

OUR VISION FOR DOWNTOWN SAN RAFAEL IN 2010

Our Vision

Our Value Constitution

Economic Principles

Design Principles

District Visions

This is our Vision for Downtown San Rafael. It is an image of what we want to create for ourselves, our children and our future. It is not a conventional land use, economic development or zoning plan. Our Vision, together with the Implementation Strategy, is intended to serve several purposes. First, it is a document stating the community consensus for the future of Downtown, the agreements we have on what Downtown ought to be. Second, it is the basis for detailed land use, design and economic plans to be developed to move toward the desired Downtown. Third, it is an indicator of how public and private actions can be coordinated, and fourth, it is a framework for the many public and private decisions needed to achieve the Vision.

Our Vision for Downtown San Rafael in 2010 has five elements:

Our Vision - What we envision Downtown to be in the year 2010. This is what we want to achieve.

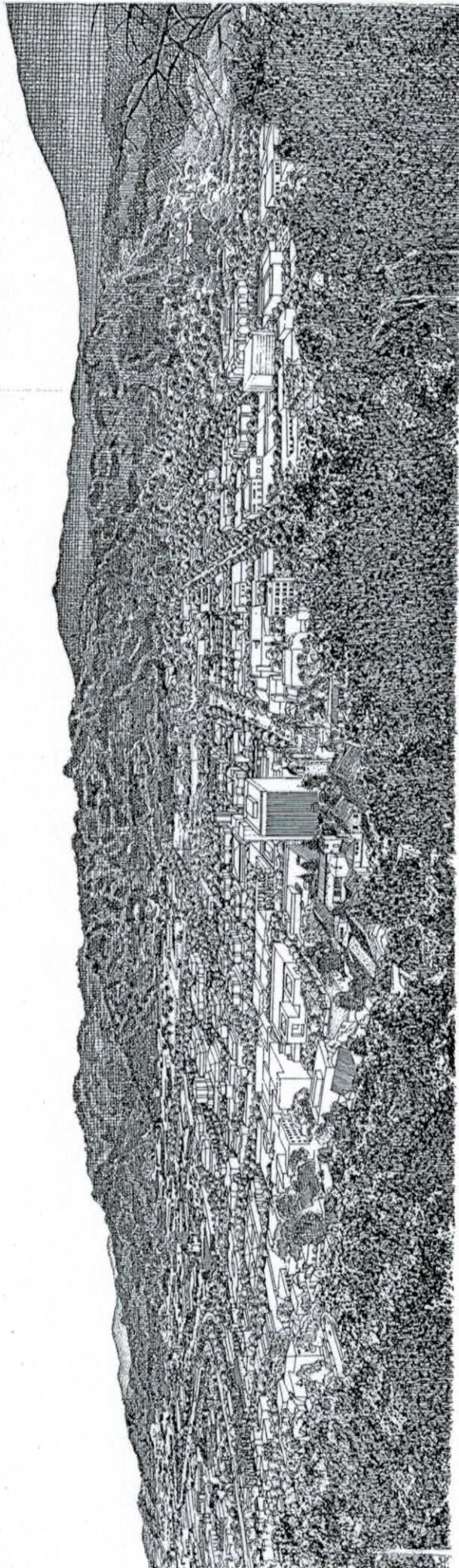
Our Value Constitution - Our Community values and beliefs which are the foundation of our Vision and are expressed Downtown. These values will guide our public and private sector decisions about development and change Downtown.

Economic Principles - Economic related courses of action consistent with the Vision and the Values Constitution. Over time, public and private projects and activities will follow the direction given in these principles.

Design Principles - Physical design factors and actions consistent with the consistent with the Vision and the Values Constitution. Some of these principles will require further study, others can be followed immediately.

District Visions - More detailed visions that address the special character of Downtown's six Districts and illustrations of how these principles can be implemented.





Downtown

View from Boyd Hill

Vision of Downtown
San Rafael

T*his is our community dream, a description of Downtown San Rafael in the year 2010. It includes the image projected by Downtown, who is served by Downtown, the relationship of our Downtown to the rest of the county and the biggest changes that have occurred since the early 1990's. This Vision is intended to capture our imaginations, focus our energies and raise our spirits. This is what we want for ourselves and future generations. All future public and private actions will be evaluated to see if they further the intent of Our Vision.*

We envision:

Downtown San Rafael in 2010 to be a healthy economic center, the business, financial and retail center for San Rafael and Marin County. A full range of housing, shopping, and employment activities are provided Downtown. Our Downtown is the heart and soul of San Rafael, the focal point of our community, and is the most interesting place in Marin County.

Our Downtown's Image

Downtown San Rafael is a hometown place; it is safe, friendly, warm and welcoming, a comfortable mix of old and new. At the same time, Downtown is a truly urban community, a multi-dimensional and real city.

Downtown is the center of San Rafael's activities, with a diverse mix of uses including retail, business, finance, government, culture, entertainment, community service and housing. Everyone likes our friendly hospitality and it is a great place to work or to conduct a business.

Successful retail activities are key to the health and vitality of Downtown, and our retailers are thriving. Downtown retail uses are unique and specialized, with an emphasis on local merchants and businesses. Shops provide personal and friendly service, customers know the merchants and like to do business with them.

Many people work Downtown in the new class "A" office buildings and in the restored and refurbished Victorians. Downtown is a wonderful place to live, with a wide range of units including condominiums, apartments, duplexes and houses. In fact, many of the people who work Downtown also live here.

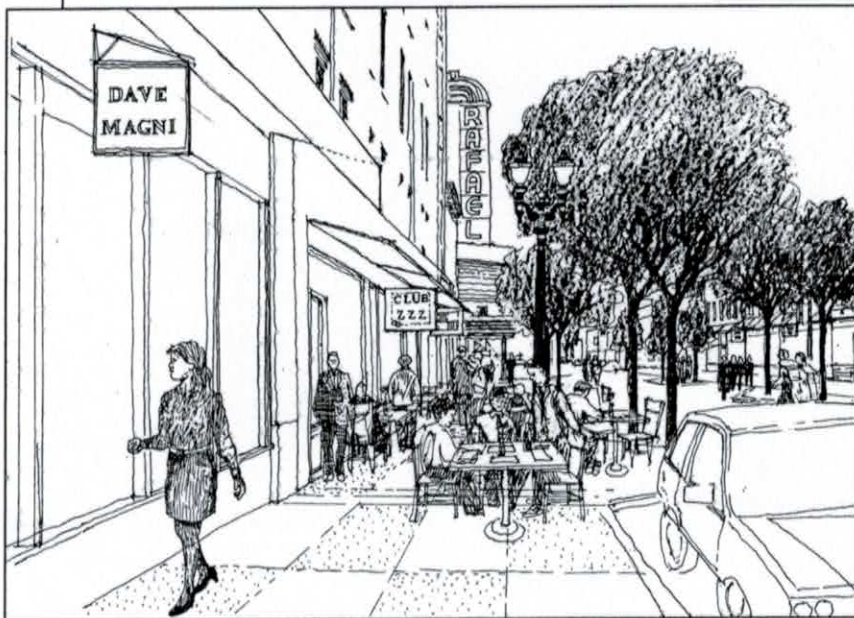
People come Downtown for lots of reasons besides work and shopping. Our cultural, recreation and entertainment activities are concentrated here, from the Falkirk Cultural Center to the dynamic Rafael Theater, and form the most interesting venue in the Bay Area. Residents and visitors alike enjoy our cultural riches: bookstores, library, art galleries, theater and museums, as well as street musicians and outdoor concerts.

Downtown is a friendly place for everyone. Our population is ethnically and culturally diverse and works well together. Children, teens, adults, and seniors all feel welcome Downtown. Families especially feel comfortable here and enjoy their Downtown outings.

Downtown is the place where good things happen in San Rafael. All ages come here for fun and entertainment. Many community celebrations and events happen Downtown. It's a gathering place for entertainment, cultural and special events like the Downtown Farmers Market, the Cinco de Mayo Festival and the Film Festival.

Our Downtown is a very attractive place with tree lined streets, flowers and good architecture. Building heights generally haven't changed, but there is more variety in building height and architecture. One and two story height increases have been granted near the freeway for special landmark buildings in the new Lindero District.

It's a great place to walk around; there are lots of trees and benches and many things to do and see. We make the most of the good weather with outdoor spaces, sidewalk cafes and open air shops.



People meet at our many outdoor cafes

Downtown is a busy place and people come from all over to work and to shop. The sidewalks are busy with people meeting friends for coffee at one of the outdoor cafes or great restaurants, browsing at the popular public market and shopping in the many interesting stores.

These increases in activity, shoppers and workers have resulted in increased traffic. The Transportation Center and the County Transitway are popular and busy alternatives to driving Downtown. We see the increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic Downtown as a mark of our success in revitalizing Downtown over the last 20 years.

District Images

Downtown has six districts, which, while they have individual images and functions, are not totally distinct and separate from one another. Together the districts form a dynamic and appealing whole, a Downtown for all.

Fourth Street Retail Core

Our Retail Core is centered on Fourth Street and flows into the surrounding cross streets. It is a strong, dynamic and growing center of retail and business activity. It's also the social heart of Downtown, the activity and celebration center of the community. Fourth Street is used throughout the year for our many special events and celebrations.

Hetherington Gateway

The Hetherington Gateway District has been revitalized and is a grand entrance to Downtown. New, well designed office buildings in the Gateway serve workers from San Rafael and other Marin communities. Our efficient and attractive Transportation Center provides environmentally friendly ways for people to get to and from Downtown.

Lindero District

The Lindero District has undergone the greatest change of all the Downtown Districts and now enhances the image of our Downtown. It is a landmark development of office, retail, recreation and residential uses. The whole District is beautifully landscaped, well utilized, with strong connections to the Retail Core, easy access to the Transportation Center and the restored San Rafael Creek.

Second/Third Corridor

Second and Third Streets have become aesthetically pleasing boulevards that function as a safe and efficient transportation corridor. This well landscaped office and retail area has been significantly upgraded and gives travellers a positive impression of Downtown San Rafael.

West End Village

Our West End Village is both a residential neighborhood and a special shopping area with a character distinctly different from the rest of Fourth Street. This area has been visually enhanced over the years but has maintained its unique identity and appealing atmosphere.

Fifth/Mission District

The Fifth/Mission District is known for its tree lined streets and pleasant sidewalks. It serves as our civic center and cultural district. It is an excellent location for small offices, apartment buildings, churches and schools. Falkirk Cultural Center, the Belrose Theater and the many Victorian buildings add a special feel to the District.

Downtown Management

Our Downtown is managed; we have a coordinated and proactive program to promote and market the entire Downtown business community. Activities include recruitment and retention of businesses, business development, service programs, common marketing and promotional programs.

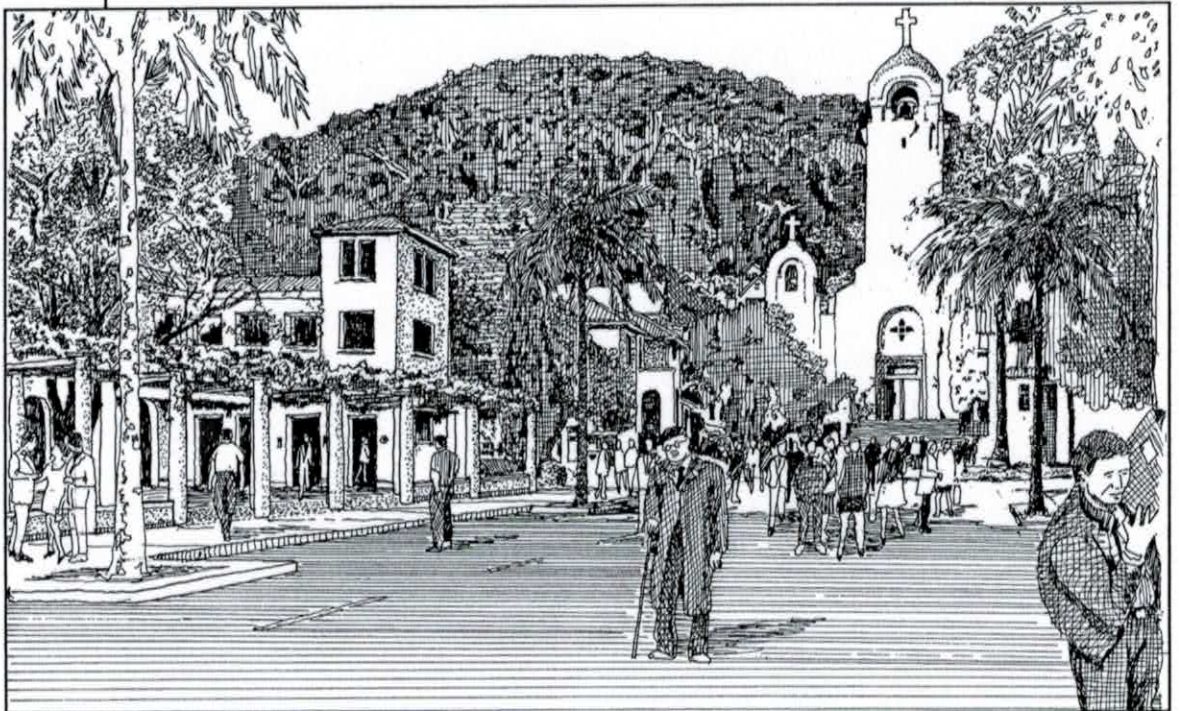
The marketing and management functions are collaborative efforts by the Business Improvement District, property owners, Chamber of Commerce and city officials. It's a friendly, open and efficient process. In addition, many organizations and individuals take responsibility for getting things done Downtown.

Who Does Downtown Serve

Downtown San Rafael serves a diverse population of all ages, cultures, physical abilities and economic levels by offering an interrelated set of activities including retail, office, culture, recreation, housing and employment. It provides business and customer convenience by locating many activities in close proximity and is the multi-purpose destination for all of Marin County.

Businesses and residents are accommodated through the provision of adequate parking, excellent public transportation, bike paths and pedestrian walkways. A range of people from local residents to the entire County are served although the emphasis is on Downtown workers and residents and San Rafael citizens. Tourists are also served through the Mission, great restaurants, cultural opportunities and the wonderful feel and atmosphere of Downtown.

Mission San Rafael Arcangel is popular with tourists



Downtown's Relationship to the Rest of the County

Downtown San Rafael is a role model for the rest of the County. It's a place which coordinates employment, housing and transportation activities and accommodates cultural and ethnic diversity.

Our Downtown has strong community involvement. It doesn't duplicate or compete with other places in the County; it has a unique and separate set of services, businesses and activities. At the same time, Downtown is connected to towns and major shopping centers throughout Marin.

Biggest Changes Downtown

Looking back from 2010, the biggest changes we see in Downtown are that it is now a much livelier place with many more people both day and evening than in 1993; a growing, dynamic, successful retail center; a more attractive place with more landscaping and trees. It is easier to get to Downtown, to move around in it, and to park. New buildings are well designed, and Downtown's events, celebrations and festivals attract the whole community. Another major change is the spirit of cooperation and collaboration among the city's residents, the business community and city officials. While Downtown has undergone these changes, it has managed to retain and enhance its hometown feeling, friendliness and pedestrian scale.



Our Value Constitution

Our Value Constitution contains the Community values that are the foundation of the Vision. These values are inherent throughout the Principles and Implementation Strategy. They are guides and inspiration for future, more detailed decisions, and will strongly influence actions of the city, property owners, developers, merchants and residents as they bring the Vision to life over the next 20 years.

We value:

Sense of Community

Downtown is the heart and soul of the San Rafael community. It's the place where people participate in community life and get involved. Downtown expresses our family orientation and social responsibility.

Healthy Economy

Downtown looks, feels and is a healthy, prosperous place. It is a good place to do business, an excellent investment opportunity and a stable residential area. Downtown is an important and expanding part of the overall city economy.

Hometown Feel

Downtown has a hometown feel; it is comfortable, walkable, the place you go to meet friends, familiar, a community unlike any other in Marin. You greet local people who work in and own their businesses.

Complete Urban Community

Downtown is an urban place that in a compact area provides all the activity needed in a community including shopping, jobs, housing, and entertainment. While Downtown is urban, it is liveable and unique because of its sense of community and hometown feel.

Strong Identity

Downtown has a strong image and presence. It is seen in the city and county as a desirable place to be. People admire and enjoy Downtown. Our Downtown is emulated by other cities and downtowns.

Clean, Safe and Attractive

Downtown is a clean, safe and attractive place. Sidewalks and streets are clean, and all utility lines are underground. People have a sense of security and safety. Buildings and landscaping are maintained, well designed and reflect pride of ownership.

Pleasant to Walk In

Downtown San Rafael is a pleasant place to stroll and people walk to and from the surrounding neighborhoods. Sidewalks are tree shaded, pe-

destrians are screened from traffic, and there are places to sit and “people watch.” Our buildings complement the street level ambience.

Active, Outdoor and People Orientation

Downtown capitalizes on San Rafael’s fine weather, with outdoor cafes, open storefronts, outdoor activities and events. It is fun, exciting, full of people, the place where people go and good things are happening.

Gathering Place

Downtown is the community gathering place where events, parades and special celebrations occur. This is where shopping and business activities converge, where we meet our friends, and interact as a community.

Historic Heritage

Downtown honors and preserves our historic heritage while welcoming and integrating contemporary architecture and art.

Good Neighbor to Neighborhoods

Downtown activities are focused and do not impact nearby neighborhoods. Downtown enhances the neighborhoods’ quality of life by offering easy and safe access to urban amenities and services.

Easy to Move About

It is easy to get to and move about Downtown. We are clear about where pedestrians are encouraged and where traffic efficiency is paramount. There is a full range of transportation options including cars, buses, bikes and walkways. Parking is easy to find and attractive.

Diversity

Downtown embraces diversity and expresses it in many ways. We value and foster a diverse mix of uses, activities and businesses throughout Downtown. We respect and welcome people of all ages, economic status, race and culture. Diversity and creativity in design and architecture are encouraged.

Environmentally Sound Practices

Downtown has environmentally sound practices. Natural features such as the creek are respected. Jobs, housing and transportation are in close proximity to reduce auto dependence and encroachment into open space areas. Recycling, energy and water conservation practices are all followed.

Civic Cooperation

The city, citizens of San Rafael and the business community cooperate to get things done. Actions are collaborative in nature with wide participation by property owners, merchants, business people and residents. High standards are set for development and activity Downtown, and the city works in a proactive and creative way with business to create an aesthetic, successful, people friendly and business friendly environment.

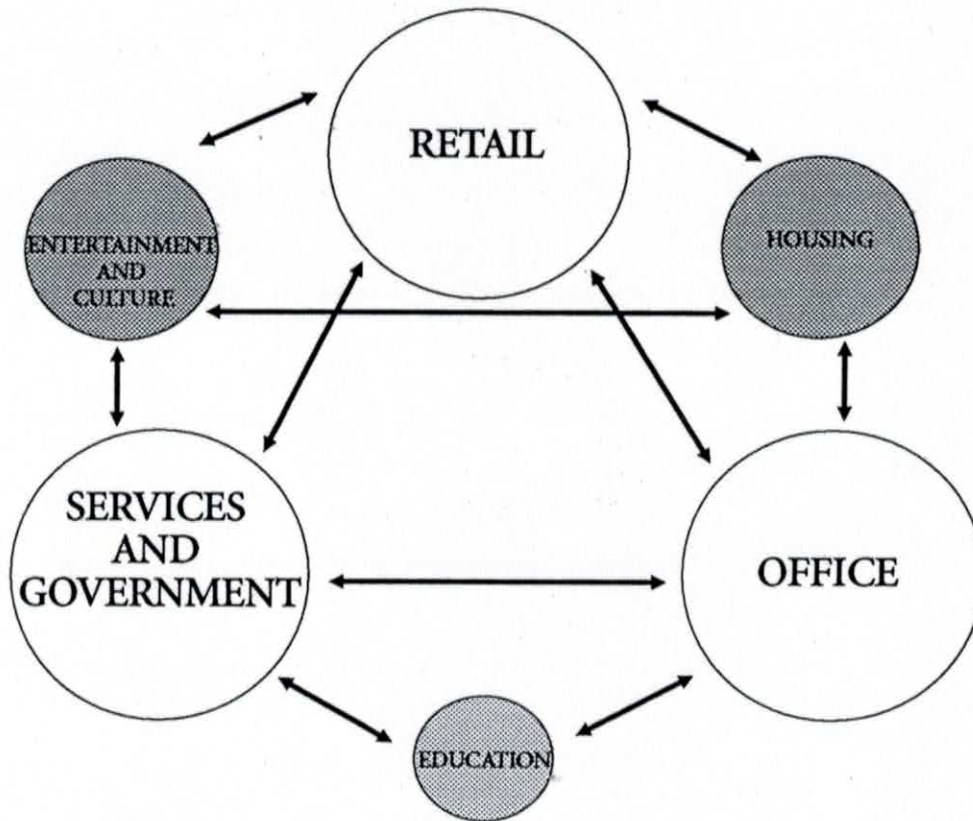
Economic Principles

Our Economic Principles are economic related rules of action flowing from the spirit and intent of our Vision for Downtown San Rafael and our Value Constitution. These are actions, approaches and developments which we feel will move Downtown towards the Vision. More specific programs will need to be developed to fill out the details. It is the details and the individual efforts of all segments of the community that will make these principles work.

We want to:

- Substantially expand Downtown's economic success and generate the necessary financial support to achieve the social, cultural and urban design elements of our Vision.
- Keep Downtown functioning as a substantial tax generator to directly benefit the citizens and City of San Rafael.
- Strengthen Downtown's position as a major business, financial and office center for the city and the county.
- Vigorously support the retail sector because a healthy retail sector is essential to a successful and prosperous Downtown. Action will be taken to:
 - ◆ Attract new enterprises to complement existing businesses,
 - ◆ Assist local businesses and merchants in their efforts to improve and expand.
- Manage and market the retail sector. A united effort that includes the Business Improvement District, Chamber of Commerce, city officials and property owners could pursue:
 - ◆ Business recruitment and retention activities,
 - ◆ Service and education programs for merchants and property owners,
 - ◆ Common marketing and advertising programs for all Downtown.
- Maintain the strong, diversified economic base generated by the mutually supportive, balanced mix of retail, office, service and government uses that exist Downtown.

Strong Economic Base with Mutually Supportive Elements



- Set up an ongoing coordinating committee or planning group to foster the interests of all Downtown. This effort will:
 - ✦ Enable individuals, public and private organizations to all take responsibility for changing Downtown,
 - ✦ Operate in a collaborative manner,
 - ✦ Include wide participation by property owners, merchants, workers, shoppers, residents and city officials.
- Emphasize flexibility and cooperation in the ongoing interactions of city officials, the citizens of San Rafael and the business community. This would include:
 - ✦ Joint public/private efforts to improve Downtown,
 - ✦ Easily understandable, flexible and efficient city development regulations and development review process,
 - ✦ Open, direct communication.

- **Make Downtown active, busy, "alive after five" and on weekends with:**
 - ✦ Many businesses open in the evenings,
 - ✦ Extensive calendar of special events,
 - ✦ Wide variety of cultural and entertainment activities,
 - ✦ More people living Downtown.

- **Establish Downtown as the cultural and entertainment center of the city. Cultural and entertainment activities will:**
 - ✦ Include public, private, non-profit and commercial efforts,
 - ✦ Appeal to people of all ages, cultures, and interests,
 - ✦ Complement and support other businesses Downtown,
 - ✦ Bring more people Downtown.

- **Expand Downtown's reputation as the event center for the city. Events could include parades, festivals, celebrations, promotional sales, sports events, and would be:**
 - ✦ Located in streets, parking lots, sidewalks, open spaces and private property,
 - ✦ Sponsored by public, private and non-profit organizations, individuals and businesses,
 - ✦ Take place in all parts of Downtown.

*Farmers Market,
one of our most
popular events*



- **Construct a popular and attractive residential environment with units of all types and costs. This would include:**
 - ✦ Keeping existing units,
 - ✦ Pursuing private sector construction,
 - ✦ Designing units that take advantage of Downtown's views, proximity to shopping and services,
 - ✦ Adopting residential development standards that respond to Downtown's urban situation,
 - ✦ Balancing the existing unit mix with construction of market rate, family and ownership units.

- **Preserve Downtown's reputation as a special place. Our strategy is to build on existing strengths and honor Downtown's:**
 - ✦ Historic heritage and buildings,
 - ✦ Unique urban characteristics and density,
 - ✦ Diversity in uses, businesses and architecture.

- **Organize the six Downtown Districts to work together as a harmonious whole. Each District will:**
 - ✦ Focus on its own unique character and function,
 - ✦ Complement and support the activities of the other Districts.

Design Principles

Our Design Principles establish the physical design parameters for all of Downtown. These Principles reflect Our Vision Constitution, and work in conjunction with the Economic Principles to establish a coherent system for the physical development aspects of Downtown.

We want to:

- **Emphasize quality architecture and development Downtown.** We place a high value on:
 - ✦ Varied and distinctive building designs,
 - ✦ Sensitive treatment of historic resources,
 - ✦ Generous landscaping to accent buildings,
 - ✦ Appropriate materials and construction.
- **Respect Downtown's urban characteristics with special development criteria to differentiate Downtown from the suburban areas of San Rafael.**
- **Make Downtown's street system much more comfortable for pedestrians.** Our street system will:
 - ✦ Adjust the balance between the needs of pedestrians and the desire for efficient traffic flow to emphasize pedestrians,
 - ✦ Establish a range of pedestrian environments,
 - ✦ Slow traffic where necessary,
 - ✦ Improve sidewalks, street trees and other sidewalk amenities,
 - ✦ Invite creative and innovative solutions and ideas.
- **Focus action and vitality in the "Heart" of Downtown on Fourth Street between the Rafael Theater and Court Street.** This will be the area that first comes to mind when people think of Downtown.
- **Increase the pedestrian shopping street character on Fourth Street and on adjacent portions of the cross streets.** These streets will:
 - ✦ Slow traffic flow to enhance the vibrant shopping setting,
 - ✦ Increase visibility to storefronts and businesses,
 - ✦ Expand sidewalks and possibly have angled parking.

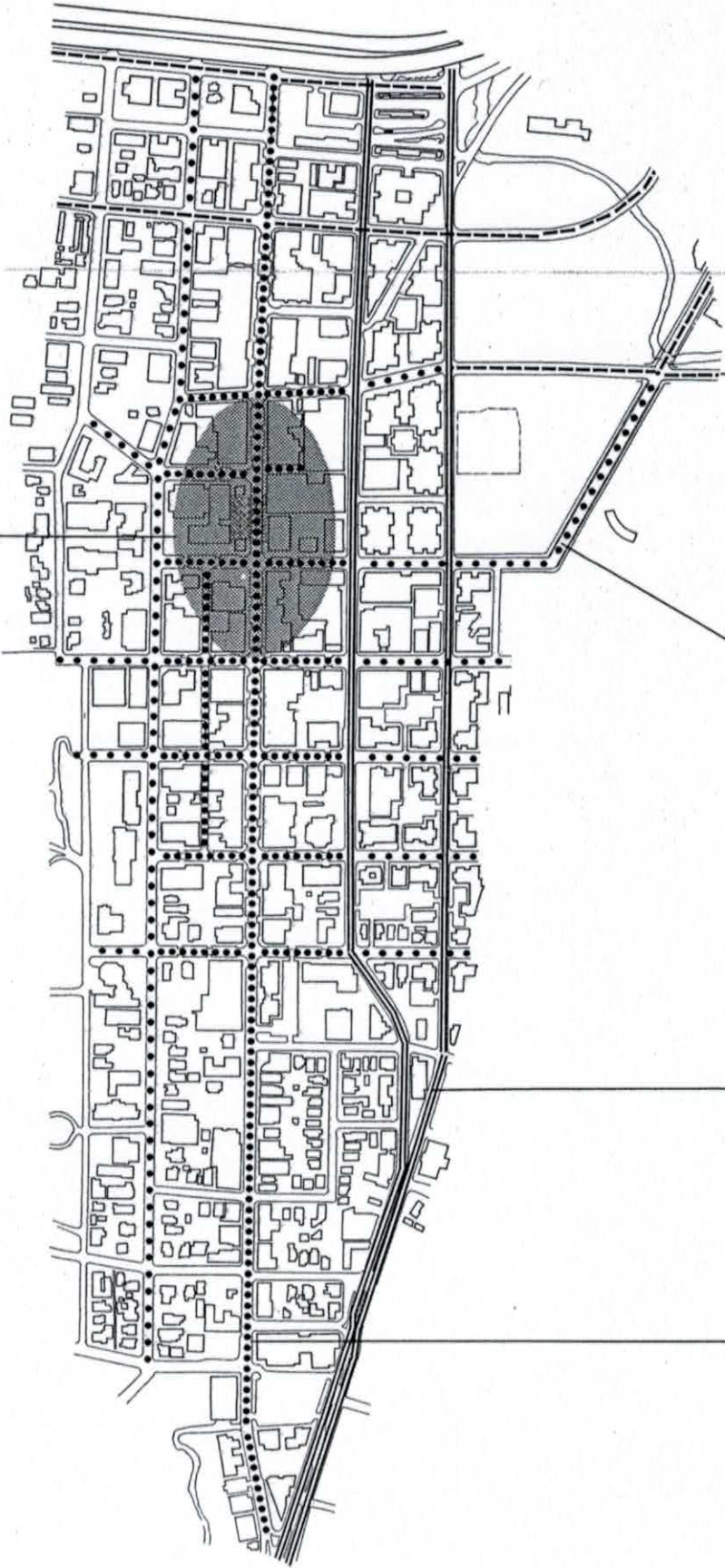
- Enhance the pedestrian environment of neighborhood access streets such as "A", "B", "C", "D", "E" and portions of Andersen Drive. These actions will include:
 - ✦ Emphasizing a comfortable walking atmosphere for pedestrians,
 - ✦ Providing two-way traffic where feasible.
- Refine the appearance of city access streets such as Lincoln, Hetheron, Lindaro and Andersen Drive that connect Downtown to the rest of San Rafael by:
 - ✦ Emphasizing safe and efficient movement of both pedestrians and vehicles to Downtown,
 - ✦ Constructing wide sidewalks on attractive, tree lined streets.
- Substantially improve the county access streets of Second and Third Streets through:
 - ✦ Planting street trees and undergrounding utilities,
 - ✦ Screening pedestrians from traffic and encouraging pedestrian use of other streets,
 - ✦ Providing safe crosswalks at all intersections,
 - ✦ Managing traffic flow for efficiency, not speed.
- Make parking convenient and easy to find. A comprehensive parking strategy will encourage innovative solutions and address Downtown's urban situation.
- Distinguish Downtown from adjoining neighborhood areas by:
 - ✦ Announcing major entrances to Downtown with gateway treatments,
 - ✦ Keeping all Downtown activities within Downtown's area.
 - ✦ Providing a gradual visual transition into adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- Maximize the wonderful views of Mt. Tam and the surrounding hillsides for people in buildings and on the streets by:
 - ✦ Orienting windows and open spaces towards views,
 - ✦ Enhancing the vistas up and down streets to the hillsides.
- Retain the existing building heights of three to five stories. Limited exceptions could be made in some Districts where a taller building will:

- ✦ Accent a gateway and become a landmark element,
 - ✦ Provide substantial public benefit,
 - ✦ Retain pedestrian scale at the ground level.
- **Ensure that all buildings, regardless of their height, are comfortable for people at the ground level. This would include:**
 - ✦ Relating wall and window heights to the height of people,
 - ✦ Providing windows, building setbacks, landscaping and things for pedestrians to look at for visual variety,
 - ✦ Orienting signs to pedestrians.
- **Provide many different ways in addition to cars for people to move to and through Downtown. These could include:**
 - ✦ Bike and walking path connections to adjacent neighborhoods,
 - ✦ Shuttle buses,
 - ✦ The County Transitway,
 - ✦ Bike lanes on streets,
 - ✦ Efficient bus service.

Street Character and Design

Vision of Downtown
San Rafael

Heart of Downtown



Pedestrian Shopping Streets
Fourth Street and portions
of cross streets

County Access Streets
Second and Third

Neighborhood Access Streets
A, B, C, D, E, Fifth,
Looitcus, Andersen

City Access Streets
Lincoln, Heberton,
Lindero, Andersen