



Design Vision

CHAPTER

4

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4.1 Downtown Vision

The vision for Downtown San Rafael is of a walkable, mixed-use center for shopping, dining and entertainment, a well-connected employment hub, and a neighborhood that offers a range of housing choices in close proximity to amenities and transit.

A Vision for an Evolving Downtown

The Precise Plan envisions Downtown San Rafael as a vibrant, mixed-use destination with a strong sense of place and history, and one that provides varied and rich experiences for visitors and residents alike. It is a blend of old and new, of contemporary and historic buildings, with a clear hierarchy in its built form and civic spaces, reflecting the role and intensity of uses in different parts of Downtown. It provides a setting that invites economic investment and new employment opportunities while preserving its sense of community and "home town" character.

Downtown has a distinct identity, reflected in its eclectic neighborhoods, and reinforced by a well-designed public realm that invites community gathering. Downtown neighborhoods provide a range of housing options supported by amenities and active transportation options that enhance livability and encourage people to put down roots for generations to come.

This chapter translates this community-supported vision for Downtown into design direction that will create the desired physical environment as Downtown evolves over the next 20 years.

Development Strategy

Downtown is physically constrained: it is largely built out, has few vacant parcels, and many parcels are too small to be efficiently redeveloped to meet current market needs. At present, it is economically challenging to develop in Downtown due to high land and construction costs, and an entitlement process that can be lengthy and uncertain.

At the same time, Downtown has many attributes that enhance its development potential. It offers a mixed-use, walkable setting with access to a wide variety of retail, recreation, and open space amenities. This aligns well with the consistent and escalating demand for "downtown living". Its history is well-preserved in its built form and street grid, giving it a distinct identity.

The Precise Plan addresses existing development challenges by taking a form-based approach to set clear development standards that reduce uncertainty for investors and provide more predictable built outcomes to allay community fears about incompatible new development. The form-based standards reflect market conditions and existing site constraints, and thus are grounded in reality, enabling potential investors and developers to spend less time and money on

understanding what is allowed and is desirable, and instead focusing on innovative design and timely implementation. The Precise Plan's development strategy also relies on coordinated design investments by the City in collaboration with regional agencies and through public-private partnerships. These include a number of projects in the development pipeline as well as key opportunity sites that can deliver the Downtown vision.

Potential Development Yield

The potential development yield for Downtown has been derived from the testing of vacant and underutilized sites identified at the Design Charrette, using metrics such as land-to-improvement value ratio, and existing use and square footage relative to what is allowed by zoning. The infill testing used a range of building types compatible with Downtown's existing built context and being

constructed in comparable locations. The yield calculated from the infill testing thus reflects actual site conditions and development possibilities. The program numbers have been vetted by City staff and refined in consultation with the team economist for project viability.

As shown in Table 4A, the potential development program in the Precise Plan area within the Plan horizon of 20 years (through 2040) includes 2,200 new residential units housing a population of 3,740, and 2,020 new jobs. Downtown is also divided into four sub-areas, and Table 4B breaks up the overall program for each of these.

This potential development program can be considered as a development "cap" that may build out differently than what is anticipated and described in this chapter. Further, the program totals for each sub-area are not fixed, and may be re-allocated within sub-areas as needed.

Table 4A. Potential Downtown Development Yield ¹		
Development Type	New Development by 2040	
Residential	2,200,000 sq ft	2,200 units 3,740 population
Non-Residential	698,000 sq ft	2,020 jobs

Table 4B. Potential Development Yield by Downtown Sub-Area ¹ Refer to Section 4.5: Downtown Sub-Areas for additional information		
Downtown Sub-Area	Residential	Non-Residential
Downtown Gateway	830 units 1,410 population (830,000 sq ft)	640 jobs (210,000 sq ft)
Downtown Core	620 units 1,050 population (620,000 sq ft)	1,040 jobs (373,000 sq ft)
West End Village	360 units 610 population (360,000 sq ft)	200 jobs (70,000 sq ft)
Montecito Commercial	390 units 670 population (390,000 sq ft)	140 jobs (45,000 sq ft)
Total	2,200 units 3,740 population	2,020 jobs

Assumptions	Pipeline Projects
Average residential unit size = 1,000 sq ft (gross area) 2,200 units correspond to 2,100 households (assuming a 5% vacancy rate) Population = 1.7 persons per household Jobs = 1 job per 350 sq ft of built-up area (gross area), with exceptions for approved projects	The numbers shown in Table 4A are inclusive of the following projects that are under construction or approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small infill projects on Shaver Street, Fifth Avenue and G Street in the West End Village • 930 Tamalpais (67 approved units) • 815 B Street (41 units under construction) • 999 Third Street (BioMarin; 207,000 sq ft) • 755 Lindaro Corporate Center (72,000 sq ft) • AC Marriott (140 rooms) • Public Safety Center (44,000 sq ft) • 800 Mission Avenue (77 approved assisted living units) • 703 Third Street (120 units) The numbers for the Montecito Commercial sub-area do not consider the potential redevelopment of Montecito Plaza, since that redevelopment is unlikely to occur within the Plan's lifespan.

Illustrative of the Downtown Vision

The Downtown vision describes the desired physical form and character of the anticipated future development.

The rendering to the right (Figure 4.1) illustrates one of many possible built outcomes of the Precise Plan vision. In this illustrative, potential new development is highlighted in shades of red and orange, reflecting future infill projects as well as those currently entitled or under construction. The smaller maps below (Figure 4.2) compare figure-ground studies of existing conditions and those likely to emerge by 2040. Please note that this is an illustration, and the Precise Plan does not mandate exact locations for future development.

Some of the key ideas illustrated include:

- Compact, mixed-use development on infill sites including a variety of building types;
- Focused development at the Downtown gateways from the east, west and the SMART station to create a sense of arrival;
- New development is compatible in scale and form with the existing built fabric;
- Development on larger sites (typically achieved through lot consolidation) is composed of well-scaled buildings, not large, monolithic structures, to create appropriate height and form transitions to the existing built fabric; and
- A cohesive network of bicycle and pedestrian-priority streets link key destinations and open spaces, enhancing the public realm.

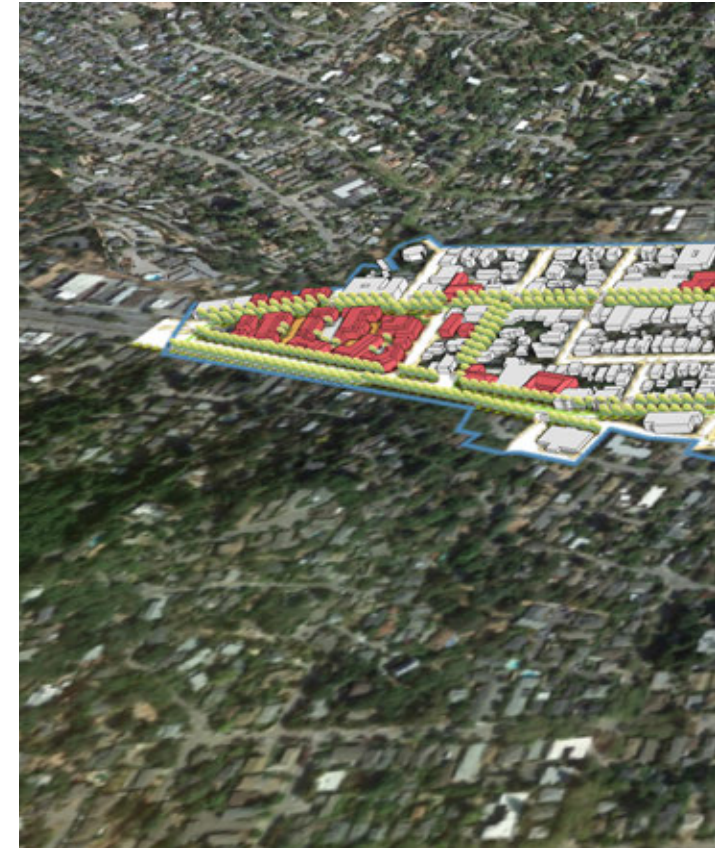


Figure 4.1 (Above) An illustrative rendering of the Downtown vision showing infill and pipeline projects

- Plan Area boundary
- Existing development
- Pipeline projects (entitled/ under construction)
- Potential infill opportunities*
- Existing civic spaces
- Proposed civic space
- Priority streets for active transportation

* Potential infill projects shown here are conceptual and for illustrative purposes only



Figure 4.2 (Left) A figure-ground comparison of existing conditions and potential future development



Built form: 2019



Built form: 2040

4.2 A Form-Based Approach for Downtown Development

The Precise Plan uses a form-based approach to establish built form standards for new development that reinforce Downtown's character and identity.

Form-Based Standards

The Precise Plan vision is implemented through a Downtown Form-Based Code (Downtown Code) found in Chapter Nine of the Precise Plan. Rather than relying on conventional zoning metrics such as density allocations, the form-based approach offers greater predictability in built outcomes by paying greater attention to Downtown's actual site conditions when setting development standards. For instance, the process included analyzing a range of building types for Downtown lots of different sizes, to determine development standards that would yield the desired built form and also fit building types being delivered in current market conditions.

The Downtown Code describes physical character in terms of "house-form" and "block-form" buildings. These terms are not direct references to the building's uses, but instead are a reflection of the building's form and its relationship with the adjacent street or civic space. House-form buildings are typically detached, have greater front and side setbacks, and look like houses, as the name suggests. They indicate a lower intensity of use and a more residential character. Block-form buildings are typically attached, with small or no setbacks, creating a continuous "street wall", and reflect a higher intensity of activity and a greater mix of uses. Downtown San Rafael

has a combination of both types, but the proportion of each in different parts of Downtown will help establish a hierarchy of built form and intensity of use. This granular approach also enables smoother transitions in scale and form between areas of different built character.

The Downtown Code also considers the interplay between built form and the adjacent public realm in creating walkable environments. In this, it emphasizes the role of building frontages - the interface between private building facades and the adjacent sidewalk or civic space; and the concept of "like facing like" - compatible built form framing both sides of a street or civic space to create more cohesive environments. Figure 4.3 discusses the role of built form and public realm in shaping community character.

The form-based approach was informed by an economic feasibility analysis and discussions with City staff.

Figure 4.3 Shaping community character through the design of the built form and public realm

Community Character, Built Form, and the Public Realm

In any urban area, buildings play an important role in shaping the character and quality of its streets and civic spaces. Elements of building design such as form ("house-form" or "block-form"), height, massing, facade articulation, and frontages play a pivotal role in shaping not just the visual character of a place, but also the pedestrian experience on the adjacent streets and civic spaces.

For placemaking to be effective, the design of the built form and public realm must be coordinated to generate active, well-used spaces and memorable streetscapes. The form-based approach used for the Precise Plan adopts such a strategy, defining standards for the critical design elements discussed above, to shape the public realm and create "outdoor rooms" for the community to enjoy.

The illustration to the right highlights how key design elements work together to create the kind of places that people want to be in. Well-designed facades, architectural elements, and a varied roofline add interest. Active ground floor uses encourage pedestrian activity. The private frontage - shown here as a forecourt with outdoor seating - creates a visual extension of the public realm.

The photographs below show examples of residential and retail frontage types that create a more active relationship between the private and public realm.



- Active ground floor uses
- Building transition (no blank side wall)
- Activities engaging the street
- Varied roofline



A Zoning Map for Downtown

The Zoning Map (Figure 4.5) establishes zoning regulations for the Plan Area. The Zoning Map is based on the Transect, described in Figure 4.4 on the facing page, and uses the "T4" and "T5" transect zones to calibrate the envisioned built environment for different parts of Downtown, summarized in Table 4C. It defines built form characteristics such as massing, heights, placement, and frontage standards for each zone. Both the T4 and T5 Downtown zones have two types of built environments: "Neighborhood" and "Main Street", which is reflected in the placement, orientation, and frontages of the built form. Both are mixed-use environments, but "Neighborhood" environments are more residential in character and "Main Street" environments are centers of activity and are typically more commercial. Main Street areas typically are more block-form in character, and Neighborhood zones are more house-form. The zone names indicate allowed maximum heights (base and with bonus); and "open" zones indicate specific areas within the zone that allow slight variations to allow greater flexibility in uses while maintaining the same form and character. For detailed development standards, refer to Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code. Please note that the Zoning Map (Figure 4.5) is repeated for clarity in Chapter Nine as Figure 2.2.040.A. Both maps show the same information.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

The General Plan 2040 sets a maximum permitted FAR ranging from 3.0 to 6.0 for Downtown, exclusive of density bonuses. The Precise Plan uses height limits rather than FAR or density to determine allowable building intensity. The standards set in Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code, and summarized in Table 4C are coordinated to ensure that new development will not exceed General Plan limits.

Table 4C. Summary of Built Environment Standards for Downtown Refer to Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code for zone standards			
Zone	Open Zone Allowed	Maximum Overall Height	Built Environment
T4 Neighborhood			Building Form
T4N 30/40	T4N 30/40 Open	30' (base), 40' (with bonus)	Primarily house-form, detached
T4N 40/50	None	40' (base), 50' (with bonus)	Building Placement Small front and side setbacks Frontages Residential and shopfronts
T4 Main Street			Building Form
T4MS 40/50	T4MS 40/50 Open	40' (base), 50' (with bonus)	Primarily block-form, attached
T4MS 40/60	T4MS 40/60 Open	40' (base), 60' (with bonus)	Building Placement Small to no front setbacks and no side setbacks
T4MS 50/70	T4MS 50/70 Open	50' (base), 70' (with bonus)	Frontages
T4MS 60/80	None	60' (base), 80' (with bonus)	Predominantly shopfronts
T5 Neighborhood			Building Form
T5N 40/60	T5N 40/60 Open	40' (base), 60' (with bonus)	Primarily block-form, mainly attached
T5N 50/70	T5N 50/70 Open	50' (base), 70' (with bonus)	Building Placement Small to no front and side setbacks Frontages Residential and shopfronts
T5 Main Street			Building Form
T5MS 70/90	None	70' (base), 90' (with bonus)	Primarily block-form, attached Building Placement Small to no front setbacks and no side setbacks Frontages Predominantly shopfronts
Notes:			
1. Downtown zones exclude street rights-of-way			
2. Civic space may occur in any of the zones above. Figure 4.5 shows the location of required new civic space			
3. Open zones are applied in specific locations (shown in Figure 4.5) to allow greater flexibility in uses while maintaining the zone's form and character			

Figure 4.4 The Natural-to-Urban Transect

The Natural-to-Urban Transect: The Framework for Form-Based Planning and Coding

The Natural-to-Urban Transect is an organizing principle used in form-based coding that establishes a hierarchy of places from the most natural to the most urban. The designation of each transect along this hierarchy is determined first by the character and form, intensity of development, and type of place; and secondly by the mix of uses within the area. This hierarchy becomes the framework for the plan and code, replacing use as the organizing principle (as used in conventional zoning). Transect zones are used to reinforce existing or to create new walkable mixed-use urban environments.

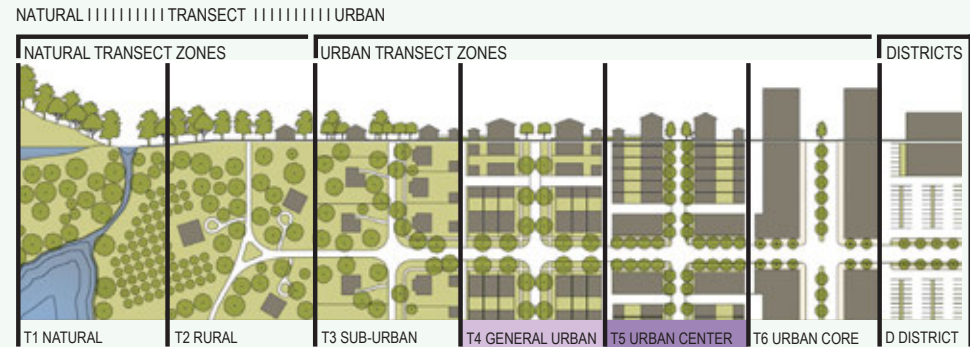
“The Natural-to-Urban Transect is a means for considering and organizing the human habitat in a continuum of intensity that ranges from the most rural condition to the most urban. It provides a standardized method for differentiating between the intentions for urban form in various areas using gradual transitions rather than harsh distinctions. The zones are primarily classified by the physical intensity of the built form, the relationship between nature and the built environment, and the complexity of uses within the zone.”

~ Form-Based Codes Institute

The model transect for American towns is divided into six transects: Natural (T1), Rural (T2), Sub-Urban (T3), General Urban (T4), Urban Center (T5), and Urban Core (T6), together with a District (D), often referred to as a Special District, a designation for areas with specialized purposes (e.g., heavy industrial, transportation, entertainment, universities, etc.).

Each transect is given a number, progressing from more rural environments (T1, T2) to more urban environments (T5, T6). Within each transect zone, there can be Main Street (MS) and Neighborhood (N) environments, reflecting the range from more residential, predominantly "house-form" (N) to more non-residential, predominantly "block-form" (MS) environments. "Open" zones reflect additional flexibility in uses within the same physical environment.

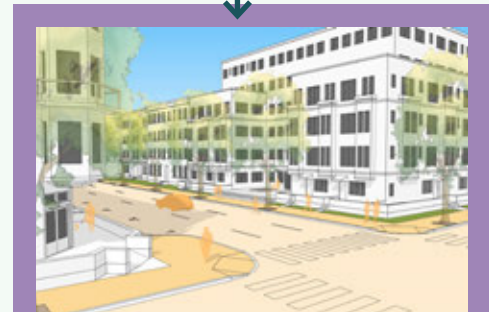
For more information, please visit www.formbasedcodes.org



T4 Neighborhood



T4 Main Street



T5 Neighborhood

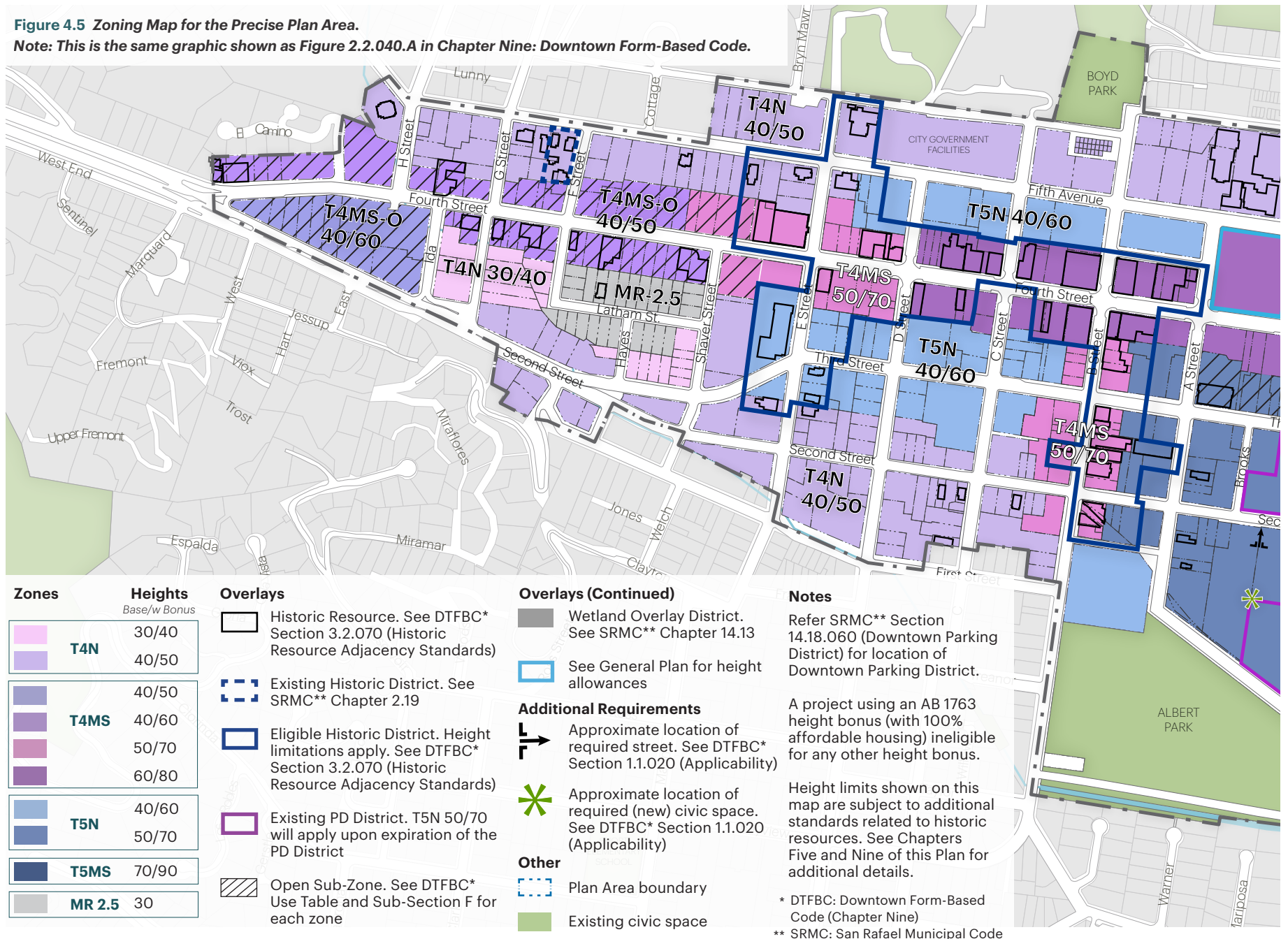


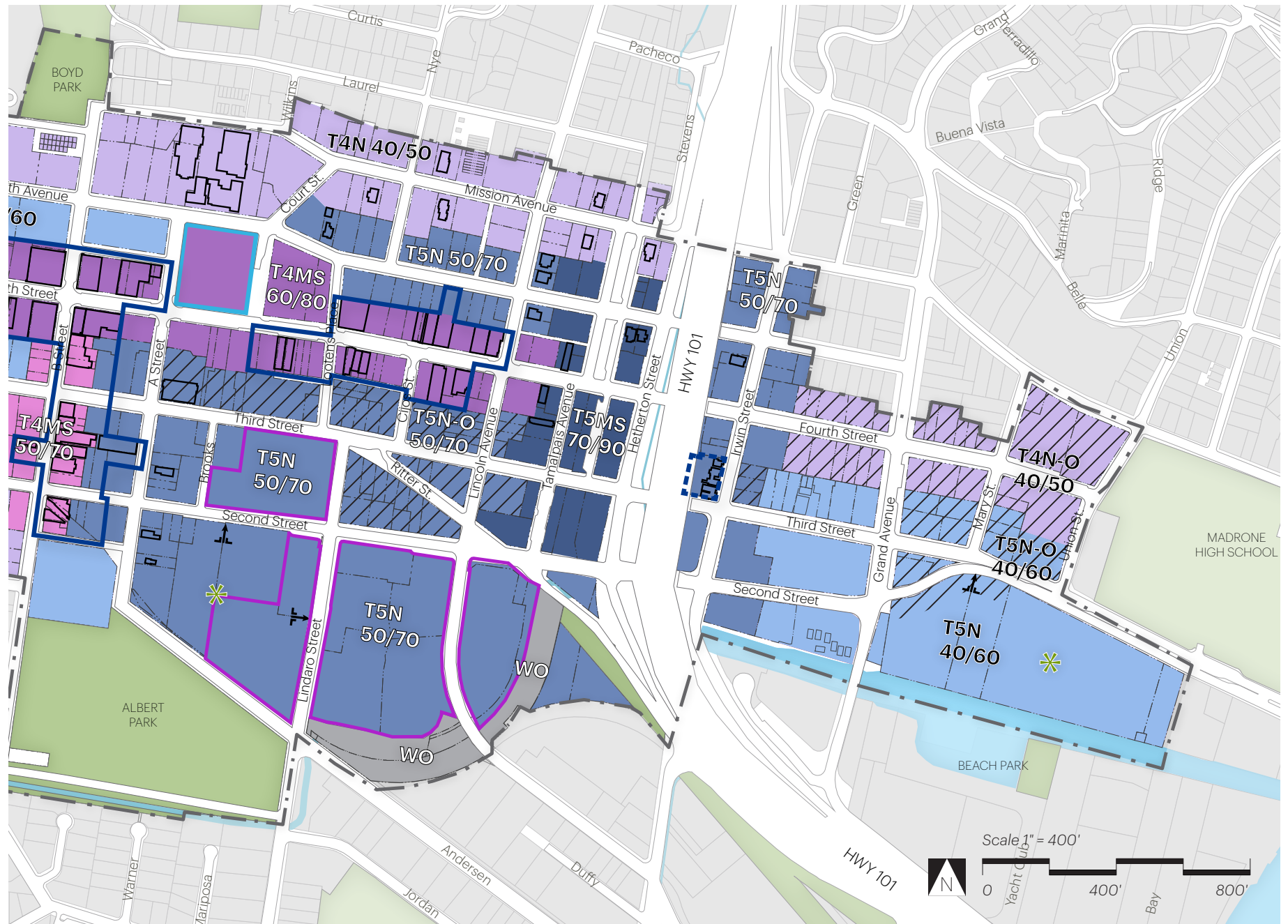
T5 Main Street

Note that in the diagram above, the Neighborhood and Main Street zones for T4 and T5 transect zones have similar built environments, but MS zones have more intense uses, reflected in ground level frontages, uses and building heights.

Figure 4.5 Zoning Map for the Precise Plan Area.

Note: This is the same graphic shown as Figure 2.2.040.A in Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code.





4.3 Building Height and Transitions



Figure 4.6 Existing building heights in Downtown vary, with a few cases of awkward transitions.



Figure 4.7 Most recent projects have applied for height bonuses and additional height as development concessions.

The Precise Plan updates allowed building heights in Downtown to reflect current market conditions and construction technology, to establish a visual hierarchy and sensitive transitions.

Building Heights and Height Bonus

Observed building heights in most of Downtown are lower than the maximum heights allowed by right under current zoning. Recently completed and entitled development projects reflect a trend of using the City's height bonus, typically to get an additional floor, and of applying for a height increase as an allowed concession.

The Precise Plan and the accompanying Downtown Form-Based Code present an opportunity to clarify allowed heights in Downtown as a "base condition" and also define the "maximum height envelope" should a height bonus be applied. In allocating heights across Downtown zones, the Plan analyzed heights of recently built projects in Downtown, current development trends (such as floor heights), as well as latest construction technologies. Also considered were the recommendations in the "Good Design" Guidelines for Downtown (2017) to limit building heights within the historic core of Downtown; and the height increases recommended near transit in the Downtown Station Area Plan (2012).

The proposed heights shown in Figure 4.8 do not vary significantly from heights allowed by current zoning inclusive of existing height bonuses. The heights have been set to coordinate the envisioned built character and

create appropriate height transitions from one area of Downtown to the next.

The maximum allowed building heights for new development are defined using feet (not number of stories) as a standard. In addition, the Downtown Code specifies maximum building top floor plate heights as well as maximum overall building heights, to allow for subtle variations in building heights and to encourage a variety of roof forms, parapet walls and similar architectural features that will add visual interest and richness to the Downtown skyline.

Heights in Downtown are also likely to be influenced by the passing of State Assembly Bill 1763 (AB 1763) in 2020. AB 1763 allows an 80 percent density bonus for projects with 100 percent affordable units. In addition, projects located within one-half mile of transit (including SMART Rail and the San Rafael Transit Center) are allowed a 33 foot height bonus. The bill provides other concessions and incentives that could make affordable and senior housing more feasible near transit.

Figure 4.8 and Table 4D illustrate the maximum base heights and height bonus tiers allowed in different parts of Downtown. These height criteria have been used to set overall maximum heights illustrated in Figure 4.5.

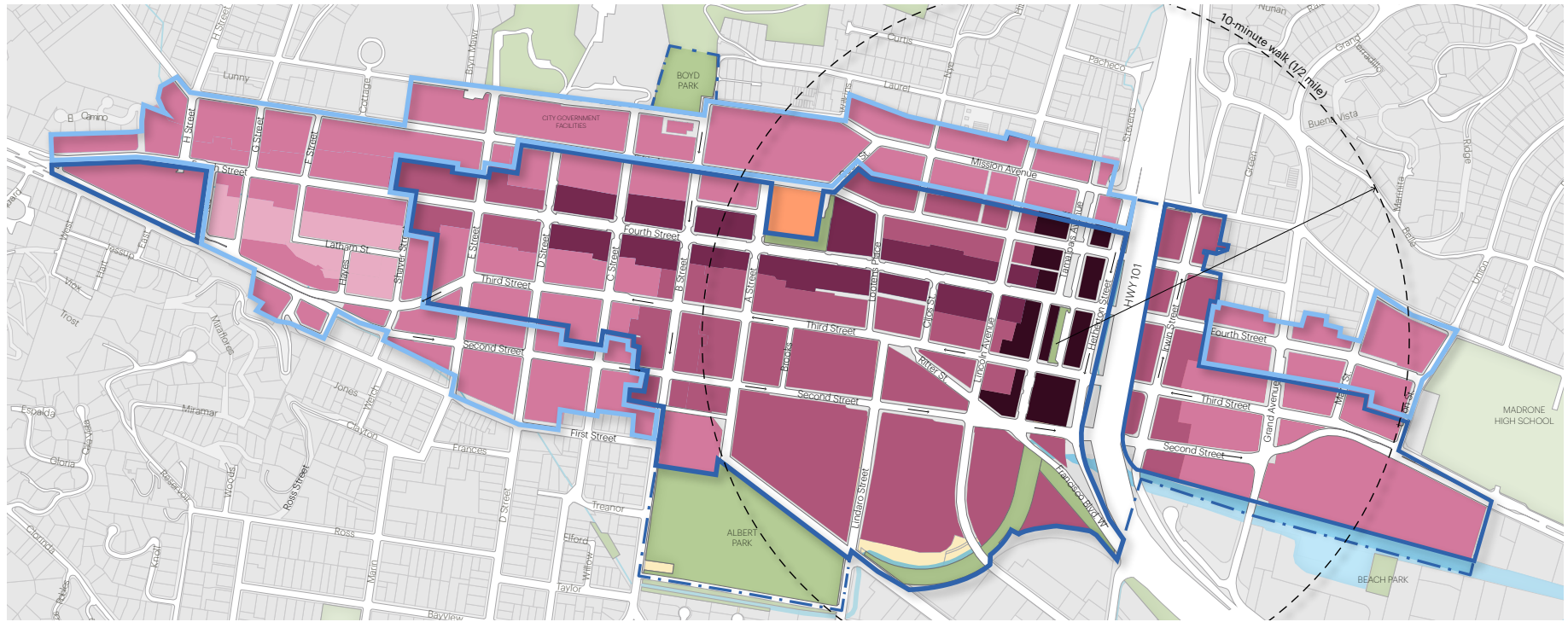
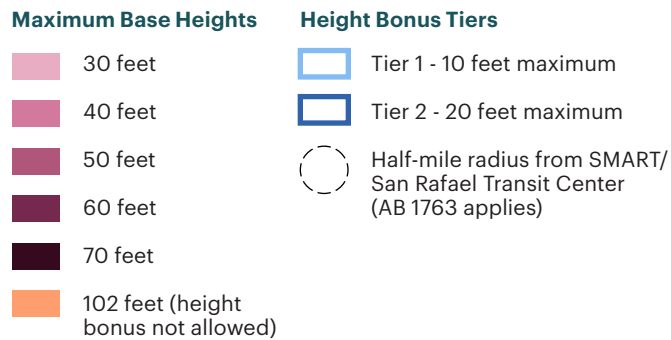


Figure 4.8 Proposed base and bonus heights in Downtown



Note:
1. A project using an AB 1763 height bonus is not eligible for any other height bonus
2. The height limits shown on this map are subject to additional standards related to historic resources. Please refer to Chapter 5: Historic Resources, and Chapter 9: Downtown Form-Based Code for additional information.

Table 4D. Height Bonus Tiers for Downtown

Tier	Bonus	Criteria for Bonuses	Notes
Tier 1	10 feet maximum	A. 20% or more affordable units; OR B. Provision of community benefits (for non-residential projects or projects with less than 20% affordable units)*	Bonuses are not additive. A plus B may not exceed 10 feet
Tier 2	20 feet maximum	A. 20% or more affordable units: 10 feet B. Provision of community benefits (for non-residential projects or projects with fewer than 20% affordable units)*: 10 feet C. 100% affordable projects located outside AB 1763 area: 20 feet	All combinations of A, B, and C may not exceed 20 feet
AB 1763 Bonus	33 feet maximum	Projects within AB 1763 area (one-half mile of SMART/ San Rafael Transit Center) in which 100% of all residential units are affordable	May not be combined with any other bonus

*Community Benefits may include public parking, child care or community facilities, plazas and open space, etc.

4.4 Public Realm and Connectivity

A well-designed and connected public realm that includes streets, parks, and plazas will improve walkability and vitality in Downtown. Natural systems can be considered for creating new civic space as well as alleviating flooding and adapting to climate change and future sea-level rise.

The societal benefits of a walkable environment allowing an active lifestyle are well-established, leading to better public health, safety, and a sense of community. Equally beneficial is providing access to open space and nature, particularly in dense urban conditions. The quality of a place's public realm, described as its streets and civic spaces, plays a prominent role in determining how "walkable" that place will be. The term "civic space" as used in this section includes public parks and plazas as well as publicly accessible open spaces on privately-owned parcels. Civic spaces can take a variety of forms to respond to different environments, and design criteria vary accordingly. Figure 4.9 shows a few types that are appropriate for Downtown.

Public Realm Framework

A fundamental element of the Downtown vision is a well-designed, cohesive public realm that functions as a connective tissue, integrating Downtown's neighborhoods and creating a strong sense of place. The design direction for Downtown's public realm is illustrated in Figure 4.10, and the framework reflects three key goals:

- **Parks and plazas** are distributed throughout Downtown, providing spaces for community gathering;
- **Streets and passages** enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and link key destinations; and
- **Natural systems** such as creeks and wetlands mitigate flooding and provide resilience to climate change.

Figure 4.9 Civic space types appropriate for Downtown's context



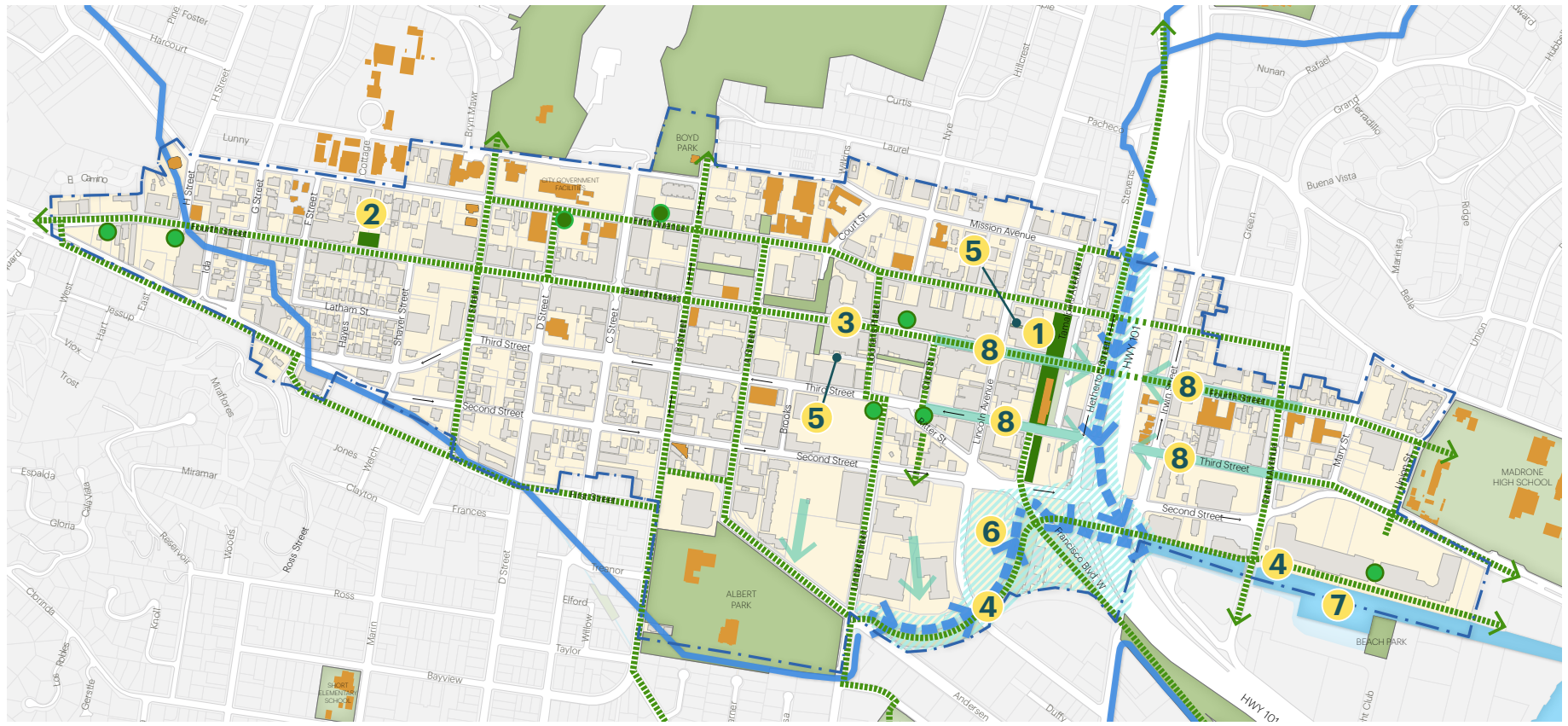

















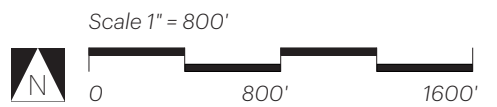


Figure 4.10 Framework for Downtown's public realm design

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|
|  | Existing civic space |  | Recommended locations for potential privately owned, publicly accessible civic spaces (Note: these are not required by the Plan) |  | SMART Transit Plaza |
|  | Community destinations |  | Recommended locations for civic spaces on publicly owned parcels (Note: these are not required by the Plan) |  | Pocket Plaza in Downtown Core |
|  | Proposed civic space | | |  | Fourth Street Improvements |
|  | Proposed wetland system for flood mitigation | | |  | Montecito Promenade |
|  | Potential streets for green infrastructure | | |  | Alley Improvements (Walter Lane, between Lauren's Place and Commercial street) |
|  | Priority streets for active transportation | | |  | Urban Wetland |
|  | Creek enhancement | | |  | San Rafael Canal Waterfront |
| | | | |  | Green Infrastructure |



Parks and Plazas

The public realm framework identifies the locations of existing civic spaces such as the Courthouse Square, and potential new civic spaces to create a cohesive network, including:

1. SMART Transit Plaza. The SMART station is a unique opportunity to design a new public plaza for station access and for community events. Also recommended in the Downtown Station Area Plan, the proposed Transit Plaza in the Precise Plan extends along Tamalpais Avenue from Fourth Street to Fifth Avenue, creating an attractive new civic space at a key location, and incorporating a key new north-south bicycle route. Framed by new mixed-use buildings with active ground floor uses, the plaza can be a venue for outdoor dining and events such as seasonal markets, exhibitions, festivals, etc.

2. Pocket Park in West End Village. An underutilized site on Fourth Street on the north side of the block, mid-block between Shaver and F Streets, can be a redevelopment opportunity to provide a small, neighborhood-serving pocket park at a key location.

Publicly Accessible Private Civic Spaces. The Plan encourages the provision of publicly accessible civic spaces on private parcels as part of redevelopment, particularly for larger projects. Some potential locations of such spaces are shown in Figure 4.10 and an example is illustrated below in Figure 4.11. The Downtown Code also requires that parcels above a certain size provide civic space when redeveloped, and sets minimum standards for those.

Streets and Passages

A network of prioritized pedestrian and bicycle routes will connect existing and potential civic spaces and popular destinations within Downtown, as shown in Figure 4.10. The network will be integrated into the city-wide network, and improve access to Downtown. Key elements include:

3. Fourth Street Improvements. The role of Fourth Street as Downtown's "main street" can be further enhanced through traffic calming and public realm improvements. The Plan envisions Fourth Street as a multimodal corridor, accommodating all travel modes but prioritizing the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. A recommended

Figure 4.11 Public-private partnership to create new civic spaces in Downtown

This graphic illustrates the potential of creating a new pocket plaza in the Downtown Core on the north side of Fourth Street, mid-block between Lootens and Cijos Streets. At this location, a newer building addition obscures an older municipal building with an attractive forecourt. Should this parcel be redeveloped and the front addition removed, the forecourt could function as a pocket plaza, with the older building showcasing local history. Please note that this is only an illustration of a design concept and not a civic space required by the Precise Plan.





Figure 4.12 Design elements of the public realm

A Pedestrian-Oriented Public Realm

The public realm is a combination of interrelated elements - streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and even private open spaces that allow public access. In most downtowns, the streets and sidewalks are often the largest contiguous civic space, experienced by almost every visitor. They can play a critical role in enhancing vitality by

providing a safe, comfortable and interesting pedestrian experience; especially when framed by visually appealing building facades and frontages, public art and signage. Each component of the public realm, highlighted in the graphic above, serves an important design function.

- Building frontage
- Space for entrances, window shopping
- Space for walking
- Space for street furniture and trees
- Trees and urban greenery
- Public art
- Street lighting

long-term improvement is the transformation of a part of Fourth Street, ideally from Tamalpais Avenue to A Street, into a Shared Street that would accommodate all modes through a shared, low-speed environment. Flush curbs, pavers and other design improvements could enable it to function more flexibly as both a street and a plaza. This could also be an opportunity to integrate green infrastructure for utilities, stormwater and flood control.

4. Montecito Promenade. To establish better access to San Rafael Canal and improve connectivity between the Canal district, the Montecito Commercial area, and Downtown, a waterfront promenade is proposed along San Rafael Canal, connecting to Downtown near Albert Park and to the Tamalpais north-south greenway.

5. Alleys and Pedestrian Passages. Downtown's existing pedestrian passages and alley improvements such as Julia Street and Lauren's Place should be enhanced and maintained. Other potential alleys to be considered for improvements include Walter Lane and connecting Lauren's Place and Commercial Street.

Natural Systems

Parts of Downtown are susceptible to flooding during heavy rains, in particular when rains coincide with high and king tides. This will be further exacerbated by climate change and future sea-level rise, and larger areas within Downtown may be impacted. A natural system for stormwater catchment and release can offset some of these impacts, and can include:

6. Urban Wetland. Several properties located south of Second Street along San Rafael Canal are constrained in access and subject to high flood risk. The City could consider working with the property owners to acquire a site in this location to create an urban wetland or similar feature to control local flooding, provide new habitat,

and potentially form part of an adaptation strategy for sea-level rise. The parcel shown in Figure 4.13 as an illustration of this strategy is difficult to redevelop because of its odd shape, poor vehicular access, low visibility and vulnerability to sea-level rise. When combined with the area underneath the highway ramps, this can provide adequate space to widen and connect San Rafael Canal, Mahon and Irwin Creeks to create a new wetland and natural open space. This could also increase the value of adjacent parcels, that would now have much reduced risk of flooding.

7. San Rafael Canal Waterfront. The northern edge of San Rafael Canal along Montecito Plaza is an opportunity to provide public access to the waterfront. This can be integrated with adaptation features for sea-level rise, and can serve to protect the Montecito area in the future.

8. Green Infrastructure. To increase the stormwater retention capacity of Downtown streets, permeable pavers can be considered for future infrastructure upgrades. In suitable locations, underground cisterns can be integrated for storage and gradual release of stormwater runoff.



Figure 4.13 Illustration of an urban wetland on constrained parcels in Downtown

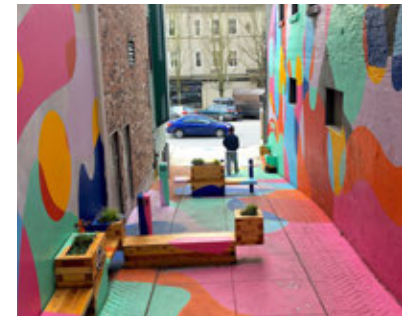


Figure 4.14 Examples of urban stormwater park systems

(Above) Qunli Urban Stormwater Park in Harbin, China. Completed in 2009, the 80-acre wetland is on a low-lying site surrounded by roads and dense development. The wetland acts as a "green sponge" to control stormwater runoff, create a new ecosystem, and provide a new urban park. [Image source: Turenscape and www.landezine.com]

(Below, left) Tanner Springs Park in Portland, Oregon [image source: Atelier Dreiseitl, www.cms-collaborative.com] and (Below, right) Usaquen Urban Wetland in Bogota, Colombia [image source: CESN/ Obraestudio, www.inhabitat.com] are other examples of urban wetlands in urban conditions.



Figure 4.15 Examples of civic space types suitable for Downtown

(Top) Paley Park, New York, a popular pocket plaza.

(Middle) A shared street environment in Copenhagen, Denmark.

(Bottom) An alley in Vancouver, Canada is transformed through public art and wayfinding into a well-used pedestrian passage.

Table 4E. Strategies for Creating Civic Spaces in Infill Conditions

Creating new civic spaces in infill conditions can be challenging due to lack of vacant parcels, high land costs, and development pressure on parcels that are vacant and being redeveloped. At the same time, the physical and emotional health benefits of access to open space in urban settings are undisputed. Below are a few policy recommendations for the City to consider in creating new civic spaces and enhancing existing ones in Downtown.

■ Privately Owned Publicly Used Space

Incentivize private developers to dedicate land for civic spaces, or allow public use of private civic space, in exchange for additional development potential (such as a height bonus), particularly in the case of development parcels above a certain size, and when several parcels are being consolidated as part of a development proposal.

■ Design Standards and Guidelines

Critical to the success of a civic space is good design. Establish civic space standards and guidelines for the location, design, degree of access and allowed uses. Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code provides standards for required civic spaces in new developments (on parcels above a certain size), which can also provide design direction for redevelopment of existing open spaces in Downtown.

■ Rethinking Streets, Alleys and Passages

Assess existing traffic capacity and actual traffic volumes for existing street rights-of-way, and

repurpose underused right-of-way space for widening sidewalks, adding bicycle facilities, or providing trees, green infrastructure, and similar improvements. In locations with high pedestrian traffic, consider converting and improving alleys, service lanes, etc. to create linear pedestrian passages. Maintain existing alleys that have been improved.

■ Parklets

Consider the conversion of on-street parking spaces in appropriate locations to parklets as a short-term or long-term measure to provide additional space for outdoor dining and similar uses to support local businesses.

■ Temporary Use of Underutilized Sites

Create short to medium-term pocket parks and pocket plazas in underutilized spaces such as vacant lots, unused setback area, or parts of underutilized surface parking lots. Employ cost-effective improvements and set a fixed "lifespan" for the project, with the provision that the project would be evaluated for continued use, or redevelopment for other uses, at the expiration of the fixed lifespan.

■ Maintenance and Upkeep

Identify suitable mechanisms to create and maintain civic spaces, such as creating a Community Facilities District or other Special Assessment Districts.

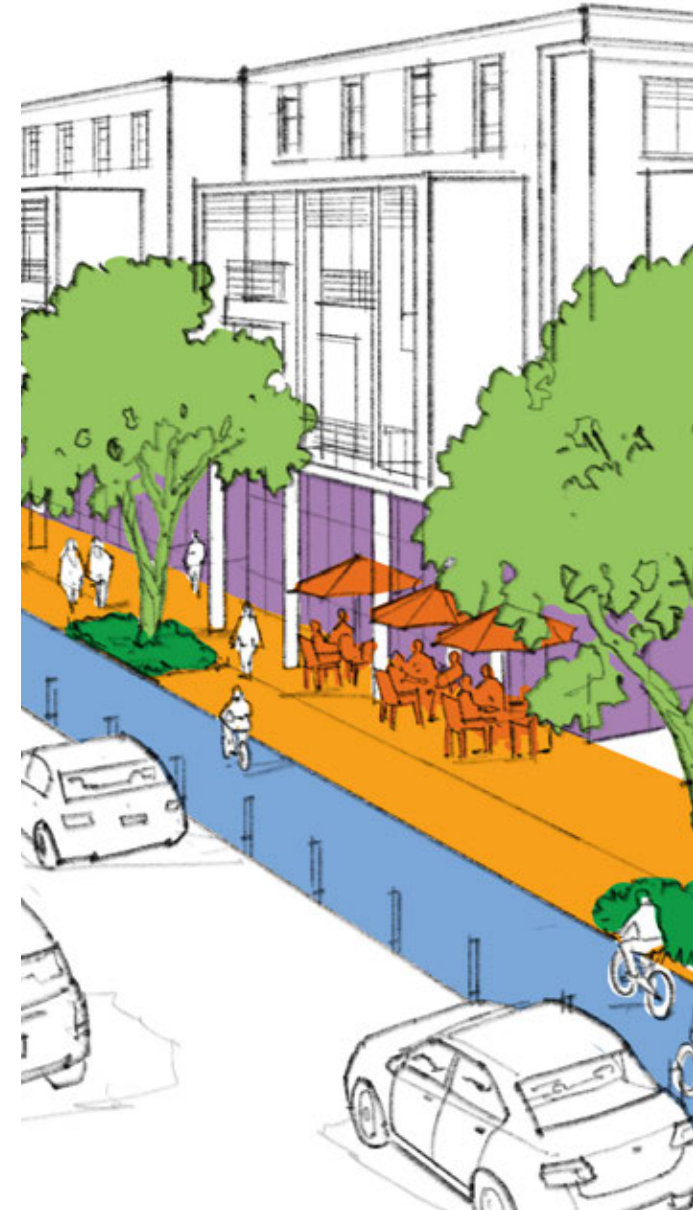




Figure 4.16 Civic space elements (left) and examples of well-designed publicly accessible private civic space (above)

- Plaza with solar access
- Outdoor seating
- Space for people walking
- Space for people riding bicycles
- Active ground floor uses
- Trees providing shade
- Urban greenery

4.5 Downtown Sub-Areas

The Plan vision organizes Downtown into four sub-areas to recognize existing differences in character and function, and to reinforce the identity of each in the future Downtown.









Downtown San Rafael is a collage of neighborhoods that differ in physical form and culture. In recognizing this, the development approach places a sharper focus on the special features and needs of each sub-area, and defines a future vision based on three overarching principles:

- Determine the degree of change required to enable growth and new development while protecting community character;

- Reinforce the existing character and unique attributes of each sub-area and its distinct role within Downtown; and
- Establish a hierarchy of form and intensity of use to improve wayfinding and reinforce a sense of place.

Figure 4.18 shows the extents of the four Downtown sub-areas. In the pages that follow, the vision for Downtown is presented through the lens of each neighborhood.

Figure 4.17 Future vision for Downtown sub-areas

<p>Downtown Gateway</p> <p><i>A vibrant, mixed-use node with new housing, employment and civic space.</i></p>	 <p>Today</p>  <p>Tomorrow</p>	<p>West End Village</p> <p><i>A compact, low-rise neighborhood with a variety of housing, eclectic shops and local businesses.</i></p>	 <p>Today</p>  <p>Tomorrow</p>
<p>Downtown Core</p> <p><i>The retail, cultural and entertainment heart of Downtown anchored by Fourth Street.</i></p>	 <p>Today</p>  <p>Tomorrow</p>	<p>Montecito Commercial</p> <p><i>A neighborhood with a unique waterfront identity, with new housing supported by amenities and transit.</i></p>	 <p>Today</p>  <p>Tomorrow</p>

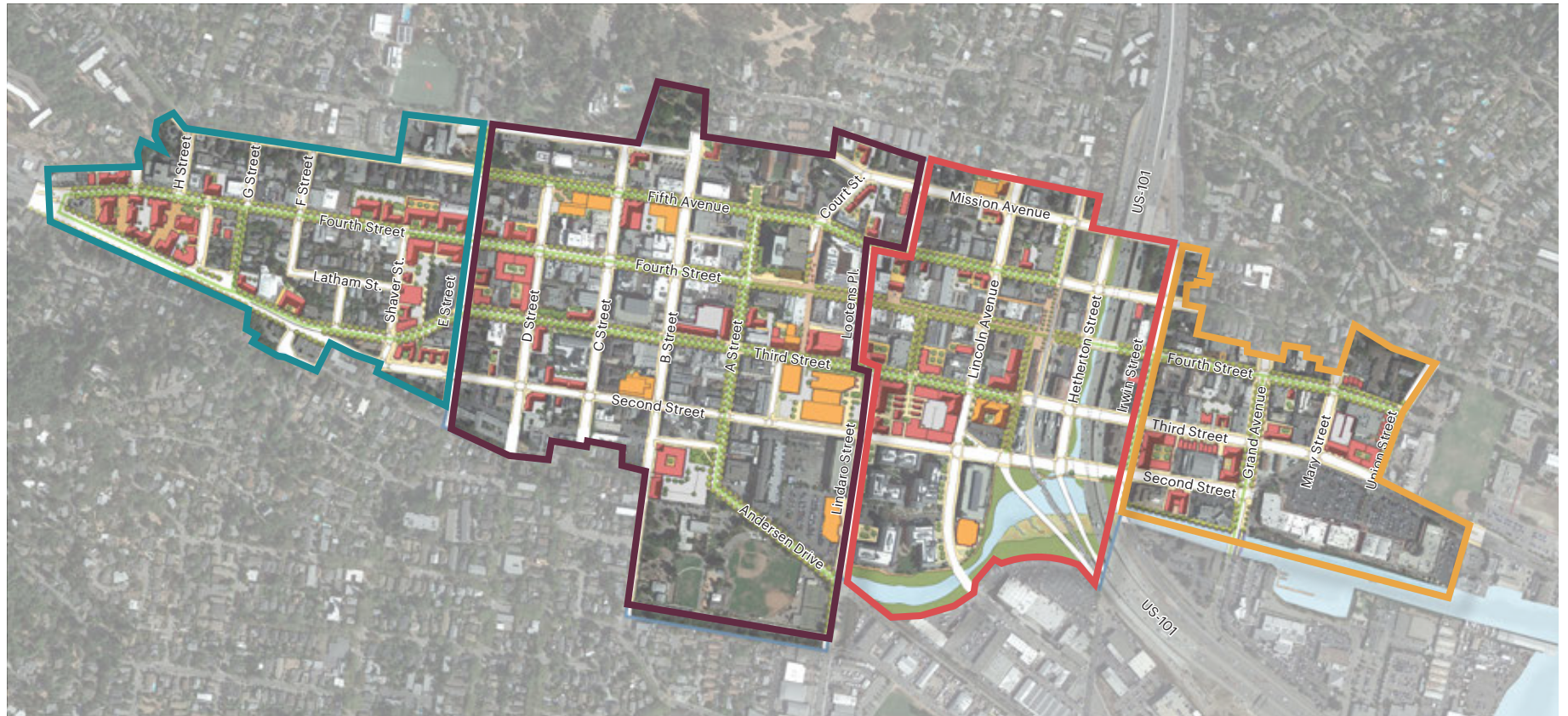






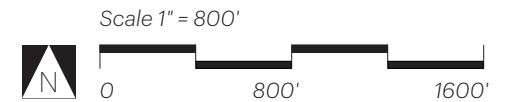


Figure 4.18 Four sub-areas within Downtown

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|--|
|  | Downtown Gateway |  | Potential infill opportunity sites* |
|  | Downtown Core |  | Buildings entitled/ under construction |
|  | West End Village | | |
|  | Montecito Commercial | | |

* Potential infill projects shown here are conceptual and for illustrative purposes only



Downtown Gateway

The Downtown Gateway augments Downtown's role as a regional transportation hub with new mixed-use development supported by amenities and civic space.

Existing Conditions

The Downtown Gateway sub-area is a place where most visitors get their first impression of Downtown, whether arriving by transit or highway. The sub-area includes the SMART station and San Rafael Transit Center, and spans US-101, as shown in Figure 4.19. While it has an important regional role as a mobility hub, the area currently lacks a sense of arrival. The SMART station lacks sufficient civic space to accommodate transit riders, and pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to adjacent areas is not as safe and convenient as it should be. This area is also an entry point for auto traffic, but the built form and streetscape does not currently provide a gateway experience. Second, Third, Irwin and Hetherton Streets are regional arterials with high traffic volumes and are frequently congested. The extension of the SMART rail line to Larkspur will require the relocation of the Transit Center. As of 2020, three sites within Downtown were being evaluated, all within a couple of blocks of the SMART station (see page 79, 81 for details). The final location is anticipated to be selected in 2021.

The sub-area has potential infill opportunity sites on Tamalpais Avenue along the train tracks between Fourth Street and Mission Avenue, and several underutilized parcels south of Second Street. There are also opportunities to intensify the parcels to the east of

the highway, and create better pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Montecito Commercial area and the Canal district.

Design Intent

The Precise Plan envisions the Downtown Gateway as a vibrant, active node and transportation hub, and an inviting entrance to Downtown accentuated with new mixed-use development, amenities, streetscape improvements, and community space. This is a valuable opportunity to provide new housing and employment at a transit-rich location, with excellent access to all the amenities that Downtown has to offer.

Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access to the SMART station and Downtown destinations will benefit local businesses and draw more visitors and residents to the area without adding to traffic and parking concerns.

The Precise Plan also recommends using this valuable development opportunity to create a new civic space at the SMART station. A new Transit Plaza at this location will carry forward the Downtown Station Area Plan vision, augment and support the uses and activities in Downtown's Courthouse Square, and strengthen Fourth Street as a pedestrian spine.

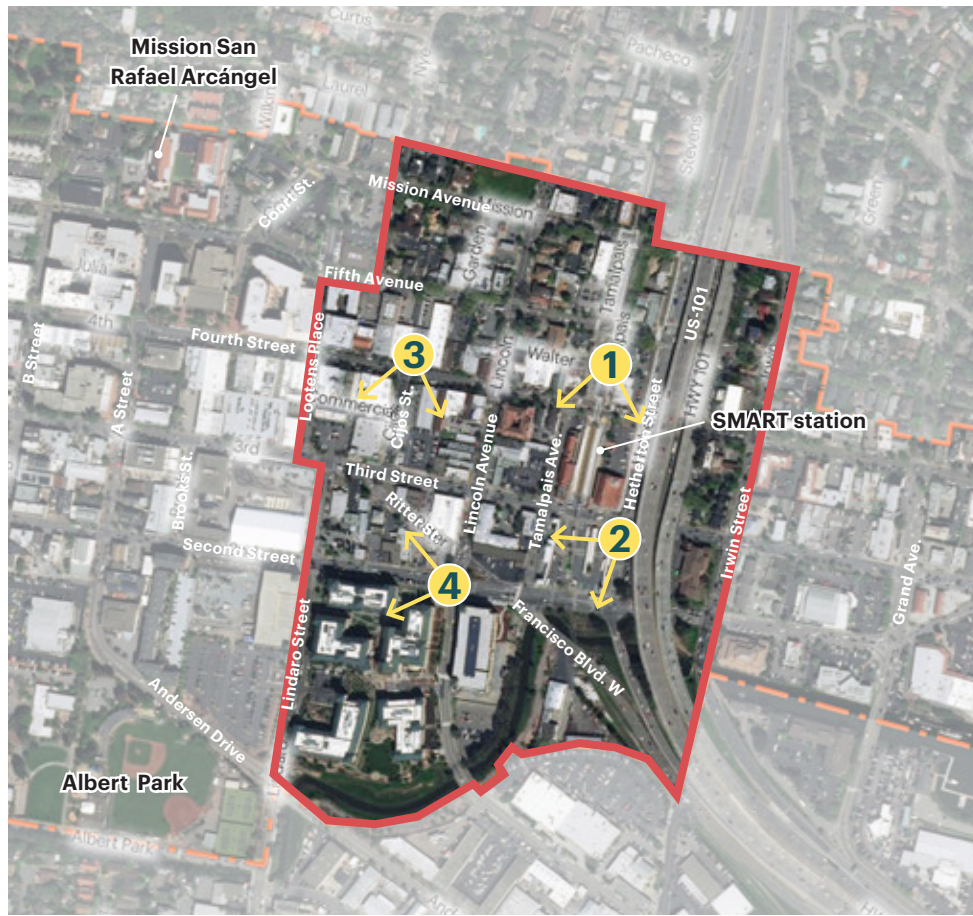


Figure 4.19 Downtown Gateway within the Plan Area
Locations of the photos of existing conditions shown on this page are indicated on the map.





Figure 4.20 Lindaro office district south of Second Street is a well-designed office campus but lacks adequate connectivity to Downtown.

Built Character and Uses

The Downtown Gateway is one of the nodes where substantial new development is anticipated. In addition to projects currently underway and in the development pipeline, the SMART station and proposed relocation of the San Rafael Transit Center will promote new transit-supported residential and mixed-use infill. At the time of drafting the Precise Plan, several sites near the SMART station were being studied for the relocation of this important regional function. Because of the prime location of each of the parcels being assessed, the final location selected may influence the overall development potential of this node. As shown in Figure 4.21, there are several large potential infill opportunity sites near the SMART station, along Tamalpais Avenue and Hetherton Street, and along Second and Third Streets, that are the focus of new moderate and high-intensity development. In addition, a variety of smaller sites are scattered throughout the sub-area that can support incremental infill.

Since many parcels in Downtown are smaller in size or have narrow widths, lot consolidation can create parcel

sizes that are more financially feasible to develop. An illustrative example of lot consolidation is shown on Second and Lindaro Streets. By removing the under-utilized Ritter Street, the parcel can be viably redeveloped with a mix of large, medium, and smaller footprint buildings, integrating a public passage connecting to the Lindaro office district.

Development Program

The development yield projected for the Downtown Gateway is 830 new housing units (approximately 25 percent of which are in the development pipeline) and approximately 210,000 square feet of non-residential uses, that translates into 640 new jobs.

Built Form

The built fabric in this sub-area is predominantly block-form, with attached buildings and small to no front and side setbacks. The lower intensity areas along Mission Avenue have a more house-form character, with detached buildings and small front and side setbacks. Frontages include residential and commercial types.

Table 4F. Downtown Gateway: Projected Program and Built Environment Summary

Refer to Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code for development standards

Development Type	Program (additional/new)	Feature	Recommendations for new development
Residential	830,000 sq ft ¹ (830 units) ²	Building types	Mainly block-form with some house-form
Non-Residential	210,000 sq ft ¹ (640 jobs) ²	Building heights	Maximum 40 feet (base) to 90 feet (with bonus)
		Frontage types ³	Shopfront, gallery, forecourt, terrace, porch, dooryard, stoop
		Building uses ⁴	Vertical mixed-use with ground floor retail
		Parking	Surface, podium, subterranean

¹ The program numbers are inclusive of pipeline projects and have been derived from the testing of infill lots with building types that conform to the Plan vision and proposed Downtown Form-Based Code, in consultation with City staff.

² Assumptions include 1,000 sq ft (gross area) per housing unit, and 1 job per 350 sq ft (gross area), with exceptions as needed for approved projects.

³ Please refer to Chapter Nine for descriptions of frontage types.


⁴ Ground floor retail is desired but not required. Active ground floors are encouraged.



Illustrative Vision for the Downtown Gateway

The illustrative plan and perspective show one of many potential built outcomes for the Downtown Gateway sub-area.



- Small-lot infill development fills missing gaps in the built fabric and provides additional housing close to transit.
- The SMART station plaza is extended north till Fifth Avenue, creating a new Transit Plaza and gateway to Downtown.
- Enhanced bicycle facilities along Tamalpais Avenue improve connectivity to the city-wide north-south bicycle greenway.
- Parcels along Ritter Street consolidated to enable a larger mixed-use project, and provide a direct pedestrian connection from Downtown to the offices south of Second Street.
- Potential location for a parking structure.
- Potential urban wetland south of Second Street to alleviate Downtown flooding, along with restored Mahon and Irwin creeks.

 San Rafael Transit Center relocation: several site options currently under review (see page 81).



View from US-101 looking north-west

Figure 4.21 Illustrative plan (above) and perspective (right) for the Downtown Gateway showing one possible build-out by 2040

-  Potential infill opportunity sites*
-  Buildings entitled or under construction

* Potential infill projects shown here are conceptual and for illustrative purposes only



Figure 4.22 Highway underpass improvements

(Above) The area beneath US-101 is currently perceived as unsafe, and is used as a parking facility by Caltrans. This area can be designed in a number of ways (as shown in the example below) to better serve pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as make improvements to Irwin Creek.

Building Heights

Building heights in the area for new development ranges from 40 to 90 feet (ranging from maximum base heights to maximum heights with bonuses). Higher intensity development is proposed for the infill sites near the SMART station along Hetherton and Irwin Streets, and moderate intensity development is proposed in most of the other opportunity sites. The parcels along Mission Avenue will have lower heights to match the existing context. Table 4F provides a summary of the proposed built environment, and development standards are discussed in Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code.

Public Realm

Streets and Active Transportation

- The Downtown Gateway is envisioned as a regional transportation and mobility hub, accommodating a variety of travel modes with seamless transfers.
- The SMART station at the heart of the Downtown Gateway is a major transit entrance to the city. Over time, the increased frequency of the trains and the resultant impact on vehicular circulation on Second and Third Streets may need to be considered. The General Plan 2040 addresses the possibility of elevating the SMART tracks through Downtown and building a raised boarding platform.
- The relocation of the San Rafael Transit Center is a major Downtown project, and the site selection will need to consider possible traffic impacts on existing streets.
- Hetherton and Irwin Streets continue to be major routes for vehicular traffic, and new developments proposed near the SMART station orient their service and parking needs along those streets.
- Fourth Street is a multimodal corridor and has enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between Downtown

and the Montecito Commercial area east of US-101. The portion of Fourth Street from Tamalpais Avenue to Hetherton Street can be reconfigured to improve auto movement around the SMART station and also accommodate protected bicycle movement.

- Tamalpais Avenue has improved circulation and drop-off activities near the SMART station area, and also accommodates a separated Class I north-south bicycle facility along the train tracks, connecting to the existing bicycle facilities on Puerto Suello Hill to the north and Mahon Creek path on the south.
- To create a more welcoming and safe environment for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users, the portions of Fifth Avenue, Fourth Street, Third Street and Second Street that pass underneath US-101 are improved, with better lighting, wider sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping, and signage.
- With the continued implementation of the Third Street Rehabilitation Study recommendations, pedestrian and bicycle crossings are enhanced for safety at the intersections of Tamalpais Avenue and Hetherton Street with Second and Third Streets.

For details on street design and modal prioritization, see Chapter Six: Transportation and Parking.

Civic Space

- The area around the SMART station south of Fourth Street is improved to better serve station users .
- A new Transit Plaza is proposed between Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue by reconfiguring Tamalpais Avenue. The new civic space accommodates pedestrians and bicycles while limiting vehicular access to service and emergency vehicles. Framed by new mixed-use development with active ground floors, the new plaza

San Rafael Transit Center

The present-day San Rafael Transit Center operates as the regional transit hub for Marin County, connecting rail, bus, shuttle and taxi services. It has 17 bays handling over 500 buses, and in 2019, was operating at capacity with over 9,000 daily weekday boardings.

The Transit Center needs to be relocated because of the SMART rail extension to Larkspur, and a multi-year process to develop a new Transit Center has been underway since early 2018. As of 2020, station design concepts were being considered on three potential sites, as shown in Figure 4.23. All lie within two blocks of the SMART station to create efficient transfers. The selection of the relocation site, not yet made as of 2020, is an important decision and can influence infill opportunities in Downtown. The sites being considered need to be evaluated carefully to ensure the smooth operation for the large number of buses serving regional and local routes, while not adding to traffic congestion in a part of Downtown that already has high traffic volumes, particularly during commute hours.

Another important consideration is the impact on the development potential of the parcels being evaluated. Two of the three potential sites are on parcels that could support mixed-use development at a greater level of intensity than in other parts of Downtown. Figure 4.24 illustrates an example of potential mixed-use development at this node, should the Transit Center relocation site to be chosen is the one north and south of Fourth Street between Hetherton and Irwin Streets, beneath US-101. Please note that this illustration is shown here simply to highlight infill possibilities, and is not a recommendation for any particular site.



Figure 4.23 Relocation sites under consideration

Three options are under consideration for relocating the Transit Center, all within two blocks of the SMART station.

- North and south of Fourth Street between Hetherton and Irwin
- On Tamalpais Avenue between Third Street and Fifth Avenue; and
- On Tamalpais Avenue between Third and Fourth Streets (combined area shown in dashed outline)



Figure 4.24 Potential infill opportunity sites

Two of the three relocation sites are in a prime Downtown location. This illustration shows an example of potential mixed-use infill at this location, should neither of these sites be selected.



Figure 4.25 *Irwin Creek runs underneath US-101 and can be part of a Downtown-wide flood control strategy*

provides space for transit users as well as community events such as a Farmer’s Market, small kiosks, etc.

- An urban wetland is suggested south of Second Street and east of Lincoln Avenue, as described in Section 4.4: Public Realm and Connectivity. Along with restoring San Rafael Canal and Irwin and Mahon Creeks, this can form part of a city-wide sea-level rise adaptation strategy to alleviate flooding and increase access to open space.
- Improve Walter Lane as a pedestrian passage connecting to the new Transit Plaza.

Historic Resources

- Existing historic resources and the French Quarter historic district are protected, and the updated historic resources survey makes an area along Fourth Street eligible for consideration as an historic district under CEQA. The Whistlestop building has the potential to be a recognized as a community icon and adapted to new uses, but any determination needs further analysis

and discussion with stakeholders. For additional details, please refer to Chapter Five: Historic Resources.

Additional Recommendations

- Create a focused wayfinding strategy to help orient visitors and enable transit users to make efficient transfers between modes. Use building massing and articulation, public art, signage, and other streetscape elements to create a unique arrival experience.
- Explore the future transformation of a part of Fourth Street to a shared street, connecting the new Transit Plaza to Courthouse Square.
- Promote greater affordable housing through height bonuses and reduced parking requirements in new mixed-use projects near the SMART station.
- Pursue public-private partnerships to increase parking supply and encourage public parking in private garages.

“Enable new transit-oriented development characterized by increased activity, a mix of uses, and a strong sense of place.”

Goal Six, Downtown Station Area Plan (2012)



Figure 4.26 *Inspiration for the proposed Transit Plaza can be derived from the Del Mar station in Pasadena (right) in which the station plaza anchors a successful mixed-use development project; and from the Indianapolis Culture Trail (above), an 8-mile pedestrian and bicycle trail connecting all of the city’s major cultural destinations.*



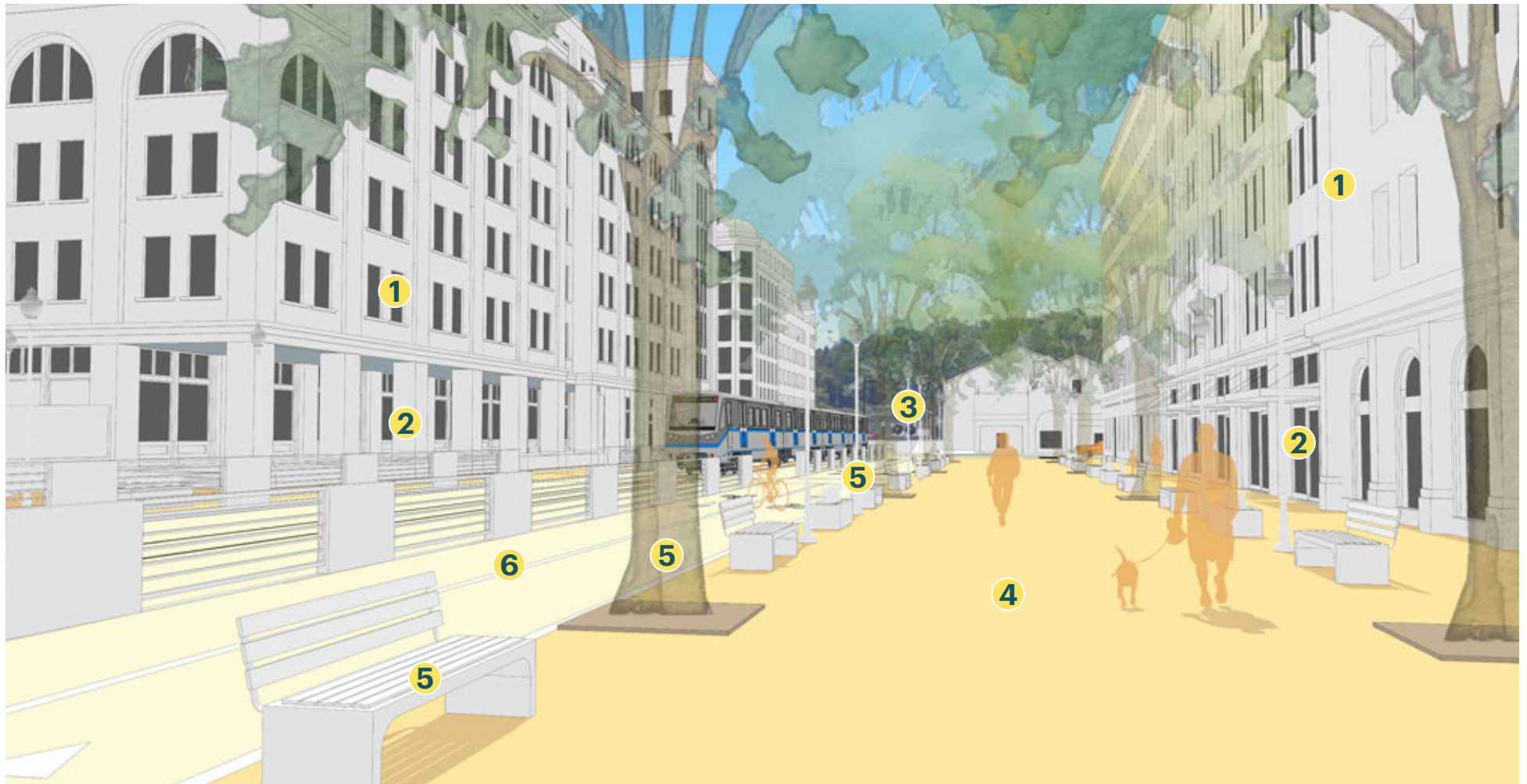


Figure 4.27 Illustrative rendering of the new Transit Plaza

(Above) A new plaza is created on Tamalpais Avenue between Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue, providing a new civic space at the entrance to Downtown. Framed by new mixed-use development with active ground floor uses, the plaza can support a variety of functions. The photo (left) indicates existing conditions at the same location.

- 1** New mixed-use development provides housing and employment close to transit and amenities.
- 2** Active ground floor uses add vitality and safety to the plaza
- 3** The SMART station creates a new transit gateway to Downtown
- 4** The new plaza creates space for a range of activities and amenities
- 5** Trees, lighting, seating and bicycle facilities enhance the Transit Plaza
- 6** A Class I bicycle facility enhances north-south connectivity

Downtown Core

The Downtown Core is envisioned as the retail, dining, cultural, and entertainment center of San Rafael, offering a diverse set of uses and an authentic, memorable "Downtown experience".

Existing Conditions

Centered around Fourth Street, Downtown's established "main street", the Downtown Core sub-area is the retail and entertainment heart of San Rafael. Residents and visitors have easy access to specialty stores, offices, restaurants, art galleries, museums, and cultural institutions such as the Falkirk Center and Rafael Theatre. Fourth Street is also a popular city-wide and regional destination for outdoor events, festivals, and celebrations, and Courthouse Square is one of Downtown's largest civic spaces. Improved alleys and small plazas such as Lauren's Place create interest. Much of Fourth Street in the Downtown Core has retained its historic character, and the human scale of the buildings and mix of uses make this an attractive destination.

The scale of the built environment changes moving south towards the Second and Third Street corridor. Typically, this area has larger buildings and a greater concentration of offices, with several development projects underway. Second and Third Streets function as regional arterials, and effectively create a barrier for pedestrian and bicycle movement in the north-south direction.

Downtown's largest open spaces flank the Downtown Core - Boyd Park north of Mission Avenue and Albert Park

south of Second Street. But linkages between the two through Downtown are not well-defined.

Future Vision

The Downtown Core has tremendous potential to further strengthen its identity as a major center for San Rafael and the region, and in addition also serve the everyday needs of new and existing residents in Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The sub-area has the capacity to introduce new housing in close proximity to amenities and transit that will enliven the area, support Downtown businesses and improve safety.

The Precise Plan envisions Fourth Street to continue to be an active and growing regional retail and cultural center, supported by new mixed-use development, and public realm and streetscape improvements to improve its role as a multimodal corridor. It retains its unique mix of shops and historic fabric, with sensitive additions to accommodate new uses while maintaining the quality of its streetscapes and views.

To improve circulation and connectivity, particularly in the north-south direction, existing streets were assessed and their roles modified as needed. Pedestrian amenities, traffic calming, trees, lighting, and signage improvements

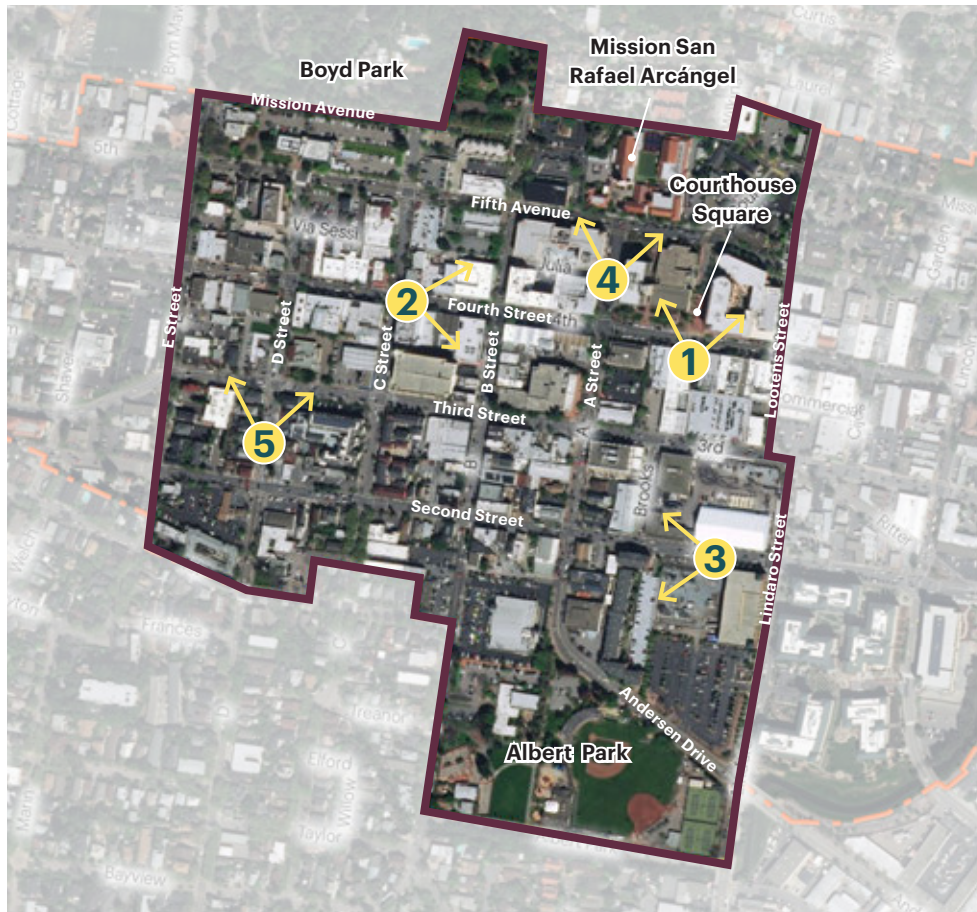


Figure 4.28 Downtown Core within the Plan Area
 Locations of the photos of existing conditions shown on this page are indicated on the map.

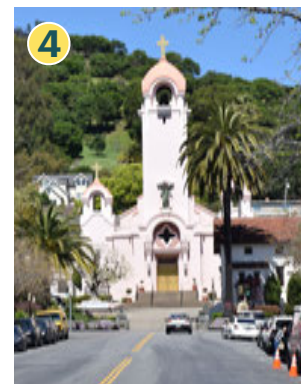
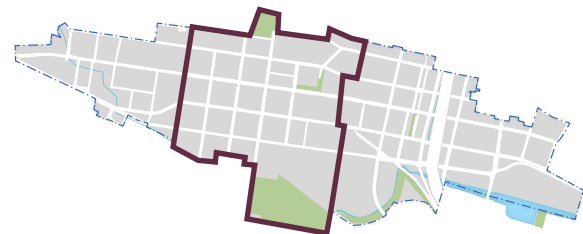




Figure 4.29 Fourth Street has several examples of historic buildings being adapted for newer uses.

Tam Commons, shown above, is a new brewpub in a building that is a designated local landmark.
 Image source: www.marinij.com

can greatly enhance wayfinding and integrate different parts of the Downtown Core.

Built Character and Uses

The Downtown Core will continue to see new residential and mixed-use infill development on some larger sites as well as smaller parcels across Downtown. Some intensification of uses along Fourth Street is proposed, guided by recommendations to preserve its historic character. In general, new development is of moderate intensity along Fifth Avenue, Fourth Street, Third Street and Second Street, and of lower intensity in the residential areas on the periphery. Major opportunity sites for larger mixed-use projects include those on Fourth Street between D and E Streets, at Fifth Avenue and C Street, on Third and Lootens Streets, and the Safeway grocery site at First and B Streets, as illustrated in Figure 4.30.

Development Program

The development yield projected includes 620 new housing units and approximately 373,000 square feet of non-residential uses, that translates into 1,040 new jobs.

Built Form

Buildings along Fifth Avenue, Fourth Street, Second Street and Third Street are more block-form in character, with attached buildings set to the back of the sidewalk. Buildings in the periphery are mainly house-form and thus more residential in character, with detached buildings and small front and side setbacks. Typical frontages include a mix of residential and shopfront types.

Fourth Street is reinforced as Downtown's "main street", and new buildings contribute to its historic character. Ground floor uses activate the street and fill in gaps.

Building Heights

Building heights for new development range from 40 to 80 feet (ranging from maximum base heights to maximum heights with bonuses). Key infill pipeline projects constitute the taller buildings in this sub-area, while lower heights are seen on smaller parcels, particularly on the periphery.

Table 4G provides a summary of the proposed built environment, and development standards are discussed in Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code.

Table 4G. Downtown Core: Projected Program and Built Environment Summary
 Refer to Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code for development standards

Development Type	Program (additional/new)	Feature	Recommendation
Residential	620,000 sq ft ¹ (620 units) ²	Building types	House-form and Block-form
Non-Residential	373,000 sq ft ¹ (1,040 jobs) ²	Building heights	Maximum 40 feet (base) to 80 feet (with bonus)
		Frontage types ³	Shopfront, gallery, forecourt, terrace, porch, stoop, dooryard
		Building uses ⁴	Vertical mixed-use with ground floor retail
		Parking	Podium, surface

¹ The program numbers are inclusive of pipeline projects and have been derived from the testing of infill lots with building types that conform to the Plan vision and proposed Downtown Form-Based Code, in consultation with City staff.
² Assumptions include 1,000 sq ft (gross area) per housing unit, and 1 job per 350 sq ft (gross area), with exceptions as needed for approved projects.
³ Please refer to Chapter Nine for descriptions of frontage types.
⁴ Ground floor retail is desired but not required. Active ground floors are encouraged.

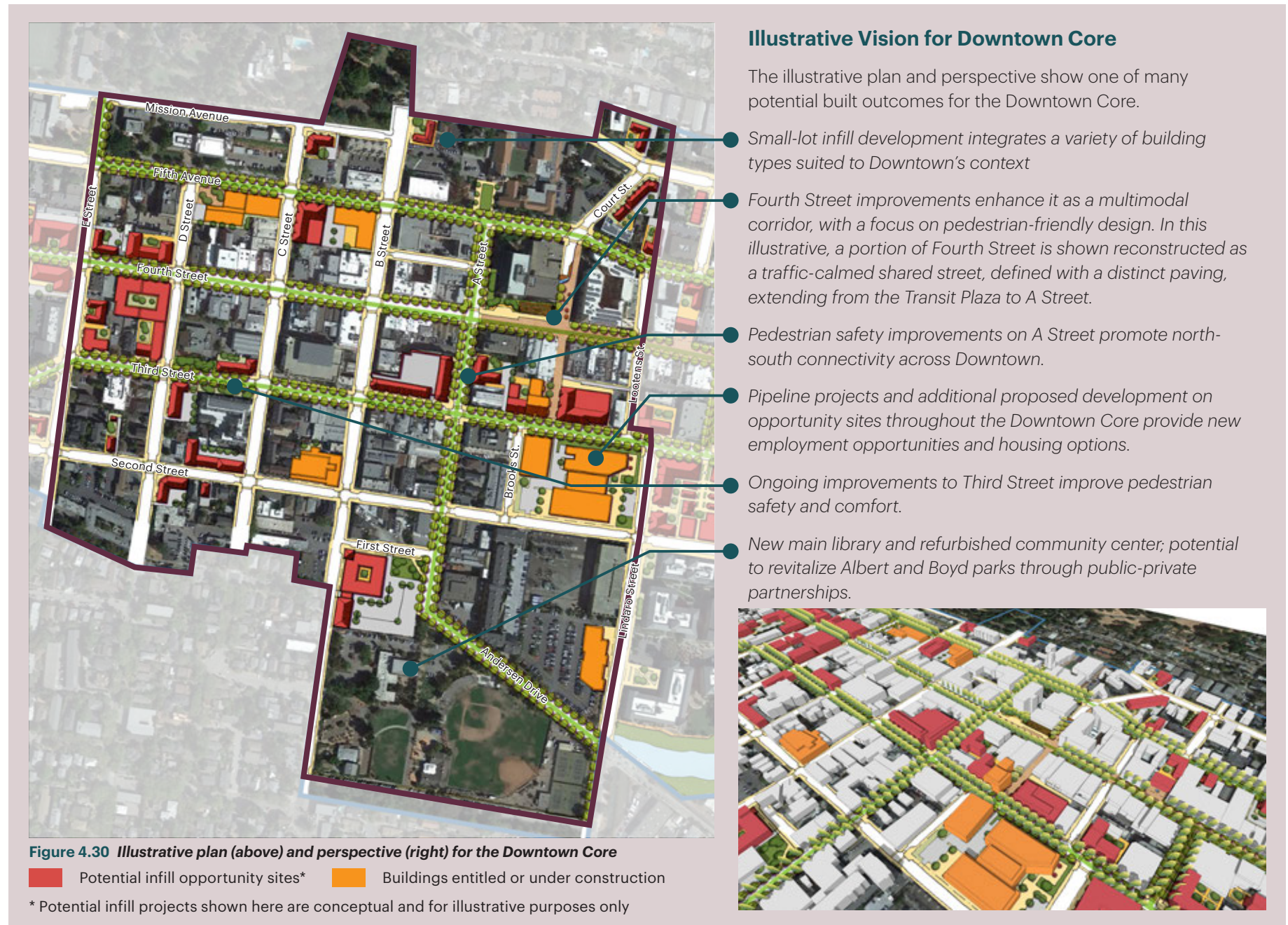




Figure 4.31 Shared street

An example of a flush or curbless shared street from Asheville, NC that can be an inspiration for Fourth Street between A Street and the SMART station. The street allows slow-moving traffic including cars, bicycles and service vehicles, but pedestrian uses are clearly prioritized. Paving materials demarcate spaces for different uses. Image source: www.nacto.org

Public Realm

Streets and Active Transportation

- Fourth Street functions as Downtown's "main street" through the Downtown Core, accommodating autos, bicycles, transit and pedestrians in a low-speed, "shared use" environment. Street parking is retained to support existing and new retail uses, and pedestrian crossings improved at key intersections. In the long term, improvements include widening of sidewalks and creating space for street trees. The existing shared lane or "sharrow" condition on Fourth Street is accentuated with a striped median for traffic calming.
- To improve north-south connectivity, A, B, and Lindero Streets are treated as pedestrian priority streets, and A and E as bicycle priority streets. Bicycle network enhancements include Class III bicycle facilities on E and Fourth, and a Class II bicycle facility on A Street.
- C and D Streets function as emergency response routes. B Street is recommended to be converted from one-way to two-way operation to improve circulation.
- Pedestrian safety is enhanced on Second and Third Streets through traffic calming and other improvements recommended in the Third Street Rehabilitation Study.

For details on street design and modal prioritization, refer to Chapter Six: Transportation and Parking.

Civic Space

- The portion of Fourth Street abutting Courthouse Square in the Downtown Core is improved with new paving, lighting and signage to enable it to function as an extension of the plaza. In the long term, the City could consider converting Fourth Street from A Street to the SMART station into a shared street, promoting more flexible use of the existing right-of-way. In the short term,

existing sidewalks can be extended in key locations to encourage a wider variety of uses.

- The existing open space in front of 1000 Fourth Street is improved with features such as a pavilion for shade and events, as well as wide steps for seating and linking better with the adjacent Courthouse Square.
- Wherever possible, existing sidewalks should be improved to provide consistent width and adequate space for pedestrians to walk, window-shop, and linger.
- The Plan recommends improvements to Albert Park and Boyd Park, and special trees and signage on A Street to strengthen the linkages between the two, and to highlight views of Mission San Rafael Arcángel.
- Improvements to alleys and paseos in Downtown enhance safety and pedestrian movement.

Historic Resources

- Existing historic resources and landmarks are protected, and areas along Fourth and B Streets may be eligible for consideration as a historic district under CEQA. For additional details, please refer to Chapter Five: Historic Resources.

Additional Recommendations

- Emphasize the history and identity of the Downtown Core through a placemaking and wayfinding strategy including interpretive signage, coordinated streetscape design, street furniture, public art, etc., as well as events and activities such guided tours.
- Develop a new main library adjacent to the San Rafael Community Center, and refurbish the historic Carnegie Library west of City Hall for a new use.

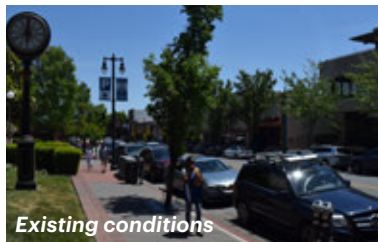


Figure 4.32 Illustrative rendering of Fourth Street improvements

Well-designed new buildings and public realm improvements elevate Fourth Street as a regional destination, with new uses and activities. The photo (left) indicates existing conditions at the same location.

- 1** Streetscape improvements create new gathering spaces and existing civic spaces are enhanced
- 2** Wide sidewalks invite people to stroll and experience Downtown
- 3** Space for new activities and seating enliven "street life"
- 4** Street trees provide shade and identity
- 5** New mixed-use development provides housing, retail and services for residents and visitors
- 6** Street parking accommodates the needs of shoppers

West End Village

The West End Village is envisioned as an iconic Downtown neighborhood that reflects its history and eclectic character with a variety of housing choices, small shops, parks and plazas.

Existing Conditions

The West End Village forms the western gateway to the Plan Area, and has an eclectic feel with a mix of historic homes and newer mixed-use development. One of its unique features is Latham Street, a block of well-preserved homes with a consistent architectural style. It also has the Victorian Village on Fifth Avenue, one of San Rafael's existing historic districts, with a collection of houses expressing Victorian architecture. Fourth Street is its commercial spines, at a lower level of intensity of uses and building scale than the adjacent Downtown Core.

Within the neighborhood, there are several vacant and underutilized parcels including a few surface parking lots that can be prime redevelopment opportunities. The neighborhood has a more residential feel than the adjacent Downtown Core, but lacks the small parks and playgrounds typically seen in a residential neighborhood. The quality of streetscapes is inconsistent, with sidewalk widths, ground floor uses and setbacks varying considerably from one block to another.

The neighborhood character along Second and Third Streets changes dramatically, with fast moving traffic, a patchwork of uses and activities, and a public realm lacking even sidewalks in several locations. West End

Village is not well served by transit, and availability of parking is an important near-term consideration.

Future Vision

The Precise Plan envisions West End Village retaining its residential character, with new development filling in the missing gaps in the neighborhood fabric. A variety of housing types including Missing Middle types respond to the existing form and scale of the neighborhood while expanding housing choice.

Improvements to existing streetscapes add a sense of coherence and spatial containment, and small-scale parks and plazas provide outdoor gathering spaces for the community. Fourth Street continues to function as its main spine, and retains the unique mix of shops that reflect its residential character.

Along Second and Third Streets, traffic calming and public realm improvements to sidewalks, lighting, trees and street furniture makes them more hospitable to pedestrians. The intersection of Fourth and Second Streets could be treated as a formal gateway to Downtown, and designed to create a sense of arrival. New development at this node should be carefully designed to fit in with the gateway character.

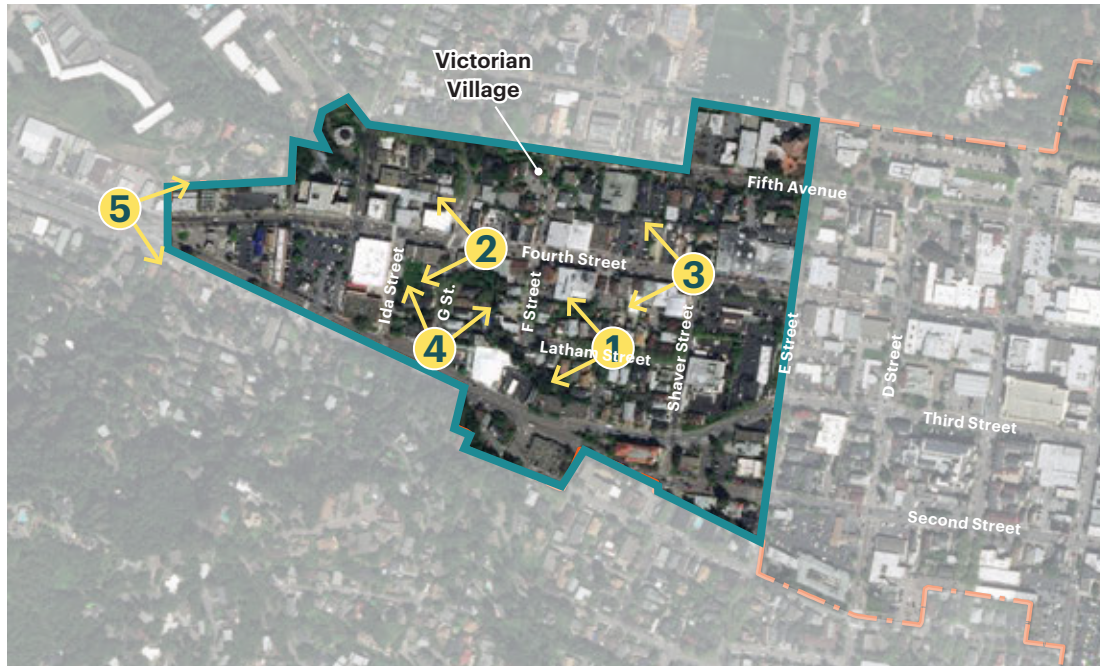


Figure 4.33 West End Village within the Plan Area

Locations of the photos of existing conditions shown below are indicated on the map.

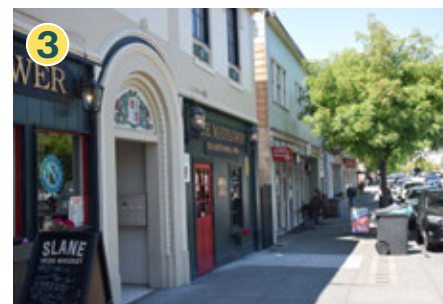




Figure 4.34 Existing built character

Built Character and Uses

West End Village has new lower-intensity residential and mixed-use development, with some moderate intensity development along Fourth Street. Neighborhood intensification is mainly in the form of incremental infill on vacant and underutilized sites. The West America Bank parcel at E and Fourth Streets is a potential site for a larger residential or mixed-use project. Figure 4.35 illustrates some key design moves for this sub-area.

Development Program

The development yield projected for this neighborhood is 360 new housing units and approximately 70,000 square feet of non-residential uses, translating into 200 new jobs.

Built Form

Buildings in the area are mainly house-form in character, with detached buildings and small front and side setbacks. Buildings along Fourth, Second and Third Streets are more block-form, with attached buildings and small to no front setbacks, and typically no side setbacks, to create a unifying street wall.

The character of Fourth Street as a neighborhood "main street" is enhanced through sensitive infill to create consistent building frontages along the street. New mixed-use buildings have a variety of ground floor uses that activate the street. Typical frontages include a mix of residential and shopfront types.

Building Heights

Lower intensity development is proposed for most parts of the neighborhood to preserve its residential character, with buildings predominantly 40 feet tall. The Latham Street block continues to retain its zoning of MR 2.5 as per the General Plan. Moderate intensity development is proposed along Fourth Street, and the western end where a "gateway" is anticipated. Heights in these areas range mostly up to 50 feet (with height bonuses), to up to 70 feet at the corner of Fourth and E Streets.

Table 4H provides a summary of the proposed built environment, and development standards are discussed in Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code.

Table 4H. West End Village: Projected Program and Built Environment Summary

Refer to Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code for development standards

Development Type	Program (additional/new)	Feature	Recommendation
Residential	360,000 sq ft ¹ (360 units) ²	Building types	House-form and block-form
Non-Residential	70,000 sq ft ¹ (200 jobs) ²	Building heights	Maximum 30 feet (base) to 70 feet (with bonus)
		Frontage types	Shopfront, gallery, terrace, forecourt, porch, stoop, dooryard
		Building uses	Residential; vertical and horizontal mixed-use with ground floor retail
		Parking	Podium, surface

¹ The program numbers are inclusive of pipeline projects and have been derived from the testing of infill lots with building types that conform to the Plan vision and proposed Downtown Form-Based Code, in consultation with City staff.

² Assumptions include 1,000 sq ft (gross area) per housing unit, and 1 job per 350 sq ft (gross area), with exceptions as needed for approved projects.

³ Please refer to Chapter Nine for descriptions of frontage types.

⁴ Ground floor retail is desired but not required. Active ground floors are encouraged.



Illustrative Vision for West End Village

The illustrative plan and perspective show one of many potential built outcomes for West End Village.

- New development at the western edge of Downtown helps create a gateway experience. For large-scale new development, the City could provide incentives to encourage private parking facilities to be publicly accessible.
- A new neighborhood-scale pocket park is created as a community benefit from redevelopment, and the new civic space helps to activate the Fourth Street corridor.
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements prioritized on Second and Fourth Streets help connect this area to the Downtown Core and Downtown Gateway nodes.
- New residential development includes a variety of housing types that reinforce the unique identity of the West End Village, responding to the existing form and scale of the neighborhood while providing additional housing choice.



Figure 4.35 Illustrative plan (above) and perspective (right) for West End Village showing one possible build-out by 2040

■ Potential infill opportunity sites*

* Potential infill projects shown here are conceptual and for illustrative purposes only



Figure 4.36 *Protecting local businesses and cherished institutions helps to enhance neighborhood character*

Public Realm

Streets and Active Transportation

- Fourth Street is the neighborhood's central spine, and continues to accommodate all travel modes while retaining street parking to support retail uses.
- Improvements to make cycling safer include modifications to the existing Fourth Street roadway to create a Class II bicycle facility in a phased manner by initially removing the left turn lane at intersections and installing a one-way bicycle lane on one side of the street, while keeping parking on both sides of the street. In the long term, as travel behavior changes and parking demands reduce, the one-way bicycle lane can be expanded to a two-way Class II bicycle facility.
- Pedestrian safety is enhanced through traffic calming improvements to Second and Third Streets, and through a realignment of the intersection of Second Street, Fourth Street and Marquard Avenue.

For details on street design and modal prioritization, see Chapter Six: Transportation and Parking.

Civic Space

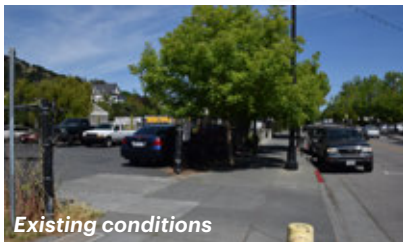
- Potential infill opportunity sites should consider providing neighborhood-scale civic spaces such as a small plaza or pocket park, as shown in Figure 4.37. Private developers can be offered a height bonus or similar incentives to provide such spaces in new development that are publicly accessible. For large sites, civic space requirements apply, specified in the Downtown Code.
- Wherever possible, existing sidewalks should be improved to provide consistent width and adequate space for pedestrians to walk and socialize. Street furniture should be selected for comfort, durability and ease of maintenance.

Historic Resources

- Existing historic resources are protected, including the Victorian Village historic district. The updated survey of historic resources makes an area along Fourth and E Streets eligible as an historic district under CEQA. Details about historic resources and recommendations are discussed in Chapter Five: Historic Resources.

Additional Recommendations

- The intersection of Fourth and Second Streets should be designed as a Downtown gateway, with signage, high-quality public art, and landmark buildings, to create a strong visual focus when approaching from the west.
- Similar to the rest of Downtown, to retain the neighborhood character of the West End Village, anti-displacement strategies should be adopted to protect local businesses and institutions that shape its unique identity.
- The history of the neighborhood and its assets, including its historic buildings and landmarks, should be recognized through interpretive signage and information materials.
- The neighborhood's identity can be enhanced through a wayfinding strategy, reflected in the design of streetscape elements such as lighting, seating, paving materials, and signage. Public art that is relevant to the location or to the site's history should be prioritized.
- Explore opportunities for shared use of private parking facilities in new development for public parking.



Existing conditions

Figure 4.37 Illustrative rendering of future development in West End Village

Neighborhood-scale mixed-use development add new amenities such as stores and cafés, streetscape improvements, and new open spaces. The photo (left) indicates existing conditions at the same location.

- 1** Building entrances activate the sidewalk
- 2** Publicly accessible pocket park
- 3** New neighborhood-scale mixed-use buildings provide housing options
- 4** Active ground floors with shops and cafés
- 5** Street trees provide shade and character
- 6** Bicycle facilities promote active transportation
- 7** Wide sidewalks with adequate space for pedestrians and outdoor seating

Montecito Commercial

The Montecito Commercial sub-area has the potential to develop as a neighborhood with a variety of housing types supported by neighborhood-serving amenities, well-connected to Downtown and to San Rafael Canal through new promenades and bicycle infrastructure.

Existing Conditions

The Montecito Commercial sub-area is located west of US-101, between the San Rafael Canal and San Rafael High School. The blocks adjacent to Irwin Street have mainly retail uses and services, with some housing. The character is more residential along Fourth Street near the High School. The eastern blocks contain auto-oriented uses on larger parcels, including a Whole Foods grocery and Montecito Plaza, a large shopping center along Third Street. Montecito Plaza has a large parking lot facing Third Street, with its buildings set back almost 250 feet from the street. The shopping center is oriented away from San Rafael Canal, with poor access to the waterfront in the form of a narrow public path that is mainly used for service functions. Poorly lit and lined with blank facades, it feels unwelcoming and unsafe, particularly at night.

The Montecito Commercial sub-area has a high number of pedestrians and cyclists, including residents from the Canal neighborhood accessing the Montecito Plaza, the Transit Center or Downtown, and over 1,400 students at San Rafael and Madrone High Schools. The new bicycle and pedestrian bridge at Grand Avenue has improved connectivity, however, additional bicycle and pedestrian

infrastructure is needed to provide better connectivity to Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Future Vision

Over time, the Montecito Commercial sub-area transforms into a vibrant residential neighborhood, well-connected to Downtown and the Canal neighborhood and with a strong relationship to the waterfront. Better connectivity can be achieved by providing new pedestrian and bicycle facilities connecting existing assets. While no large-scale redevelopment projects are anticipated in the near term, the area continues to improve through incremental infill of available sites, with small-scale, mixed-use buildings.

In the long term, as the area transforms, Montecito Plaza could be redeveloped into a mixed-use node providing new housing and community-serving retail and services, oriented to San Rafael Canal and incorporating adaptation strategies to future sea-level rise. As one of the largest parcels within the Plan Area, this is a valuable future development opportunity that could lend new identity and define a new eastern gateway to Downtown. This transformation is not anticipated within the lifespan of the Precise Plan.



Figure 4.38 Montecito Commercial within the Plan Area
Locations of the photos of existing conditions shown below are indicated on the map.

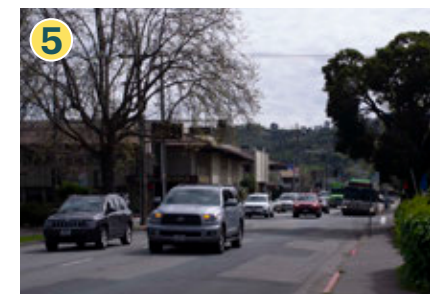




Figure 4.39 Montecito Plaza

Built Character and Uses

Montecito Commercial is a compact, mixed-use neighborhood with a mix of lower and moderate intensity development. Change is seen mainly in the form of incremental infill on vacant and underutilized sites, as illustrated in Figure 4.40. The potential long-term redevelopment of Montecito Plaza is shown as a design concept in Figure 4.42.

Development Program

The development yield projected for this neighborhood is 390 new housing units and approximately 45,000 square feet of non-residential uses, that translates into 140 new jobs. These numbers do not assume the transformation of Montecito Plaza, since the redevelopment of that site is unlikely to happen within the timeline of the Plan.

Built Form

Buildings in the area are small to medium in size, and predominantly block-form in character, with some house-form buildings, particularly along Fourth Street. Fourth Street retains its character as a lower intensity mixed-use

street, and the visual axis to San Rafael High School is maintained. Typical frontages include a mix of residential and shopfront types.

Building Heights

Building heights in the sub-area are between 40 to 70 feet (ranging from maximum base heights to maximum heights with bonuses). Moderate intensity development is envisioned along Irwin Street that has high redevelopment potential due to its proximity to Downtown, and this will be enhanced further if the site chosen for the Transit Center relocation is the one between Hetherton and Irwin, along Fourth Street. Moderate intensity development is also proposed along Second and Third Streets. Montecito Plaza, if redeveloped in the future, could support larger, mixed-use buildings.

Table 4I provides a summary of the proposed built environment, and development standards are discussed in Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code.

Table 4I. Montecito Commercial: Projected Program and Built Environment Summary

Refer to Chapter Nine: Downtown Form-Based Code for development standards

Development Type	Program (additional/new)	Feature	Recommendation
Residential	390,000 sq ft ¹ (390 units) ²	Building types	Mainly block-form with some house-form
Non-Residential	45,000 sq ft ¹ (140 jobs) ²	Building heights	Maximum 40 feet (base) to 70 feet (with bonus)
		Frontage types	Shopfront, gallery, porch, stoop, dooryard, forecourt, terrace
		Building uses	Residential, mixed-use with ground floor retail
		Parking	Surface, podium

¹ The program numbers are inclusive of pipeline projects and have been derived from the testing of infill lots with building types that conform to the Plan vision and proposed Downtown Form-Based Code, in consultation with City staff.

² Assumptions include 1,000 sq ft (gross area) per housing unit, and 1 job per 350 sq ft (gross area), with exceptions as needed for approved projects.

³ Please refer to Chapter Nine for descriptions of frontage types.

⁴ Ground floor retail is desired but not required. Active ground floors are encouraged.



Illustrative Vision for Montecito Commercial

The illustrative plan in Figure 4.40 shows one of many potential built outcomes for the Montecito Commercial sub-area.

- Smaller-scale infill with Missing Middle housing types (multifamily units in house-form buildings) on vacant parcels and smaller opportunity sites; transitioning in scale to the existing smaller single-family homes on Fifth Avenue and Mission Avenue.
- New block-form and house-form mixed-use buildings with active ground floor uses provide housing and employment options within walking distance of Downtown and the Transit Center.
- San Rafael Canal improvements create an attractive waterfront, and new development is oriented towards it.
- An improved waterfront promenade provides public access and is designed to be resilient to sea-level rise. This could be part of a pedestrian-bicycle route connecting to the Grand Avenue bridge and further to Downtown and Albert Park, and to the north-south Tamalpais Greenway.

Figure 4.40 Illustrative plan (above) and perspective (right) for the Montecito Commercial sub-area showing one possible build-out by 2040

■ Potential infill opportunity sites*

* Potential infill projects shown here are conceptual and for illustrative purposes only



Public Realm

Streets and Active Transportation

- Grand Avenue is proposed as a bicycle priority corridor, with a Class IV bicycle facility (protected bicycle lane) from Fourth Street to the Canal neighborhood.
- Fourth Street is an enhanced multimodal corridor, supporting pedestrian, bicycle and transit use. This will be a Class III Bicycle Boulevard. Between Irwin Street and Grand Avenue, a one-way bicycle lane can be created within the existing roadway in the short term, with a "sharrow" in the opposite direction, with the long-term objective of a two-way buffered bicycle path on one side of the street, similar to the concept proposed for Fourth Street in the West End Village.
- Third Street east of Grand Avenue is a Class I bicycle facility with a separated bicycle path connecting to the waterfront and Pickleweed Park.
- Connections to Downtown are enhanced through improvements to the street segments underneath

US-101, with better lighting, wider sidewalks, particularly on Second and Third Streets, and public art.

For details on street design and modal prioritization, refer to Chapter Six: Transportation and Parking.

Civic Space

- A pedestrian promenade is proposed along San Rafael Canal connecting to the Grand Avenue bridge, and to Downtown towards Albert Park. It connects to the north-south multi-use path towards Anderson Drive and Mahon Creek. In the near term, the promenade can be widened through cantilevered walkways, as recommended in the Canalfront Conceptual Plan. In the long term, as redevelopment occurs along the waterfront, property owners can be encouraged to provide easements where needed to complete missing gaps and provide additional width.
- If Montecito Plaza gets redeveloped in the future, the Plan recommends requiring a publicly accessible civic space such as a plaza providing waterfront access, with pedestrian-bicycle passages for public access.

Figure 4.41 Examples of waterfront activation and urban flood control

Clockwise from right: River Walk in San Antonio, Texas is a popular waterfront destination. The 2.5 mile stretch in downtown is the most visited part of a city-wide flood control system.

Cheonggyecheon in Seoul, South Korea, has transformed an underground channel into a thriving urban park that provides recreation along with flood control and habitat creation.

Currently under construction, HafenCity near Hamburg has dense, transit-oriented, flood resilient development with elevated buildings and passageways.

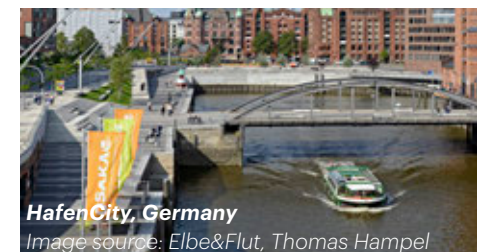




Figure 4.42 Illustrative perspective (above) and plan (right) showing potential redevelopment of Montecito Plaza. Please note that this is conceptual and not expected to occur in the life of the Precise Plan.

In this concept, the street network is extended to subdivide the Montecito Plaza parcel into a series of mixed-use blocks. The realignment of Second Street creates a more pedestrian-friendly and safe intersection at Third and Union Street, which is heavily used by pedestrians and San Rafael High School students. A new civic space frames views of the canal and connects to the waterfront, opening up opportunities for canal improvements and water-related recreation.

- 1 Gateway element on Third Street
- 2 Activated waterfront along San Rafael Canal
- 3 New mixed-use development with housing options and amenities
- 4 New neighborhood-scale incremental infill
- 5 Active transportation corridors link to the Canal neighborhood and to Downtown

Historic Resources

- Details about historic resources and recommendations are discussed in Chapter Five: Historic Resources.

Additional Recommendations

- Parts of the Montecito Commercial area will be impacted by sea-level rise as a result of climate change. Future development in this area should be guided by the recommendations of the City's Sea-Level Rise Adaptation Study that is currently underway.
- Improvements to the San Rafael Canal should be supported by new uses and activities along the waterfront as well as water-based recreation. This could stimulate the neighborhood's economy, and providing a unique Downtown experience.
- Third Street forms an eastern entrance to Downtown that is often overlooked and is currently not memorable. This node should be treated as a Downtown gateway, with well-designed buildings and public realm and landscaping features including signage and public art.

