On May 1st through May 4th, The City of Soledad with Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. held a three-day design charrette in downtown for the Downtown Specific Plan Update and Vision Program. Over the course of the three days, the Consultant Team met with City Officials and members of the general public to discuss design and land use concepts for the Specific Plan area. Sargent Town Planning created an illustrative site map and several perspective illustrations based on concepts discussed at the charrette. Additionally, transportation planning firm Nelson Nygaard conducted a parking analysis and generated key ideas for an innovative parking strategy for downtown. On the afternoon of May 4th, the City Council and Planning Commission held a joint study session to review the work completed to date and provided additional feedback (Click here for official meeting minutes). Feedback from the public, Planning Commission and City Council will inform the creation of regulations and standards for upcoming work on the Downtown Specific Plan, slated to begin this summer and conclude early next year.
Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. was hired by the City to lead a team of consultants including Sargent Town Planning, Raimi + Associates, Nelson Nygaard, Hanna-Brunetti, Jacobson & Wack, and SWCA to update the City’s Downtown Specific Plan. A key component of the Specific Plan Update is establishing a detailed Vision Program with clear goals and guiding principles that capitalize on unique community assets and differentiate downtown Soledad from other Salinas Valley cities. The Vision Program and Downtown Specific Plan Update seek to restore the City’s historic downtown as the commercial center.

Over the course of a three-day design charrette (5/2/11 – 5/4/11), the Consultant Team worked collaboratively with the City to craft a Vision that builds on the City’s existing downtown assets including recently improved streetscapes, a compact pedestrian-oriented street network, and successful local businesses. The charrette included lunch sessions on the topics of urban design and business development, as well as two evening public workshops.

Charrette activities culminated in a special meeting of the Planning Commission and City Council on Wednesday, May 4, 2011. The Consultant Team presented the results of the charrette and input received from the community. The presentation included urban and architectural design proposals, street and public space configuration concepts, recommendations regarding building types and uses for downtown infill development, and suggestions for façade and signage improvements.

The Consultant Team will utilize the feedback and ideas generated at the charrette to create a draft Vision Program document illustrating refined concepts for the downtown. The Vision Program will inform the Specific Plan update process, which is scheduled to begin in July 2011.