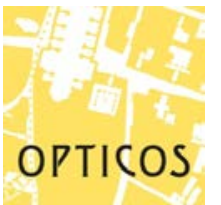




# Downtown Options Report

Downtown San Rafael  
Precise Plan

**September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019**



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# 1. Introduction



# Downtown Precise Plan

## What is the Precise Plan?

- **A 16-month planning effort led by City staff to develop a 2040 Vision for Downtown San Rafael, guided by active community input at all key stages.**

## What will the Precise Plan do?

- **Assess previous planning efforts.**
- **Analyze current Downtown conditions and identify development opportunities.**
- **Establish a Downtown Vision for the next 20 years with zoning-level development standards and design direction for architectural quality, streetscape design, and historic preservation.**

The Precise Plan is a continuation of previous and ongoing Downtown planning efforts including:

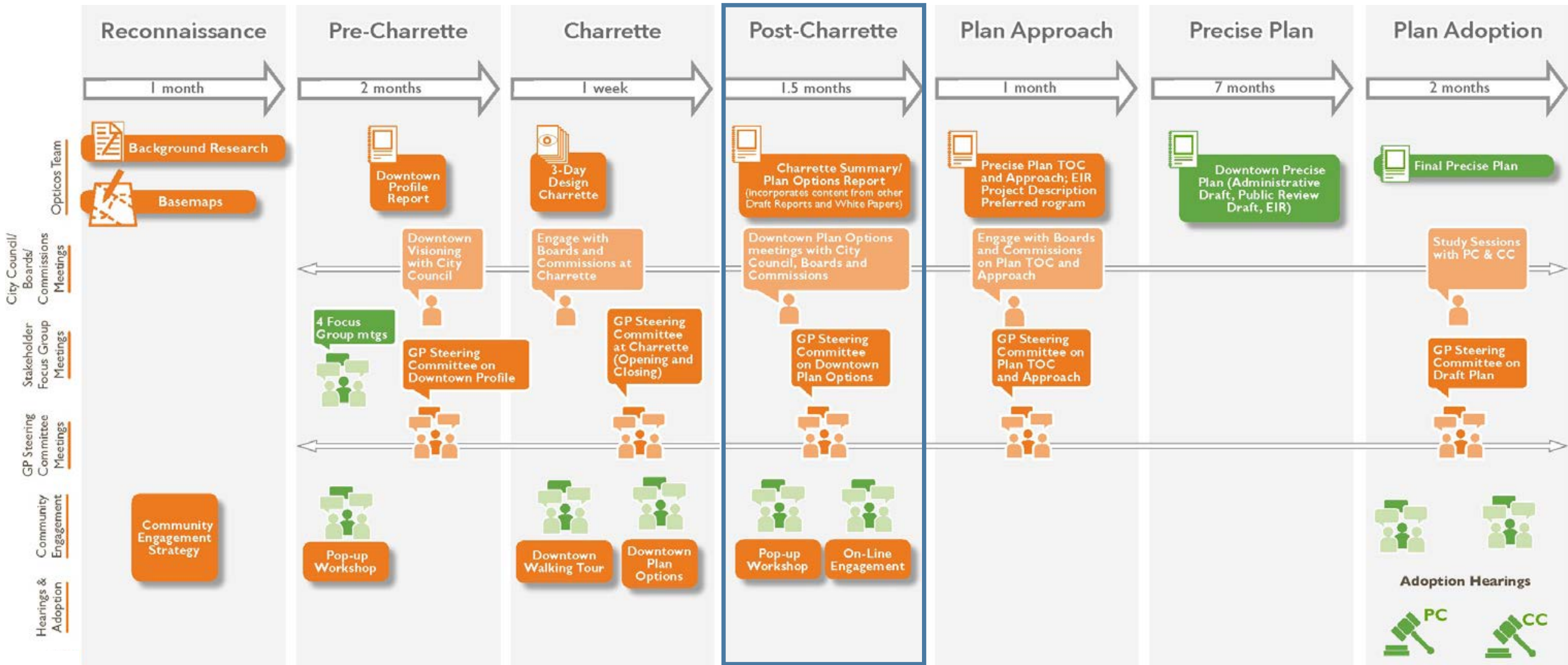
- Downtown Station Area Plan (2012)
- Good Design Guidelines for Downtown (2017)
- San Rafael Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan (2018)
- Downtown Parking and Wayfinding Study (2018)
- San Rafael Transit Center Replacement Project (ongoing)
- Third Street Rehabilitation Project (ongoing)

# Precise Plan study area



**The Precise Plan project area covers approximately 265 acres and includes most of the Downtown PDA, the West End Village and the Montecito Commercial Area.**

# Precise Plan timeline



# 2. Progress to Date



# Precise Plan milestones to date

January 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Project kick-off**

March 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 +  
April 10<sup>th</sup> 2019

**General Plan Steering Committee presentations:  
visioning + prioritization exercises**

April 12<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Visioning pop-up workshop at 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday Art Walk**

May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 +  
May 8<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Focus group meetings with Downtown  
stakeholders**

May 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Multi-day design charrette: opening + closing  
presentations, brown bags, open studio**

June 10<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Downtown Profile Report**





# Precise Plan milestones to date

August 16<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Draft Downtown Options Report**

August 29<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Downtown Options pop-up at farmer's market**

September 10<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Study session with Planning Commission**





# General Plan Steering Committee Presentations + Pop-Up Workshops

# Steering Committee presentations

## Visioning exercise - March 13<sup>th</sup>

Steering Committee members described **assets, constraints and opportunities** in Downtown.

## Prioritization exercise - April 10<sup>th</sup>

Steering Committee members **voted on their top three** assets, opportunities and constraints.

### Top 3 assets

- 16%** **Ambience:** walkable streetscapes, environment
- 16%** **Diversity** of people, businesses and activities
- 18%** **Human scale:** “not too big, not too small”

### Top 3 constraints

- 15%** **Homelessness** is unattractive, uncomfortable
- 17%** **Lack of housing** and people to support businesses
- 18%** **Not pedestrian or bike friendly:** cars too fast, too much through-traffic

### Top 3 opportunities

**15%** Repurpose obsolete or underutilized sites

**15%** Reuse of Bettini Transit Center and Whistlestop

**21%** New infill housing

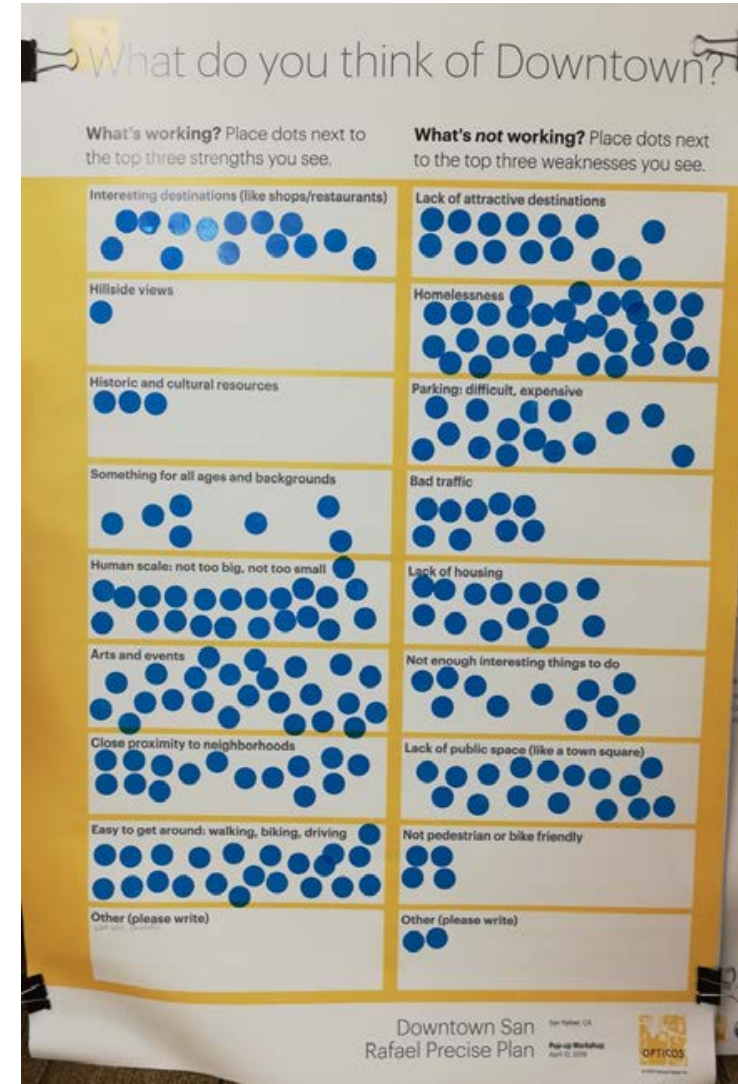
# Downtown Pop-Up 1: plan visioning

- Held on **April 12<sup>th</sup> 2019** at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday Art Walk.
- Passers-by participated in a simple **prioritization exercise**, choosing their top three from two lists: ‘what was working’ in Downtown San Rafael and ‘what was not’.
- Participants could also contribute ideas and thoughts on the topic: “In 2040, Downtown San Rafael will be.....”



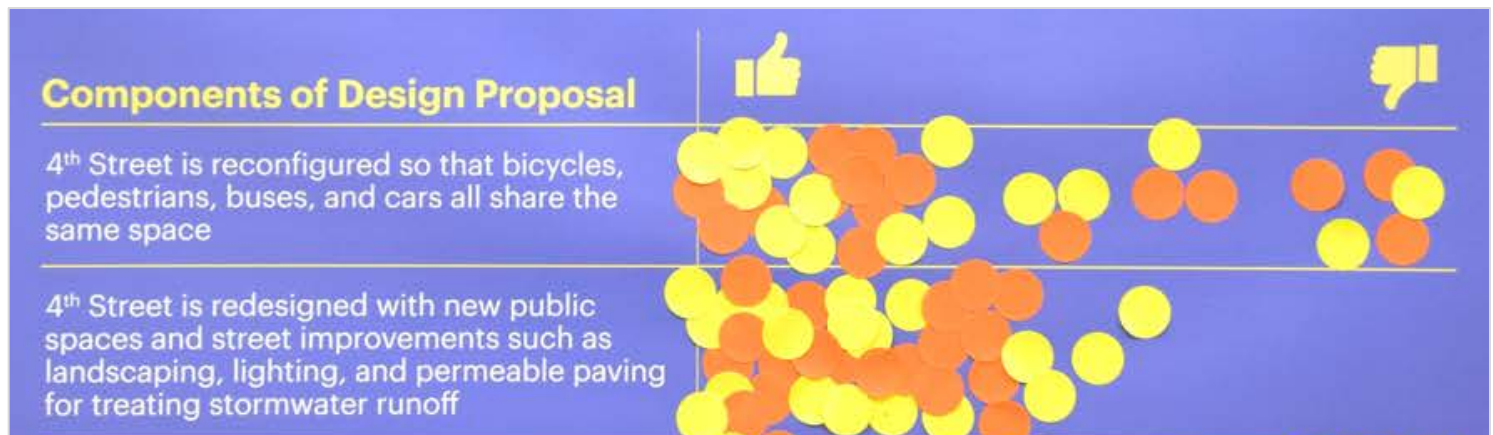
# Pop-Up 1 results

What do you think of Downtown?			
What's working? Identify the top three strengths you see.	Dots counted	What's not working? Identify the top three weaknesses you see.	Dots counted
Interesting destinations	14	Lack of attractive destinations	14
Hillside views	1	<b>Homelessness</b>	<b>31</b>
Historic and cultural resources	3	Parking: difficult, expensive	15
Something for all ages and backgrounds	7	Bad traffic	9
<b>Human scale: not too big, not too small</b>	<b>22</b>	Lack of housing	14
<b>Arts and events</b>	<b>24</b>	Not enough interesting things to do	11
Close proximity to neighborhoods	15	<b>Lack of public space (such as a town square)</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Easy to get around: walking, biking, driving</b>	<b>22</b>	Not pedestrian or bike friendly	4
Other (please write)	0	Other (please write)	2



# Downtown Pop-Up 2: plan options

- Held on **August 29<sup>th</sup> 2019** at the Downtown farmer's market.
- Passers-by participated in a **dot exercise**, indicating their level of support for ideas for each of the four sub-areas within the Precise Plan boundary.
- Participants could also use post-it notes to contribute other ideas and thoughts on the designs.



# Pop-Up 2 results: Transit Station Area

Mid-rise housing above ground-level retail, restaurants, and services create a new destination around the San Rafael SMART station

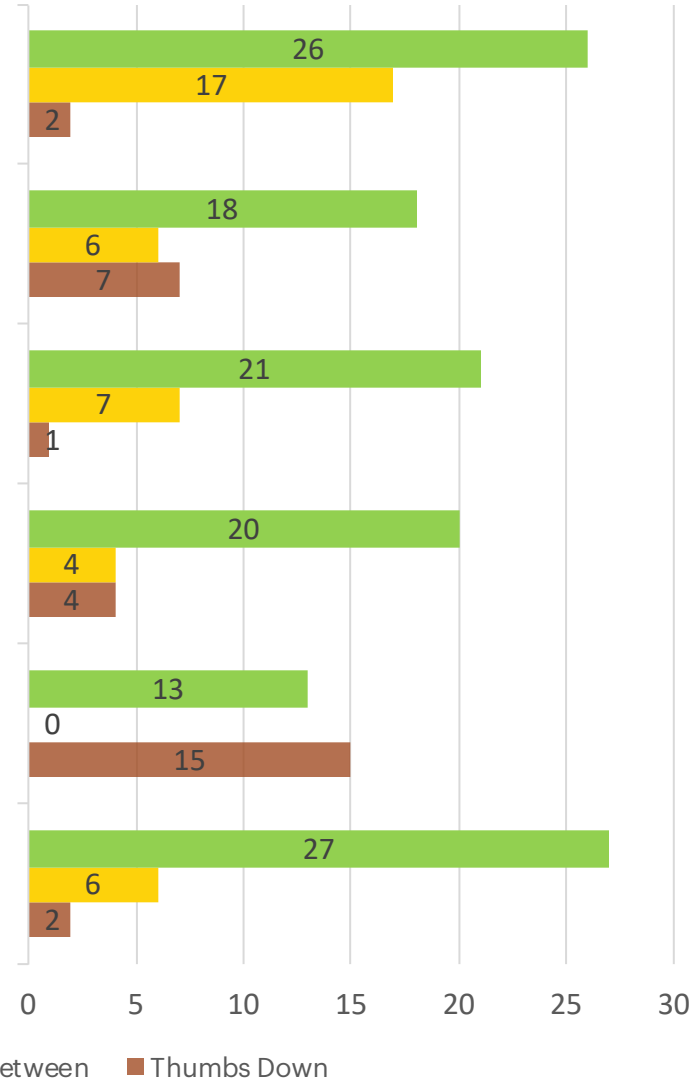
The historic Whistlestop building is preserved and restored

A new plaza at the SMART station features public art, landscaping, water features, places to sit, and a direct connection to 4th Street.

4th Street is redesigned so that bikes, pedestrians, cars, and buses all share the right-of-way.

Ritter Street is closed to create a new development site and provide a more direct connection from the BioMarin Campus to Downtown

Traffic calming and new facilities for bicycles make it safer and easier to walk or bike on 2nd and 3rd Streets.



**Tell Us What You Think: Transit Station Area**

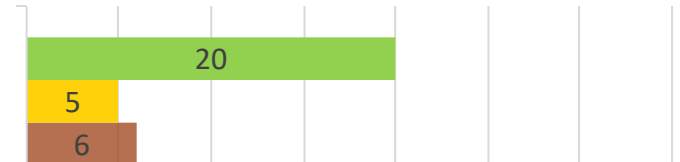
During the Downtown Design Charrette from May 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, the design team heard your vision and used your feedback to inform conceptual designs. Tell us what you think about the designs by adding dots to the table below.

Components of Design Proposal	Thumbs Up (Green)	In Between (Yellow)	Thumbs Down (Brown)
Mid-rise housing above ground-level retail, restaurants, and services creates a new destination around the San Rafael SMART station	26	17	2
The historic Whistlestop building is preserved and restored	18	6	7
A new plaza at the SMART station features public art, landscaping, water features, places to sit, and a direct connection to 4 <sup>th</sup> Street	21	7	1
4 <sup>th</sup> Street is redesigned so that bikes, pedestrians, cars, and buses all share the right-of-way	20	4	4
Ritter Street is closed to create a new development site and provide a more direct connection from the BioMarin Campus to Downtown	13	0	15
Traffic calming and new facilities for bicycles make it safer and easier to walk or bike on 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Streets	27	6	2

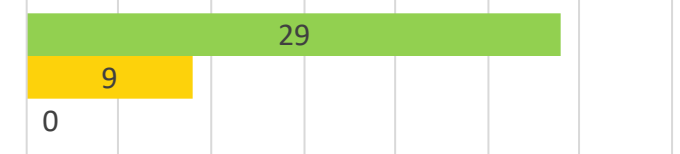
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August 28, 2019  
OPTICOS

# Pop-Up 2 results: Downtown Core

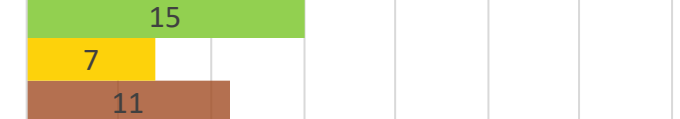
4th Street is reconfigured so that bicycles, pedestrians, buses, and cars all share the same space



4th Street is redesigned with new public spaces and street improvements such as landscaping, lighting, and permeable paving for treating stormwater runoff



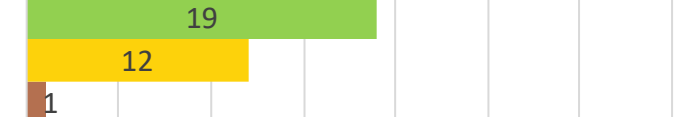
B, C and D Streets are converted from one-way to two-way streets, making it easier to get around and to park Downtown



Streets in this area are enhanced with wider sidewalks, street trees, new plazas and public art



New low-scale development on smaller vacant lots adds a variety of building types and uses that are well-suited to Downtown's context



■ Thumbs Up ■ In Between ■ Thumbs Down

**Tell Us What You Think: Downtown Core**

During the Downtown Design Charrette from May 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, the design team heard your vision and used your feedback to inform conceptual designs. Tell us what you think about the designs by adding dots to the table below.

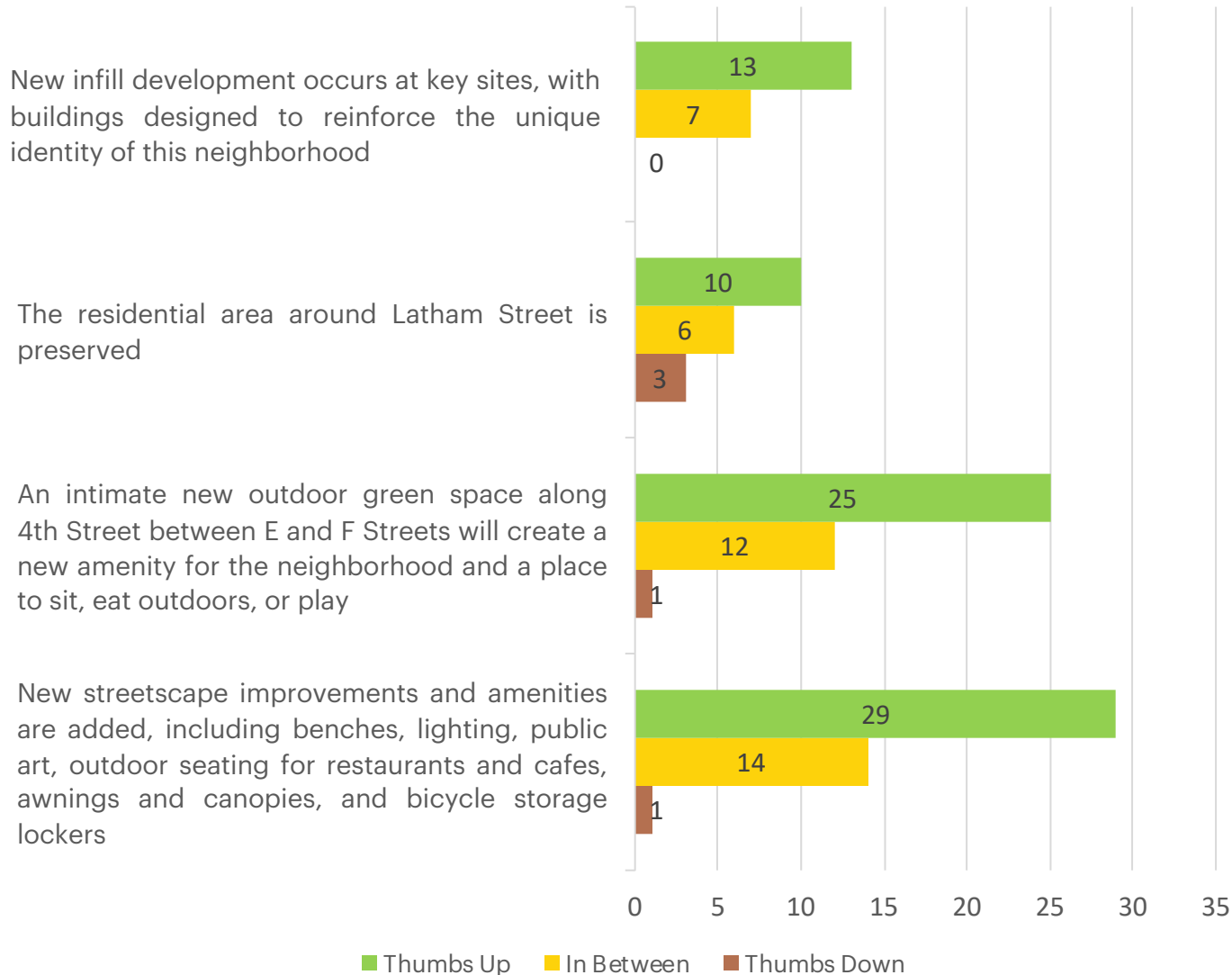
**Components of Design Proposal**

- 4th Street is reconfigured so that bicycles, pedestrians, buses, and cars all share the same space
- 4th Street is redesigned with new public spaces and street improvements such as landscaping, lighting, and permeable paving for treating stormwater runoff
- B, C and D Streets are converted from one-way to two-way streets, making it easier to get around and to park Downtown
- Streets in this area are enhanced with wider sidewalks, street trees, new plazas, and public art
- New low-scale development on smaller vacant lots adds a variety of building types and uses that are well-suited to Downtown's context

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# Pop-Up 2 results: West End Village



**Tell Us What You Think: West End Village**

During the Downtown Design Charrette from May 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, the design team heard your vision and used your feedback to inform conceptual designs. Tell us what you think about the designs by adding dots to the table below.

Components of Design Proposal	Thumbs Up (Green)	In Between (Yellow)	Thumbs Down (Brown)
New infill development occurs at key sites, with buildings designed to reinforce the unique identity of this neighborhood	13	7	0
The residential area around Latham Street is preserved	10	6	3
An intimate new outdoor green space along 4 <sup>th</sup> Street between E and F Streets will create a new amenity for the neighborhood and a place to sit, eat outdoors, or play	25	12	1
New streetscape improvements and amenities are added, including benches, lighting, public art, outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes, awnings and canopies, and bicycle storage lockers	29	14	1

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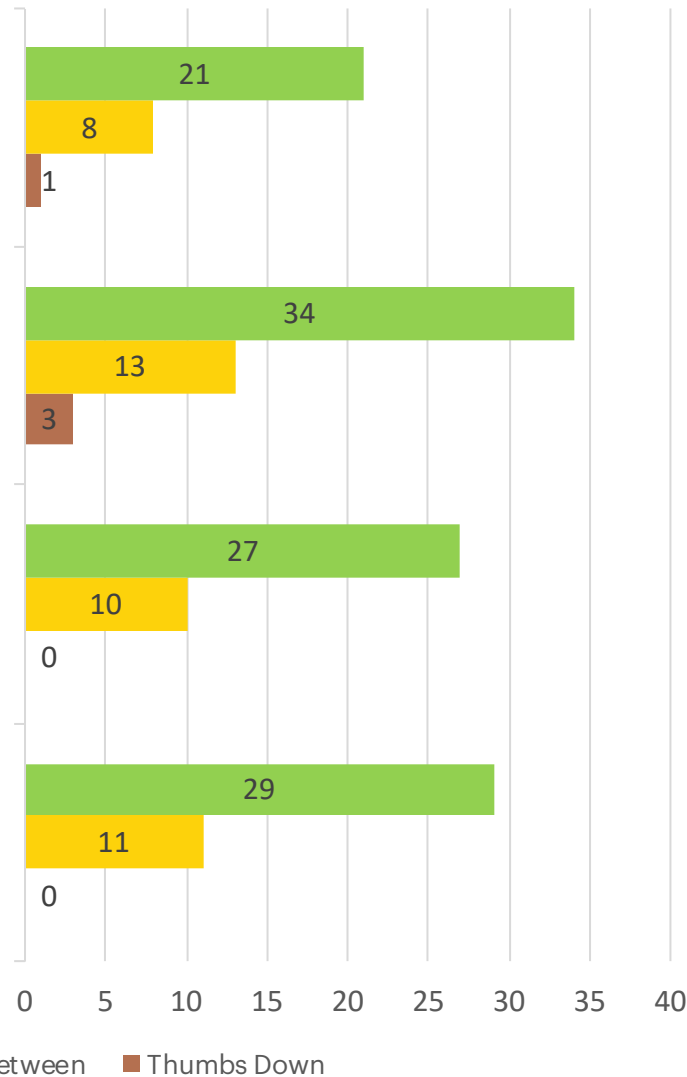
# Pop-Up 2 results: Montecito Area

2nd and 3rd Streets are reconfigured to create a new eastern gateway to Downtown

In the long term, the Montecito Plaza Shopping Center is transformed into a new mixed-use center that is oriented to the Canal, with new public space, housing above retail shops, structured parking, and ecological improvements that help adapt to sea-level

Pedestrian and bike connections to Downtown are enhanced along the Canal with new promenades linking to the Mahon Creek Trail

An urban wetland south of Mahon Creek to the east of Andersen Drive creates a new open space amenity, alleviates local flooding, and provides a new pedestrian-bike connection between Downtown and the Canal



**Tell Us What You Think: Montecito Area**

During the Downtown Design Charrette from May 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, the design team heard your vision and used your feedback to inform conceptual designs. Tell us what you think about the designs by adding dots to the table below.

**Components of Design Proposal**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets are reconfigured to create a new eastern gateway to Downtown
- In the long term, the Montecito Plaza Shopping Center is transformed into a new mixed-use center that is oriented to the Canal, with new public space, housing above retail shops, structured parking, and ecological improvements that help adapt to sea-level rise
- Pedestrian and bike connections to Downtown are enhanced along the Canal with new promenades linking to the Mahon Creek Trail
- An urban wetland south of Mahon Creek to the east of Andersen Drive creates a new open space amenity, alleviates local flooding, and provides a new pedestrian-bike connection between Downtown and the Canal

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# Focus Group Interviews

# Focus group interviews

- The consultant team attended **4 focus group meetings with 30+ stakeholders** on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019.
- Each focus group included **7-10 local stakeholders**, selected to include a range of viewpoints and opinions.

## Focus group topics:

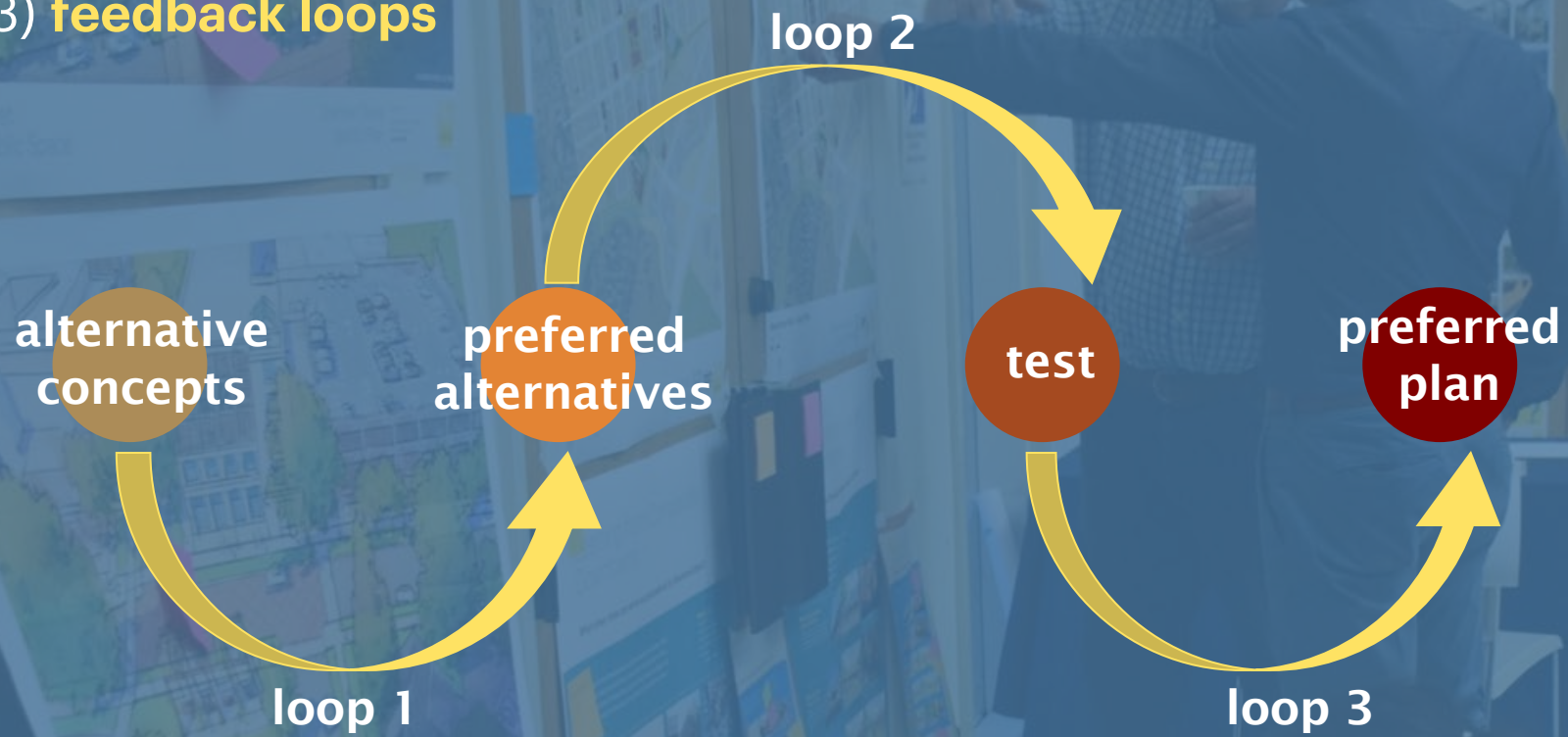
- Historic resources in Downtown
- Downtown merchants and businesses
- Downtown service providers
- Major employers and developers



# Multi-Day Design Charrette

# What is a charrette?

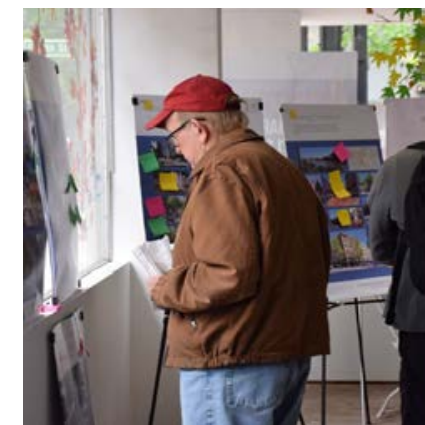
A **collaborative and iterative process** that relies on several (minimum 3) **feedback loops**



Slide repurposed from Bill Lennertz, National Charrette Institute

# Charrette summary: May 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

- **Downtown walking tour with 30+ participants**
- **Opening presentation + map exercise with 65+ participants**
- **Midpoint pinup, transportation discussion with 25+ attendees**
- **Brown bag lunches on historic resources and economics, 30+ attendees at each**
- **11+ hours of open studio with 100+ visitors, 285+ comments**
- **Closing presentation with 50+ participants**



# Downtown walking tour

- 1.5 hour-long walking tour of Downtown Plan area.
- Participants included General Plan Steering Committee members, City staff, community members and the consultants.
- Each group stopped at key points along the route and shared observations and ideas.





# Opening presentation + map exercise

## Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>

- Formal **opening presentation** by consultant team.
- **Visioning map exercise** with table groups to share ideas for Downtown.



**65+ participants in 8 table groups**

# Brown bag lunchtime presentations

## Historic resources

Thursday May 9<sup>th</sup>

by *Garavaglia Architecture*

## Economic conditions

Friday May 10<sup>th</sup>

by *BAE Urban Economics*

**30+ persons at each  
brown bag**



# Open studio

**Thursday May 9<sup>th</sup> and  
Friday May 10<sup>th</sup>**

- Informational posters on relevant topics
- Public feedback through comment cards and post-it notes
- Design schemes and ideas from local experts

**11+ hours of open  
studio**



# Closing presentation + discussion

**Wednesday May 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Formal **closing presentation** by the consultant team summarizing the work produced at the charrette.
- Presentation followed by an informal discussion of **guiding principles and design ideas** with attendees.

**50+ participants**



# Post-charrette feedback

- Key graphics including the preliminary design ideas were displayed in the charrette space on May 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Passers-by could view the exhibits and comment online at **[www.cityofsanrafael.org/2040](http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/2040)**





# Downtown Profile Report

# Downtown area Profile Report

## A summary of existing conditions and key findings on relevant topics to guide the Precise Plan

- Historic resources
- Demographic profile
- Economic conditions
- Urban design
- Transportation network
- Utility infrastructure
- Natural hazards



# 3. Charrette Results





# Community feedback: key takeaways

Community support for:

- **Infill and reinvestment in Downtown, focusing on key opportunity Sites such as the Bettini Transit Station Area**
- **Encouraging residential mixed-use development**
- **Maintaining existing and creating new public space**
- **Preserving and integrating important historical buildings such as Whistlestop**

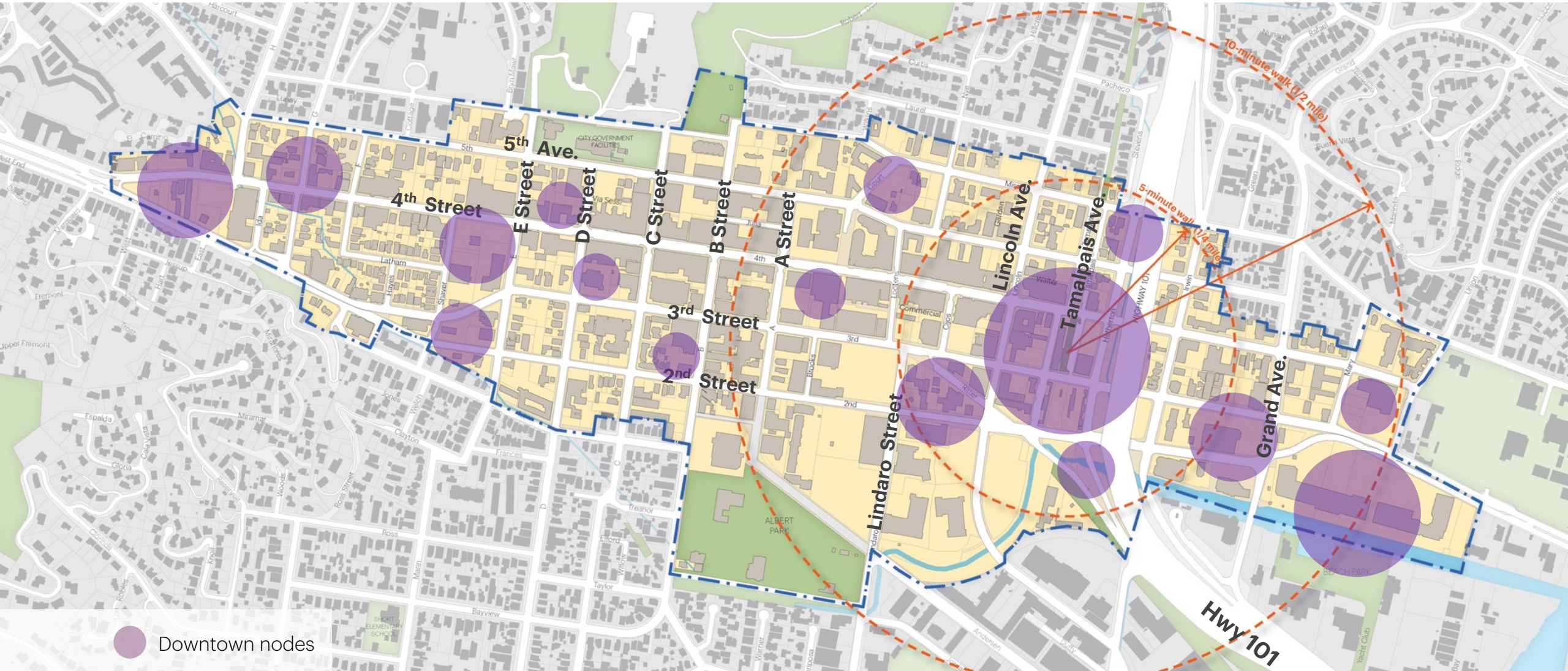




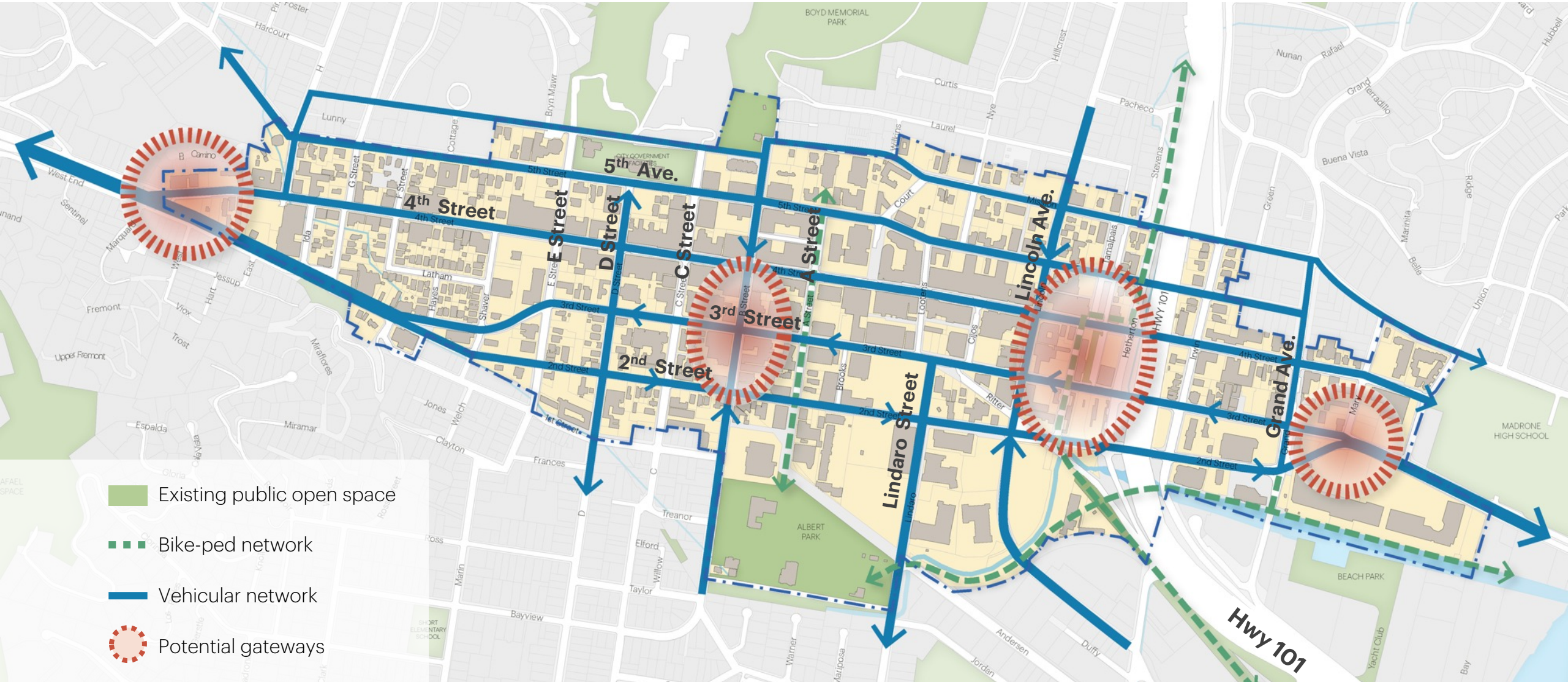
# Design principles

- 1. Focus development at key nodes to establish a distinct Downtown experience and identity**
- 2. Reinforce gateways and design the Transit Station to create a sense of arrival**
- 3. Strengthen multimodal connectivity, prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle safety and access**
- 4. Create a cohesive public realm through an interconnected network of civic spaces**
- 5. Generate a development program and policies that support City goals related to TOD, mixed-use development, affordable housing, and jobs-housing balance**
- 6. Recommend growth and adaptation strategies that are resilient to climate change, in particular sea-level rise**

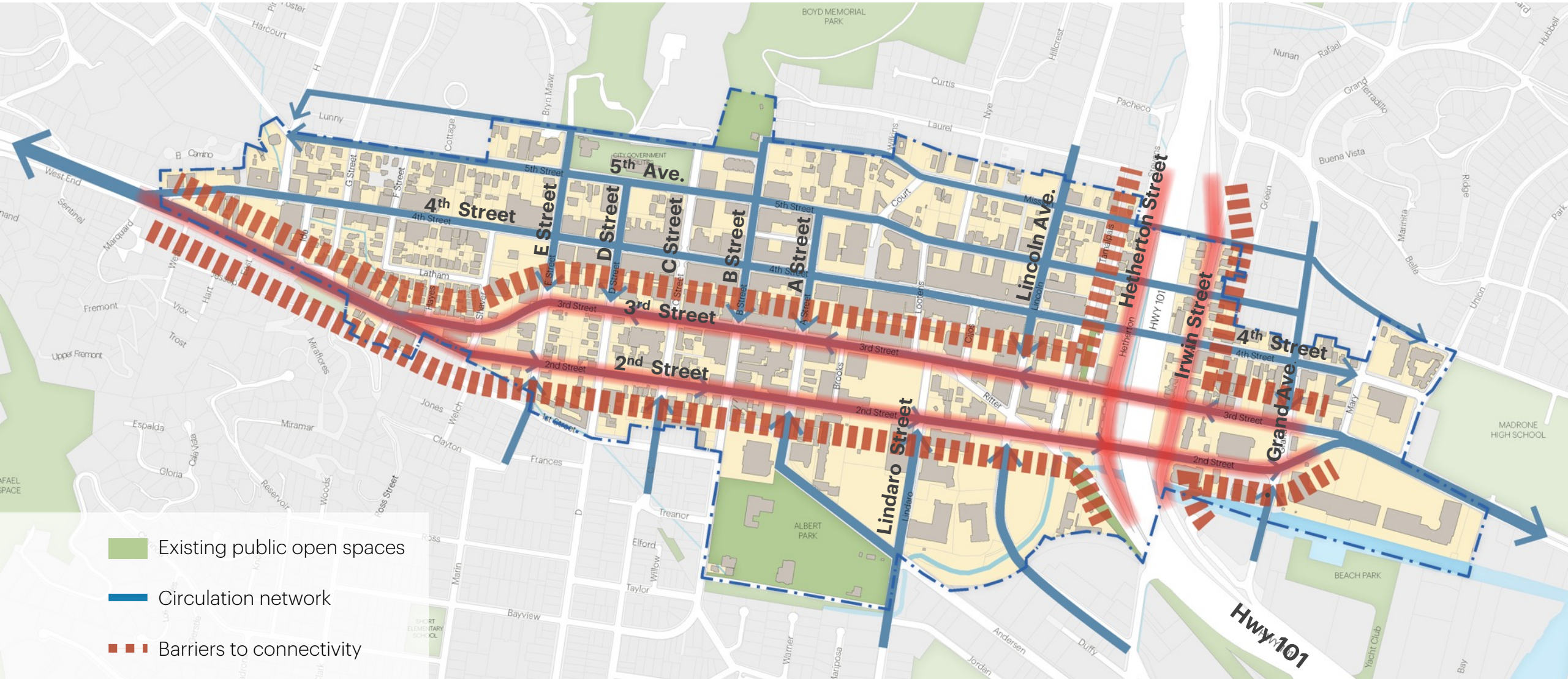
# 1. Focus development at key nodes



# 2. Reinforce gateways + sense of arrival



# 3. Strengthen multimodal connectivity



# 4. Create a cohesive public realm



# 5. Development program + policies

## A development program that supports:

- Transit-oriented development
- A mixed-use Downtown
- Greater housing access and affordability
- Improving the City's jobs-housing balance



*A visualization of a mixed-use, pedestrian-scaled environment*

# 6. Climate change + sea level rise

## Adaptation strategies that respond to:

- Climate change and sea level rise
- Development standards for resiliency at both building and district level

