campanile,

spoke early to address a video circulating on social media about a potential buyer for the building. She clarified that her organization is a tenant of more than three years and is not affiliated with the buyer or the video, even though the video may read that way.

Mayor Bernal confirmed there is a legal purchase agreement in place, that an offer has been made and accepted, and that the people in the video are attempting to raise money. He was candid that community fundraising efforts of this kind usually do not come together without an organized group and real money in the bank.

Several attendees pushed for more detail. Debbie shut the topic down, and the reason matters: three council members were in the room when only two were scheduled, which limits what can legally be discussed in a public setting. She committed to handling the theater at a separate meeting. Councilwoman Walker Torres said there is context the community does not have and offered one-on-one conversations in the meantime.

This is the item most likely to resurface. It needs its own meeting.

Security patrol coverage

The most concrete cause-and-effect discussed all night. The city had a contract with a security company to patrol downtown from 5 p.m. to midnight, rotating between nine parking lots and addressing anything the patrol saw in transit. That contract ended at the end of June. Downtown has now gone roughly six weeks without it, and the mayor said plainly that he believes the gap is connected to the current uptick.

Mayor Pro Tem Don Farias and Council Member Rocha are working on whether to renew, and what a renewed contract should look like in cooperation with APD and downtown businesses. The mayor described this as urgent.

Walker Torres raised an alternative worth tracking: a police district overlay for the business district. It costs participating businesses more, but it funds actual police service rather than a contracted vendor. Her argument was that with a contract, you always have to ask who the vendor really answers to.

APD staffing, and why response times look the way they do

Sergeant Fachener and Officer Amiri gave a presentation aimed at explaining what the department is actually working with.

Antioch has 85 sworn officers against 105 authorized positions, serving roughly 120,000 residents. The mayor put that at about 0.75 officers per 1,000 people, well

below where a city this size should be. Twelve people are in the hiring pipeline, nine currently in the academy and three entering September 12. Five more are in background, polygraph, and medical stages. Council has authorized a path to 117 officers by fiscal year 2028, which would move the city closer to one officer per 1,000.

The timeline is the part most people do not know. From application to academy start takes about six months. The academy itself is another six months, and not everyone passes. Field training follows that. Lateral hires, meaning officers already certified elsewhere, move faster at eight to ten weeks to hire and about six weeks of field training.

Dispatch is authorized for 17 and currently has 14 active plus two in training. Dispatcher training runs a year in-house before the state academy.

The workload numbers from the last 30 days: 7,746 calls for service handled by patrol, 17,960 phone calls answered by dispatch, 1,179 cases documented, 157 arrests. That works out to roughly 11 calls for service every hour and over 25 dispatch calls every hour.

The call priority explanation was useful and worth repeating to business owners:

- **Priority 1:** immediate danger to life. Active violence, shootings, someone not breathing, severe injury accidents.
- **Priority 2:** suspicious persons or vehicles, verbal disturbances, reckless driving, vandalism, shoplifting.
- **Priority 3:** no immediate danger, situation stable, suspect already gone.

A Priority 2 call placed first still gets pushed back by a Priority 1 call placed two minutes later. That is why a report can sit for hours. This is the answer to give business owners who ask why nobody came.

Tools APD offered

Four resources came up that businesses can use right now:

CrimeMapping (referred to as Cisnrims in the meeting). A live crime map by address. Useful for spotting patterns near your block and organizing a neighborhood or block watch.

Extra patrol requests. You can submit a request for increased patrol in a specific area during specific hours. This came up in response to a downtown resident who described consistent property damage between 12:30 a.m. and 4 a.m. If an officer is not on

another call during that window, they can patrol your area.

Vacation house checks. Submit three weeks ahead and an APD volunteer will check your property.

SeeClickFix app. iOS and Android. Photograph graffiti, abandoned vehicles, or similar issues, and the app GPS tags the report and routes it to the correct city department with status updates. Parking enforcement uses the same feed for abandoned vehicle reports.

The camera registry change

APD is moving its camera registry to a new system called Fusus, owned by Axon. This came with an important clarification that businesses keep getting wrong.

Registering your camera does not give APD access to it. Registration only tells the department that a camera exists at your address so they know who to contact for footage. They email you a link and you upload the clip if you choose to. Officer Amiri pointed out this also protects people who do not want to be seen speaking with police at their door.

There is a separate optional upgrade, the Fusus Core module. It starts at about \$350 with a \$150 annual subscription. It hardwires into your existing cameras and lets you share live video with the department on your terms. You choose which cameras, which hours, or you can set it to activate only when a call comes in near your address and shut off when the call clears.

Sergeant Fachener explained why live access matters operationally. Alarm calls typically reach police four to five minutes after the fact. With live video, dispatch can pull a suspect description or plate while officers are en route, and can connect one hit to another across town on the same night.

APD received 10 modules free from Axon and Fusus. They will place these strategically based on crime data and high-impact locations, at no cost to those businesses. Anyone else who wants to sign up can.

One caution repeated several times: camera quality determines whether footage is usable. Debbie mentioned she has a contact who can advise businesses on cameras and asked people to reach out to her.

Community survey coming

APD is preparing a community survey in partnership with CSU East Bay to measure public perception of the department and gather feedback on services and resource allocation. It will be open for 60 days and promoted through APD social media and through inserts on water bills. No launch date announced yet.

Cleanliness

Debbie described the recurring complaint she hears most: downtown is dirty. Businesses that maintain their own storefronts still deal with the frontage of vacant buildings whose landlords are not around. Blue paint from a Fourth of July event is reportedly still visible across three blocks.

Mayor Bernal explained the mechanics. Street sweeping runs through a Delta Diablo Sanitation contract. Sweepers do not wait for parked cars, they drive around them, and they do not pick up large debris, they drive around that too. His practical ask was for residents and businesses to learn their sweep schedule, move vehicles on those days, and clear heavy debris out of the gutters so the sweeper can do its job.

Both Brian Pitts and Kevin Scudero asked to be sent whatever came up so they can follow up.

Parking

Parking generated the most back-and-forth of the night.

Parking enforcement is now in-house. The city previously contracted it out and ran into liability problems, including cars towed that should not have been and citations issued that should not have been. Enforcement now runs through three full-time CSOs plus volunteers working two to three days a week. Abandoned vehicle and parking complaints have dropped from more than 500 to an average of 40 to 50 a day.

On RVs, Sergeant Fachener explained the constraint clearly. If registration is current, the vehicle is operable, and it moves every 72 hours, it cannot be cited on a public street. Private lots downtown post their own 72-hour limits.

Two-hour parking rules exist downtown, but enforcement has historically been thin.

Permit parking was the strongest new idea to come out of the meeting. A downtown resident of 18 years described not being able to park where he can see his vehicle, and having his car damaged after confronting people at 3 a.m. Permit parking is not currently in the city ordinance. Walker Torres said she came from Richmond, where

downtown McDonald Avenue mixes business and residential and does have permit parking. Her position was that the city should stop leading with what it cannot do and start asking what it would take. Mayor Bernal said the group should develop the idea, agree on the desired outcome, and bring a proposal to the city. He noted it is a significant undertaking, and that squeezing one part of the problem tends to push it somewhere else.

Two other parking items surfaced:

- **Signage.** Downtown has nine parking lots and no clear wayfinding. Walker Torres called this out as a low-cost near-term fix. People cannot use lots they do not know exist.
- **One-way conversion of 4th to 2nd Street** to add parking. Walker Torres and Scott Bunting walked the streets and discussed it. It would require a traffic and parking study plus council approval, and realistically a multi-year process.
- **A parking structure** was floated as a long-term option, with the caveat that it should not read as a gray box in a historic waterfront district.

Walker Torres also flagged a constraint that shapes all long-term land decisions: when the city puts land on the open market, state law opens it to housing development first. Holding land intentionally matters if downtown wants control over what gets built.

Economic development

This is where the structural problem showed. City economic development capacity is limited by staff vacancies. The Economic and Community Development Director position is open and being actively recruited while Kevin Scudero serves as acting director. Walker Torres said her hope is that the position gets filled now rather than waiting six months to a year for a permanent city manager to be hired first. Anyone interested can apply online.

Debbie reported that the DAA and Communities Strong put together a five-year downtown plan, shared it with economic development and the District 1 representative, and want to start work on year one priorities with the broader group. She will share it with membership.

She was also direct about sequencing. People keep asking for an event every weekend. Her response is that events require money and, more importantly, they require people to feel safe enough to come downtown in the first place. Safe and clean comes before programming.

Dominique, a downtown business owner, made the point that the situation is a symptom of several overlapping problems rather than any one person's fault, and asked what can be done about it. Councilwoman Walker Torres responded that work was underway before the city manager went on leave to address the operational deficits driving high vacancy rates across departments. Her concern is that when a city gets understaffed enough, it starts contracting out services it should be delivering itself.

The conversation then turned to what businesses can do without waiting on the city:

- Denise made the point that it takes something like a hundred positive actions to erase one negative one, and that young people are absorbing the negative version of Antioch before they ever visit.
- The three actions from a prior meeting were repeated: pick up a piece of garbage, project a positive image, shop and eat local.
- Debbie noted that people creating negative content about downtown are monetizing it, and that the community does not have to supply the audience.
- Walker Torres offered a balanced version: amplify real positive experiences without dismissing genuine harm happening in the community, and do not let the harm become the focal point of a community trying to attract investment.
- Recruiting businesses is something anyone can do. Debbie specifically named a breakfast restaurant as an open gap downtown, and asked people to send prospective owners her way rather than letting them hear the negative version first.

DAA promotion channel. Members get a business highlight on the DAA website. Debbie asked businesses to send her their promotions and events so the DAA can produce reels. She reported strong view counts on DAA social content. This costs nothing but the time to send her the material.

Church ordinance question

An attendee asked whether the city could use an ordinance to limit how many churches operate downtown, citing research that a heavy concentration of churches in a small area affects the trajectory of a business district.

The answer was no. Federal law prohibits a city from denying permits to religious organizations. Mayor Bernal noted the city sought legal guidance on this roughly 20 years ago and got the same answer. The topic was tabled for a possible future meeting.

Community event announcement

Councilwoman Walker Torres announced two NAACP and community partner events this Saturday:

- **Career fair, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Antioch High School.** Kaiser, labor organizations, and trades will be present, focused on one-year career pathways for young people.
 - **Family event, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Contra Loma Estates Park.** Rides, food, backpack giveaway, clothing giveaway, and children's activities.
-

Decisions and commitments

- City council (Mayor Pro Tem Farias and Council Member Rocha) is actively deciding whether to reinstate the downtown security patrol contract and what form it should take. Treated as urgent.
 - APD will place 10 free Fusus modules based on crime data and strategic value, at no cost to those businesses.
 - The theater discussion is tabled for a separate meeting, not dropped.
 - Public Works and Economic Development will follow up on issues logged from this meeting.
 - Permit parking will be explored, but the community needs to build and bring the proposal.
-

Action items

For downtown businesses and residents

- Register your security cameras with APD through the new Fusus system.
- Upgrade camera quality if your current footage is not usable. Contact Debbie for a referral.
- Download SeeClickFix and use it for graffiti, abandoned vehicles, and similar issues.
- Check CrimeMapping for your block and submit extra patrol requests for known problem windows.
- Learn your street sweeping day, move vehicles, and clear heavy debris from gutters.

- Send promotions, events, and reel material to Debbie for DAA social media.
- Join the DAA and get your business highlight on the website.
- Email your district council representative and the full council. Attend council meetings.
- Refer prospective business owners to downtown Antioch. A breakfast restaurant is a named gap.
- Watch for the APD community survey and complete it.

For the DAA and the working group

- Develop a permit parking proposal to bring to city council.
- Share year-one priorities from the five-year downtown plan with membership.
- Schedule a separate meeting on the El Campanile Theater.
- Compile issues raised tonight and send to Brian Pitts and Kevin Scudero.
- Consider pursuing parking lot signage as a low-cost, near-term win.

For the city

- Finalize the downtown security patrol decision.
- Fill the Economic and Community Development Director position without waiting on a permanent city manager.
- Distribute Fusus modules to priority locations.
- Release and promote the CSU East Bay community survey.

Open questions

- What are downtown security guards actually responsible for, and can that scope be extended? Private building security was also raised. Do they call police when they observe suspicious activity outside their assigned property, or do they turn away? This was listed as a focus area but never fully answered.
- What is the status of new lighting and cameras in District 1, and does tree trimming need to happen alongside it for the lighting to matter?
- Will the security patrol contract be renewed, replaced with a police district overlay, or something else?

- Who takes the lead on a permit parking proposal, and by when?
 - What happens with the theater purchase, and who convenes the separate meeting?
-

Notes on this document

- The transcript refers to "Cisnrims" for the crime map. This is most likely CrimeMapping. Confirm the correct tool name and link before sharing with businesses.
- Confirm the meeting date before distribution.
- Mayor Bernal named Mayor Pro Tem Farias and Council Member Rocha as the two working the security patrol decision. Council Member Rocha was not identified as present in the room. Confirm before circulating.