



# Existing Conditions

CHAPTER

# 2

**This chapter includes a brief summary of the Downtown Area Profile Report to provide relevant context. A link to the complete Profile Report can be found in Appendix II of this document.**

***In this chapter***

<b>2.1</b> Location, Demographics and Market Conditions	14
<b>2.2</b> Historical and Cultural Context	18
<b>2.3</b> Built Form and Character	20
<b>2.4</b> Multimodal Access, Circulation and Parking	24
<b>2.5</b> Natural Hazards and Climate Change	28
<b>2.6</b> Downtown's Challenges and Opportunities	30

# 2.1 Location, Demographics and Market Conditions

**Downtown San Rafael has a prime location at the entrance to the North Bay, and is within easy commuting distance from both San Francisco and cities in the East Bay. It is recognized within Marin County and the region as an important employment, civic, and cultural center.**

## Location and demographics

Situated in the North Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area, San Rafael is the largest city in Marin County and is also the County seat. The City has a population of 59,000 and covers an area of approximately 22 square miles. The Downtown Precise Plan Area (Plan Area) covers approximately 265 acres (about three percent of the City's land area) and has 2,300 residents (2018 figures).

San Rafael is an important employment center in the San Francisco Bay Area, well connected to cities within the region by highways US-101 and I-580. The Sonoma Marin

Area Rail Transit (SMART) line from Santa Rosa to Larkspur has two stations in San Rafael, one within the Plan Area.

San Rafael has topography stretching from sea level to 1,000 feet above sea level, and development patterns respond to its hilly terrain and environmental features, as shown in Figure 2.3. Downtown occupies relatively flat land and has gridded streets, while some streets and development along the San Rafael Canal adjacent to Downtown run parallel to this waterway.







**Figure 2.1 (Right) Location of San Rafael within the region**

**Figure 2.2 (Far right) Downtown San Rafael** has good access, with US-101 passing through it in the north-south direction, and linking to East Bay cities via I-580.

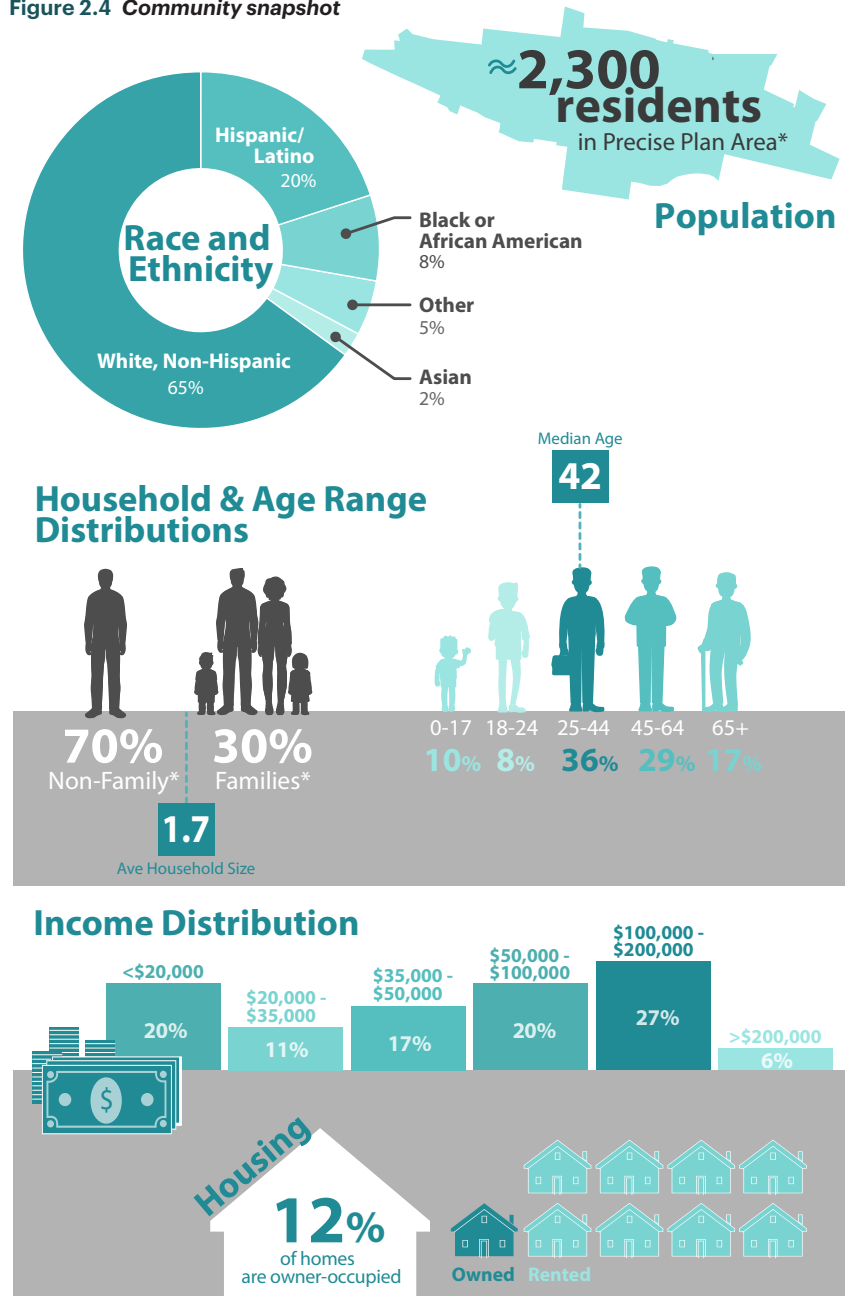




**Figure 2.3 Natural setting and settlement patterns**

-  Hills ≥ 150 ft elevation
-  1000 ft elevation contour
-  2000 ft elevation contour
-  Building footprints and urbanized area
-  Downtown Precise Plan Area boundary
-  City boundary

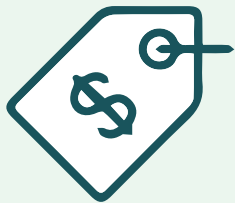
**Figure 2.4 Community snapshot**



**Table 2A. Downtown real estate market conditions**



**<5%** multifamily rental vacancy rate in Plan Area  
**<20** multifamily units constructed from 2009-19



**35%** of city-wide retail square footage located in Plan Area  
**14%** of city-wide taxable sales within Plan Area (2018)



**5.1%** office vacancy rate in the Plan Area  
**8.6%** office vacancy rate city-wide

## Existing economic and market conditions in Downtown

Market conditions in Downtown for major real estate sectors are summarized below. Table 2B on the facing page details potential economic opportunities for Downtown, based on real estate trends. For more information, refer to Appendix II: Downtown Area Profile Report.

### Residential sector

Downtown San Rafael has a strong multifamily rental market, with low vacancy rates of below five percent (2019 figures) and rising rents, signifying a strong demand for more multifamily rental housing. Similar to other communities in the Bay Area, San Rafael is experiencing a severe housing shortage; yet demand has not been matched by new multifamily construction. Between 2009 and 2019, fewer than 20 multifamily units were constructed in the Plan Area. San Rafael's for-sale residential market is likewise strong, but located almost entirely outside of Downtown.

### Retail sector

Downtown accounts for 35 percent of San Rafael's retail square footage. While the retail market is strong city-wide, indicated by low vacancy rates and increasing rental prices, Downtown has a lower (and declining) percentage of taxable sales which are increasingly driven by the large-format retail stores in other parts of the city. However, while taxable sales have declined in the Plan Area, restaurant sales have increased, particularly in the core area Business Improvement District. Within the Plan Area, most retail activity occurs during the business day, with more limited activity evenings and weekends. This is a challenge for some retailers and limits appeal to some restaurateurs. Shopping and "food and beverage" establishments dominate Downtown's retail market, which

make it vulnerable to changing retail trends towards a more diverse range of uses.

### Office sector

San Rafael is an employment hub within Marin County, accounting for 43 percent of the county's office space. The Plan Area has a low (1.2 percent) vacancy rate among Class A office properties, and lower vacancy rates (5.1 percent) for all classes of office space than city-wide (8.6 percent). Downtown's location, with amenities and multiple transit options, is preferred by many office tenants. According to brokers, there is demand and inadequate supply for small and mid-sized office tenants. Also, many existing office spaces in the Plan Area are older and smaller than what most prospective tenants seek. This potentially indicates demand for new construction. However, there is not much new construction underway. Developers may be hesitant to pursue speculative projects since reported rental rates are not high enough to justify new construction.

### Industrial sector

San Rafael accounts for over half of Marin County's industrial and flex space. However, the Plan Area contains only 1.3 percent of the city-wide inventory. Although low vacancy rates indicate demand for industrial and flex space, Downtown may not be best suited for these kinds of spaces, with their large-floor plate single-story building forms, and issues of noise and servicing needs.

## Table 2B. Real estate market outlook for Downtown

*Downtown San Rafael is well positioned to capture new residential, office, and retail growth based upon the following findings and observations drawn from its economic existing conditions. For more information, refer Appendix II: Downtown Area Profile Report.*

- **Authentic urban environment.** Downtown San Rafael offers an urban experience at a scale that is attractive to both existing and prospective residents, shoppers, and office employees. Its sizable stock of historic buildings gives it character and authenticity.
- **Retail center of gravity.** Downtown is at the center of San Rafael’s retail gravity with high traffic flows along Second and Third Streets, US-101, and other connections to many of the City’s residential neighborhoods, making it a convenient destination for shopping and entertainment.
- **Transit hub.** San Rafael Transit Center and the SMART rail service enhance the marketability of Downtown by offering mobility options for both residents and workers.
- **Daytime worker population.** The Census estimates that there are approximately 6,700 persons who work in Downtown San Rafael and the relocation and expansion of BioMarin adds to the overall spending power of Downtown workers.
- **Strong household incomes.** While household income in San Rafael is close to the Bay Area median, the City is located in central Marin County which is one of the most educated and affluent counties in the nation, making it desirable for retailers.
- **Residential developer preferences.** Bay Area developers of multifamily residential seek transit-rich locations to give their projects a competitive edge and potentially higher rents.
- **Millennial housing preferences.** More millennials (persons born between 1981 and 1996) have been moving into prime household formation age, generating demand for additional housing. These renters prefer apartments that offer a rich set of amenities, including walkability to retail, restaurants, and entertainment.
- **Lodging and hospitality.** Downtown is lacking in hotel accommodation, with only one hotel, the Marriott on Fifth Avenue, under construction in 2020. The City’s last hotel opening was in 2007. New hotels may be able to secure a competitive position in the local market due to the fact that many of the City’s hotels are over 30 years old. Adding a hotel to Downtown will fill a gap in its existing mix of retail, office, and residential uses and will serve as an important amenity.

## 2.2 Historical and Cultural Context

**Downtown San Rafael has a 200-year legacy of being the cultural hub of Marin County. Through its significant history, the area has evolved into the commercial core of the City.**

San Rafael is the oldest city in Marin County. Originally a settlement inhabited by several Coast Miwok tribes, the City derives its present-day name from Mission San Rafael Arcángel, the 20<sup>th</sup> Spanish mission established in 1817 in what was then the colonial Mexican province of Alta California. Incorporated in 1874, San Rafael has grown to be the county's largest city, and has developed as an important cultural, civic, and employment center.

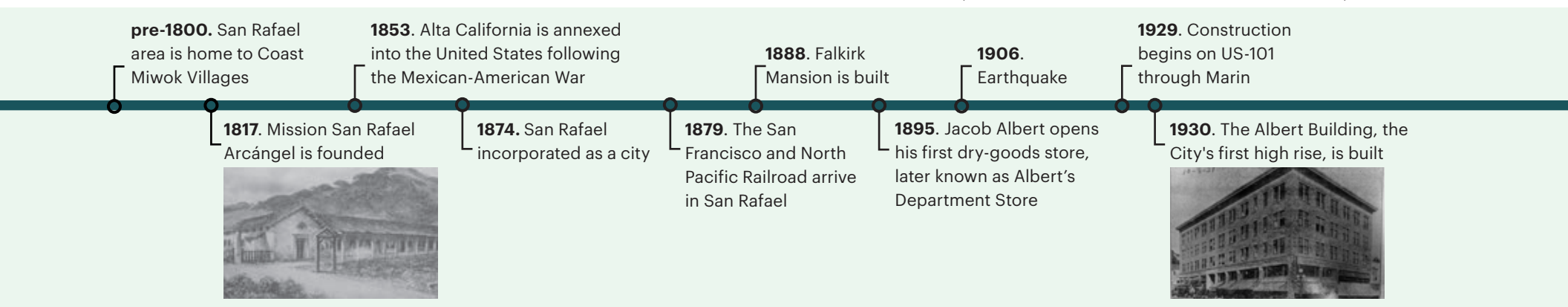
Area, as shown in Figure 2.6. The existing survey of historic resources (conducted in 1977 and updated in 1986) was updated as part of the Downtown Precise Plan process, and identified resources eligible for listing as individual or contributing historic resources on the California Register of Historical Resources or the National Register of Historic Places. The newly eligible resources are discussed in Chapter Five: Historic Resources.

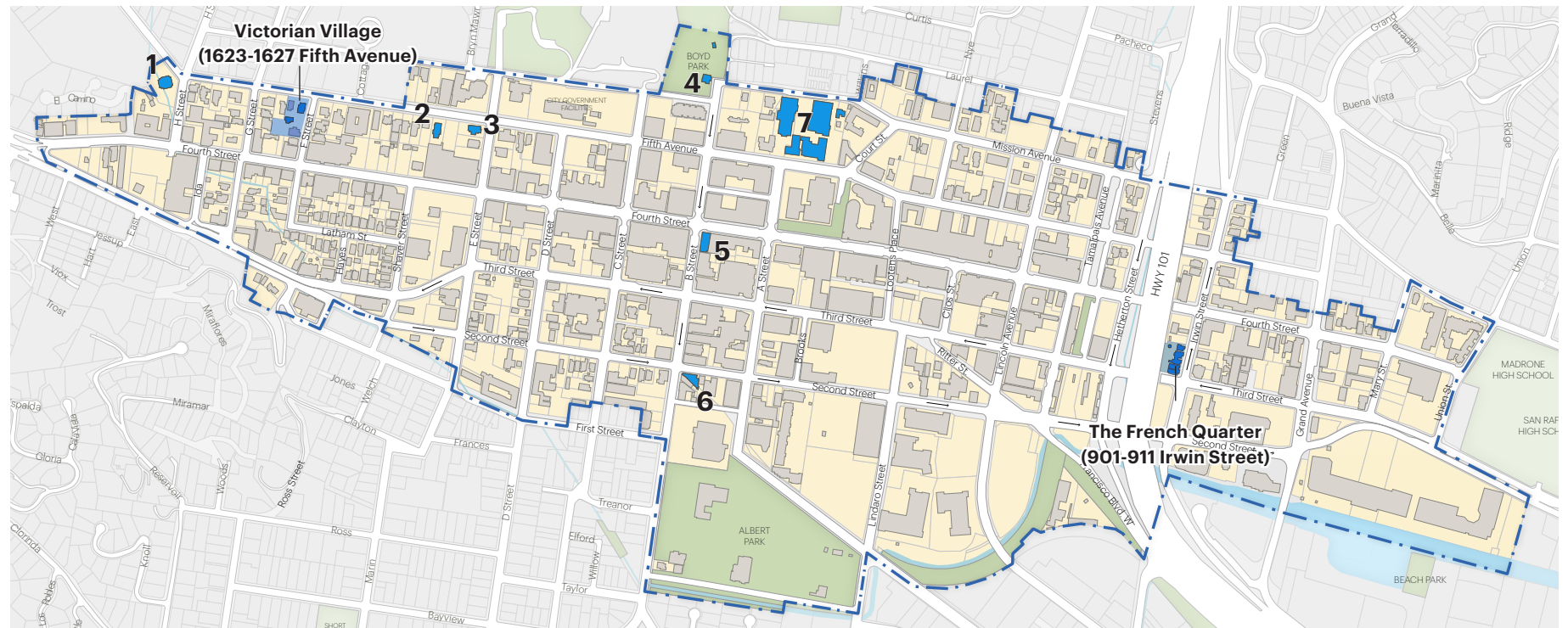
In 2017, San Rafael was recognized as one of California's 14 Cultural Districts. Under AB 189 (2015), Cultural District designations are awarded for five years to "well-defined geographic areas with a high concentration of cultural resources and activities" to encourage local artists and promote socio-economic and ethnic diversity.

### Historic resources in Downtown

Currently San Rafael has 19 designated local landmarks, and three historic districts. Among these, seven individual resources (consisting of a total of nine buildings), and two historic districts are within the Downtown Precise Plan

**Figure 2.5 Major milestones in Downtown San Rafael's development** illustrated in the timeline below.

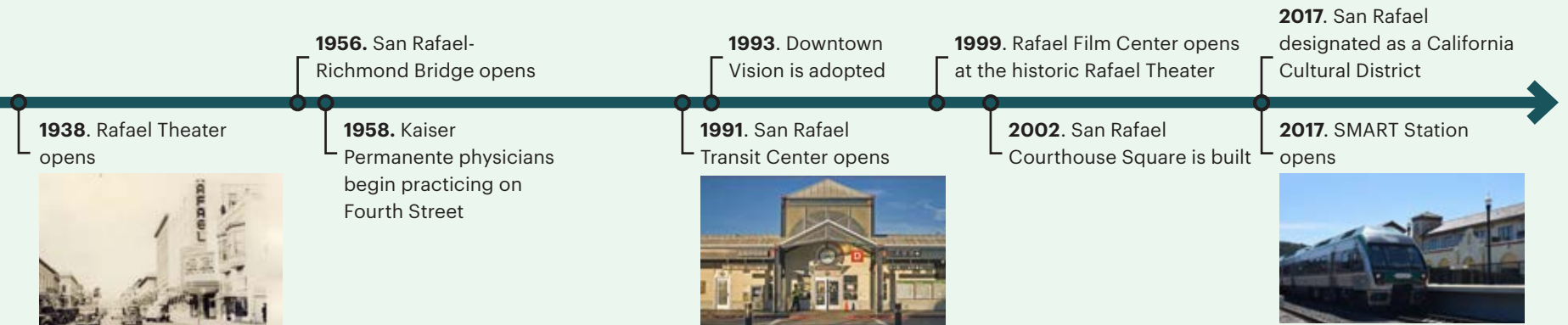




**Figure 2.6 Historic resources in Downtown (2020 conditions)**

Plan Area boundary  
 Landmark buildings (listed on right)  
 Historic districts

- 1. San Rafael Improvement Club (1800 Fifth Avenue)
- 2. The Chisholm Residence (1517 Fifth Avenue)
- 3. Schlosser-Cole Residence (1099 E Street)
- 4. The Boyd House and Memorial Park (1125 B Street)
- 5. The Mulberry House (1149 Fourth Street)
- 6. The Flatiron Building (724 B Street)
- 7. Mission San Rafael Arcángel (CA Historic Landmark)



## 2.3 Built Form and Character

**Downtown has a walkable environment with pedestrian-scaled street and blocks, memorable buildings and vistas, with a few inconsistencies in lot widths, building character and heights.**

Downtown San Rafael has a compact grid of small blocks approximately 330 feet by 330 feet in size, and streets that are 60 to 80 feet wide. Most of Downtown has retained the historic grid, and is pedestrian-scaled. However, some areas around Second, Third, Hetherton and Irwin Streets are more auto-oriented, with wider streets and greater traffic volumes.

### Character districts

Downtown is defined by several "character districts", the boundaries for which were initially defined in the 1993 Downtown Vision. Fourth Street is Downtown's "Main Street", the Lindero District and the Second/Third Street Corridor are employment-focused; and the West End and Montecito Commercial areas are more residential. The Hetherton Gateway flanks the SMART station area, and the Fifth/ Mission district has a civic and institutional feel.

### Built character

Parts of Downtown are very memorable due to its built form, historic buildings and vistas. Much of Downtown is mixed-use in character, which is reflected in the type and placement of its buildings. Most parts of Downtown have "block-form" buildings - attached buildings with small setbacks set close to the sidewalk, while its residential areas have more "house-form" structures - detached buildings with deeper front and side setbacks. The built form is inconsistent in places, and several blocks have large surface parking lots or buildings with deep setbacks that create gaps in the urban fabric.

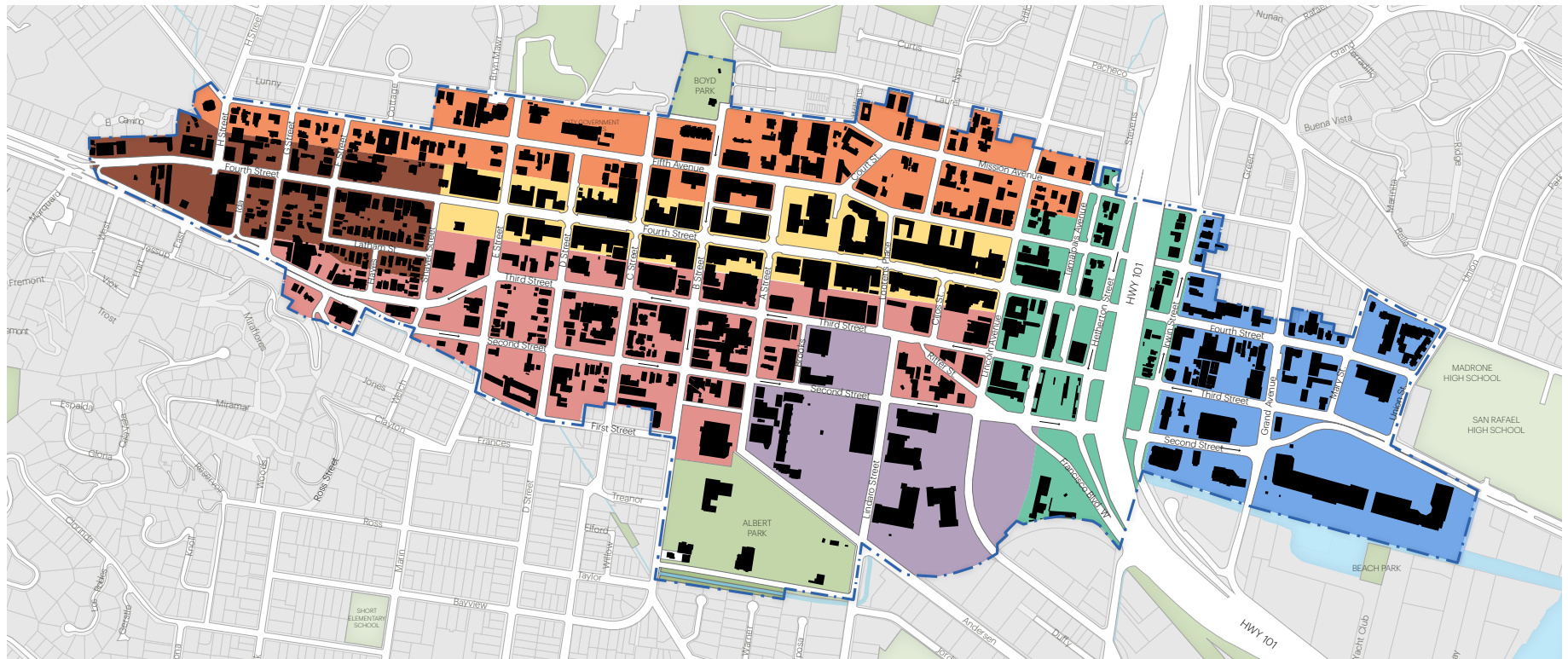
The built form analysis in Figure 2.8 highlights how the built form (house-form or block-form) reinforces the character of the Downtown districts.

#### Figure 2.7 Character of Downtown buildings

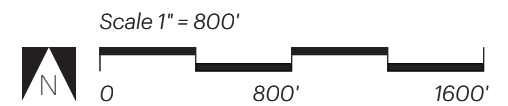
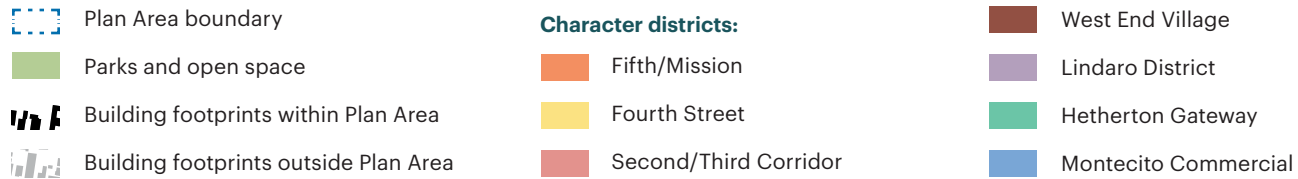
From left to right: a typical "house-form" building, the predominant "block-form" buildings in Downtown, and an example of a larger building on a consolidated lot.







**Figure 2.8** Built form analysis and Downtown's character districts



### Building heights

Existing buildings are predominantly two to three stories tall, as shown in Figure 2.9. Currently, allowed building heights in Downtown are from the General Plan and do not correspond with zoning districts in Downtown, nor do they take into account height bonuses. The Precise Plan is an opportunity to re-examine and adjust heights for future development.

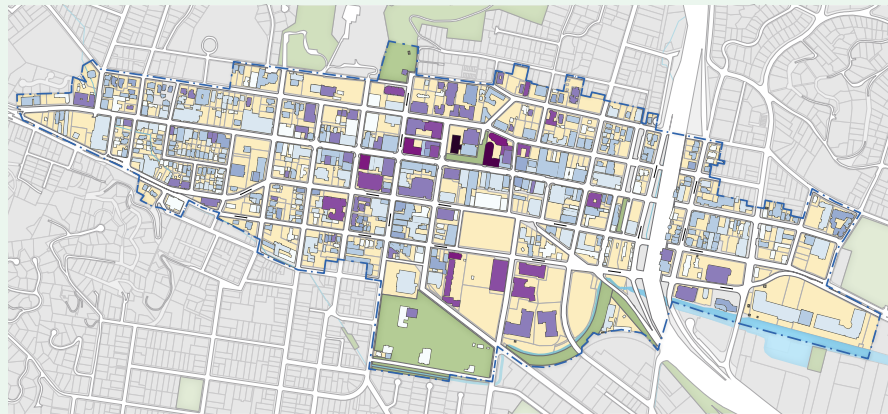
### Lot sizes

There is a wide variation in block widths, as shown in Figure 2.10, and some lots are too narrow to make redevelopment feasible. Consequently, lots have been consolidated in many blocks to develop larger buildings, which do not always complement existing buildings. Several blocks have large surface parking lots or deep setbacks that create gaps in the urban fabric.

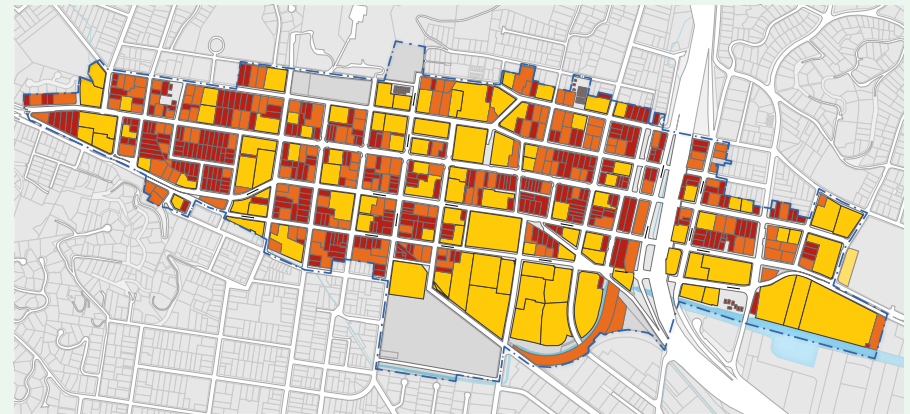
### Building frontages

Frontage can be simply described as the way in which a building interacts with the adjacent sidewalk, through the size and orientation of entrances and openings, spaces for outdoor seating, shade, etc. "Active" frontages enhance walkability and the quality and safety of the public realm. The design of the adjacent street, sidewalk, or civic space also determines the range of activities that can be accommodated. Ideally there should be space for pedestrians to walk comfortably and to window-shop, space for outdoor seating, street furniture, bicycle parking, planting strips and trees, etc.

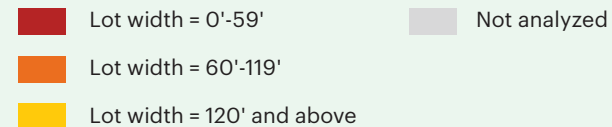
As shown in Figure 2.11, existing frontage conditions in Downtown are not of consistent quality. Fourth Street is the only street to have coherent stretches of streetscapes with active, engaged frontages.



**Figure 2.9 Existing building heights**



**Figure 2.10 Existing lot widths**

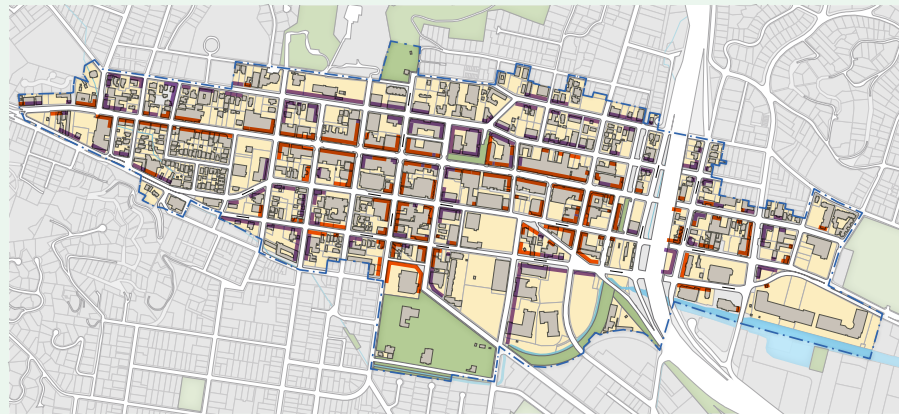


### Civic space, community amenities and services

Downtown is a recognized venue for a variety of events and activities, and is one of California's 14 Cultural Districts. Downtown's cultural, civic and community attractions include the Mission, San Rafael Theatre, City Hall and the library. Fourth Street is one of the City's most popular destinations for shopping, recreation, and events such as the weekly Farmer's Market, 2nd Friday Art Walk, May Madness car festival, and the Italian Street Painting festival, that attract visitors from all over the Bay Area.

Downtown has good access to open space with Boyd Memorial Park to its north, and Albert Park to its south that has recreational facilities. Courthouse Square is a centrally located plaza along Fourth Street, that is well-used and can be enhanced to support a wider variety of activities. The San Rafael Canal in the Montecito area is a unique asset but lacks good pedestrian access and visibility.

Downtown San Rafael also has a high concentration of institutions providing social services and related to homelessness, as compared to other communities in Marin that do not currently offer as many related services. The availability of these services, and the spiraling housing crisis in the Bay Area, has led to an increase in Downtown's unsheltered population. This in turn has affected its perception by many as a safe and desirable destination. The Precise Plan is an opportunity to examine and attempt to resolve these issues.



**Figure 2.11 Analysis of building frontages**

- Active retail or service frontage
- Active office or bank frontage



**Figure 2.12 Community destinations: parks and institutions**

- Institutions: civic/ community
- Institutions: religious
- Institutions: educational
- Historic resources

## 2.4 Multimodal Access, Circulation and Parking

**Figure 2.13** Downtown's existing transportation infrastructure (2018)

- **14 miles** of roadway
- **3 miles** of bicycle facilities
- **21 miles** of sidewalk
- **4,414** public parking spaces
- **3,785** private parking spaces
- **282** bicycle parking spaces

**Figure 2.14** Downtown travel characteristics

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2017 data

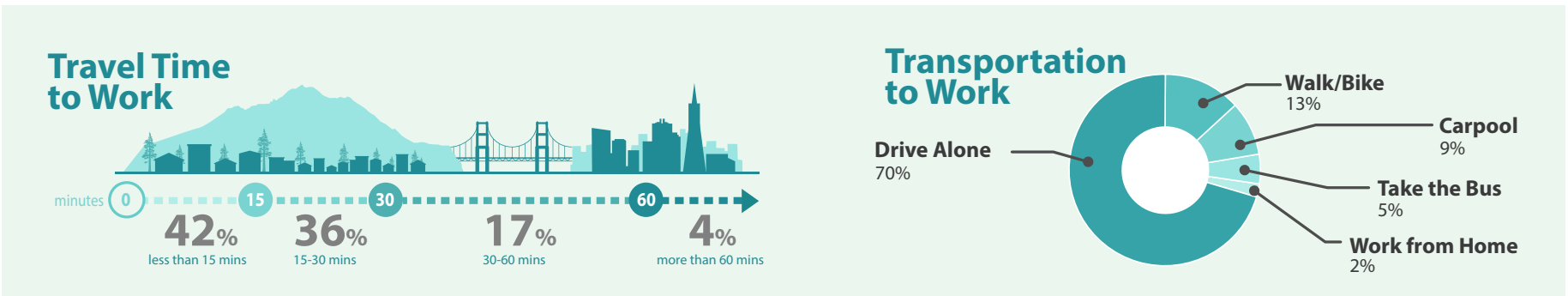
**Downtown San Rafael is located at the gateway to Marin county from San Francisco and the East Bay. US-101 provides highway access and the Downtown Transit Center provides local and regional bus service as well as SMART rail service.**

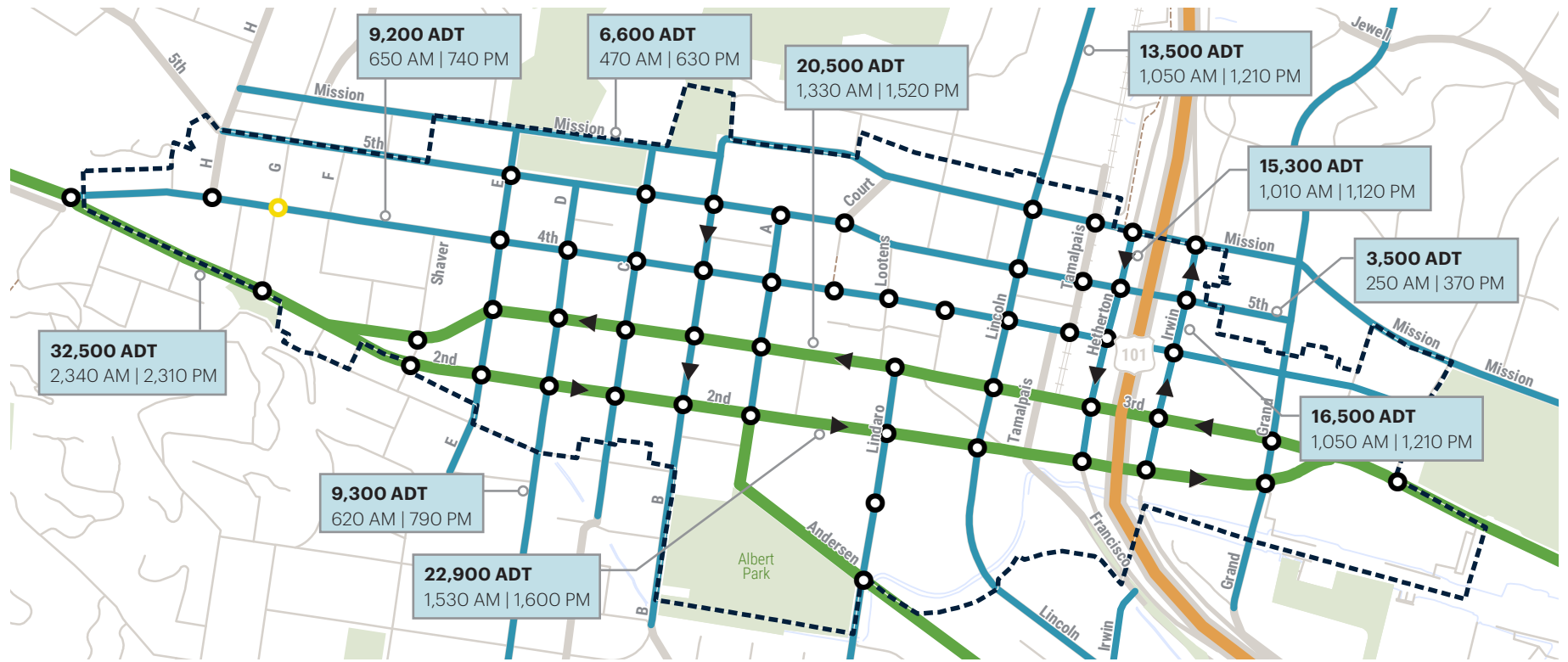
### Roadway network

Regional access to Downtown is provided by Interstate 580 (I-580) from the East Bay and Highway 101 (US-101) from San Francisco and Marin. Both highways are owned, operated, and maintained by Caltrans. US-101 has four lanes in each direction and carries approximately 202,000 vehicles per day. I-580 has two lanes in each direction and carries about 77,000 vehicles per day.

Downtown has a grid network of lettered north-south streets and numbered east-west streets. Downtown blocks are typically 330 feet by 330 feet with roadway widths ranging from about 40 to 52 feet. Generally, roadways have a posted speed limit of 25 mph to 35 mph.

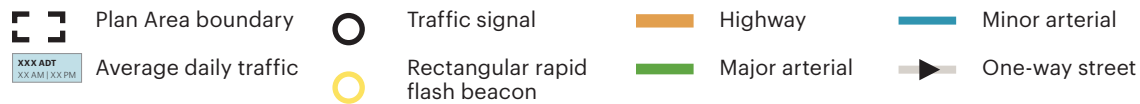
The City of San Rafael classifies local roadways by their intended function into highways, major arterials, minor arterials, and local streets, as shown in Figure 2.15. Major arterials also serve as "Congestion Management Agency (CMA)" arterials and are primary routes in and out of Downtown. These include the Second and Third Street one-way couplet and Andersen Drive. Minor arterials handle local traffic and include several one-way streets such as B, Hetherton and Irwin Streets. US-101 bisects Downtown in the north-south direction, with highway access from Hetherton and Irwin Streets. High traffic volumes are seen on both these streets as well as on Second and Third Streets, particularly during commute hours, affecting pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.





**Figure 2.15 Street hierarchy and traffic counts**

Source: Fehr & Peers, May 2019



Scale 1" = 800'



**Figure 2.16 Downtown street character**

From left to right: Second Street (heading east, between Irwin Street and Grand Avenue), Fourth Street between C and D Streets, and Tamalpais Avenue.

### Bicycle network

Downtown San Rafael has a limited bicycle network, as shown in Figure 2.17, with only 21 percent of the 14 miles of Downtown roadways having dedicated space for the use of bicyclists. Downtown bicycle facilities include a Class I path along a few blocks of Hetherton Street and Class III shared routes on Fourth Street and Grand Avenue. Downtown has approximately 282 bicycle parking spaces. Bicycle lockers are provided near the SMART train station and under US-101 north of Third Street.

San Rafael had the eighth highest frequency of bicycle collisions of 104 comparably sized California cities, and according to the 2018 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, one in ten collisions in San Rafael involved a bicyclist.

### Pedestrian network

Downtown has a walkable street grid, and some streets, particularly Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue from Lincoln Avenue to the West End, are pedestrian-friendly streets. Marked crosswalks facilitate pedestrian crossings at most intersections, but the area around the Transit Center has more collisions. Streets with higher traffic volumes and vehicle speeds present a less comfortable pedestrian environment. The 2018 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan identified gaps in pedestrian infrastructure, shown in Figure 2.18.

Downtown has regular events such as the San Rafael Thursday Farmer’s Market, held from May through September on Fourth Street by closing it to vehicular traffic between Cijos and B Streets during this time.



**Figure 2.17 Bicycle network**

- Existing Class I Multi-Use Path
- Existing Class II Bicycle Lane
- Existing Class III Bicycle Route
- - - Proposed Class I Multi-Use Path
- - - Proposed Class II Bicycle Lane
- - - Proposed Class III Bicycle Route
- Proposed Class I-II Bicycle Path/Lane
- Proposed Class II Bicycle Lane
- Proposed Class II-III Bicycle Lane/Route
- Proposed Class III Bicycle Route



**Figure 2.18 Pedestrian facilities**

- Plan Area boundary
- Sidewalk gap
- Difficult crossing

### Transit network

The Downtown San Rafael Transit Center is the regional transit hub for Marin County. Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) provides passenger rail service with one of its ten stations located in Downtown. Since SMART started operations in 2017, Downtown has accounted for about 700 daily weekday passenger boardings. The SMART extension to the Larkspur Ferry will add 800 daily riders. The extension has also necessitated the relocation of the Transit Center, for which several design concepts are being considered.

Regional bus service includes 26 fixed routes run by Golden Gate Transit (GGT) and Golden Gate Ferry (GGF). Marin Transit operates local buses, with over 3.2 million passenger trips in 2017, on 29 bus and shuttle routes.

### Parking supply and demand

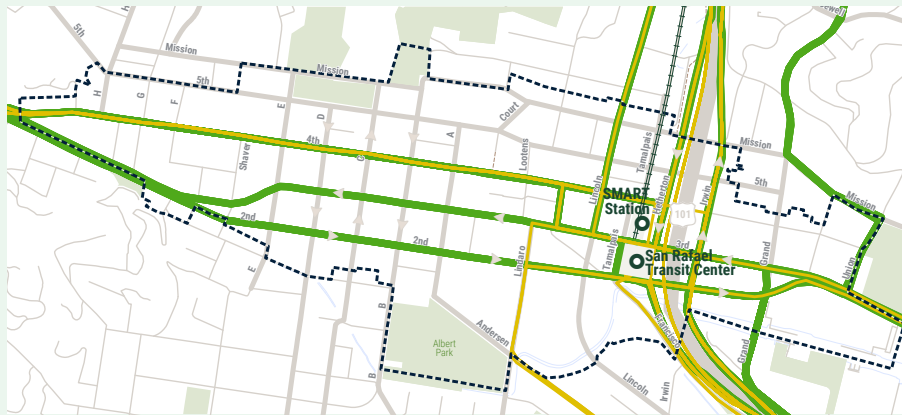
According to the Downtown Parking and Wayfinding Study (2017), Downtown has approximately 6,700 parking spaces (refer to Figure 2.21). Approximately 200 free park-and-ride spaces are provided by Caltrans in four lots under US-101 near the Transit Center.

Peak parking demand in Downtown is between 11:00 AM and 3:00 PM on both weekdays and weekends, during which total parking occupancy of approximately 66 percent on weekdays and 46 percent on weekends, indicating adequate supply. The five most heavily used public off-street parking facilities, exceeded 85 percent peak-period occupancy on weekdays, indicating that they are well utilized.

**Figure 2.21 Downtown parking supply (2017)**

Source: Downtown Parking and Wayfinding Study (2017)

- **6,709** total parking spaces
- **1,627** on-street spaces (including areas on edges of Downtown outside Plan Area)
- **1,297** public parking spaces
- **3,785** private parking spaces



**Figure 2.19 Transit network**

- Project Area Boundary
- Marin Transit
- Golden Gate Transit
- Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit



**Figure 2.20 San Rafael Transit Center (above) and 2019 trip usage statistics (below)**

- 500+ buses served on 17 bus bays
- 9,000 weekday boardings
- 50% of weekday trips have origins or destinations within Downtown
- 25% of trips are bus-to-bus/ bus-to-rail transfers

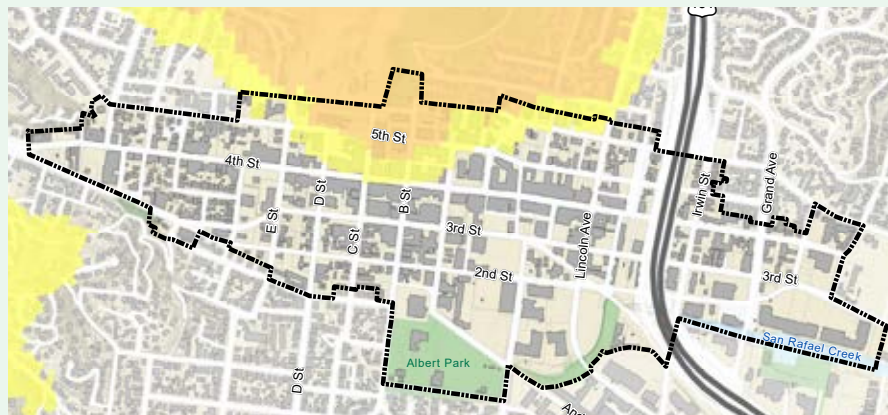
# 2.5 Natural Hazards and Climate Change

**Parts of Downtown are vulnerable to natural hazards such as wildfire and climate change, in particular sea-level rise. This will impact future growth and utility infrastructure upgrades.**

Bound by hills and the San Francisco Bay, parts of Downtown are susceptible to climate change and face hazards from wildfire, flooding and sea-level rise. Parts of the Plan Area fall within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and contain land within the "Moderate" and "High" Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) set by CalFIRE. The Plan Area lies within San Rafael's Local Responsibility Area (LRA), indicating a high enough fire risk to require local

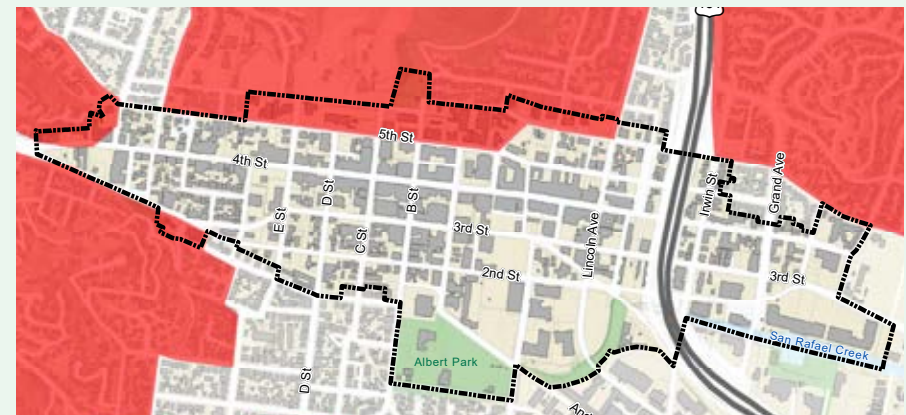
governments to be financially responsible. The south-eastern portion of the Plan Area is within the FEMA 100-Year Flood Hazard Zone, and some areas will be impacted by projected sea-level rise, shown in Figure 2.24.

Table 2C highlights potential impacts for Downtown. For more information, refer to Appendix II: Downtown Area Profile Report.



**Figure 2.22 Fire hazard zones within Downtown**  
 Source: ESRI, 2017; CAL FIRE, 2018; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks 2019.

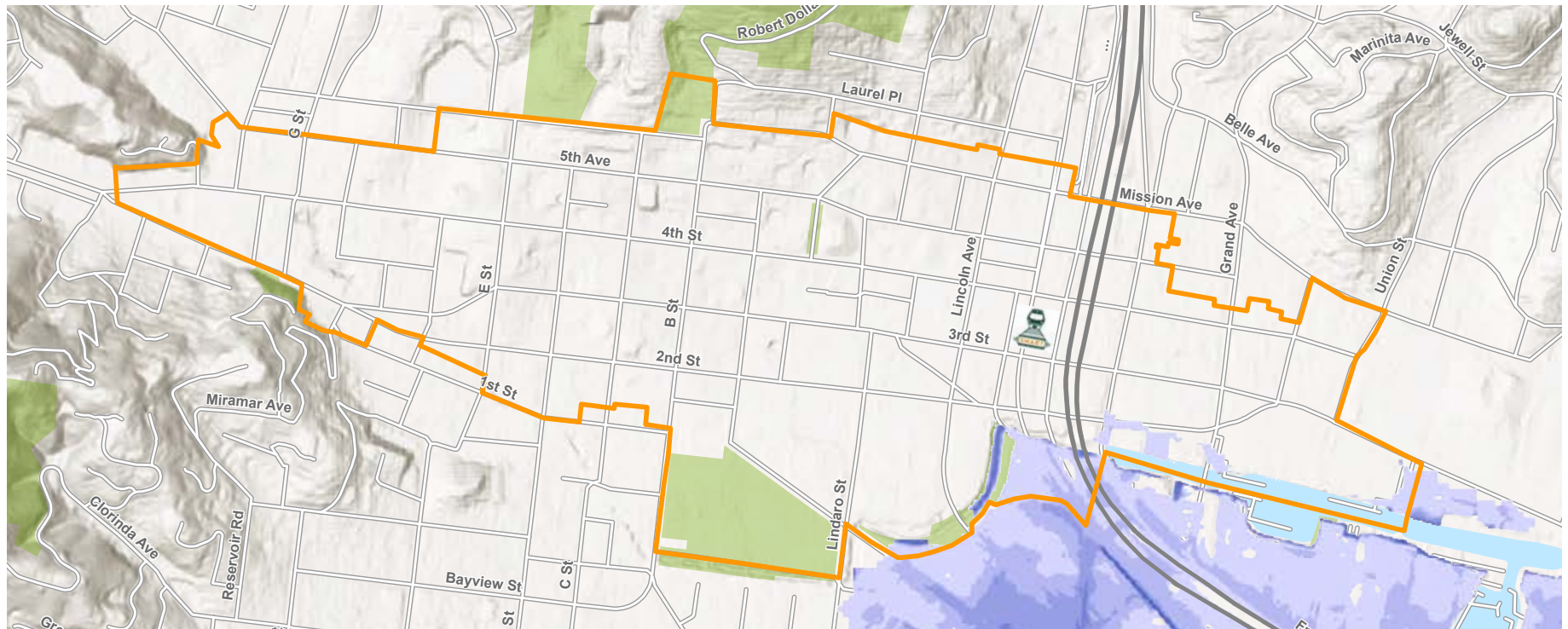
- High fire hazard severity zone
- Moderate fire hazard severity zone



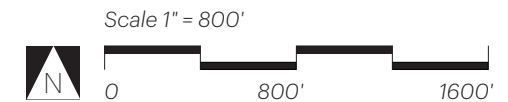
**Figure 2.23 Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**  
 Source: ESRI, 2017; US Forest Service, 2006; City of San Rafael, 2019; PlaceWorks 2019.

- Wildland Urban Interface





**Figure 2.24 Estimated flooding in Downtown by 2050 from sea-level rise and a 100-year storm surge**  
 Source: City of San Rafael, 2019; CosMos, 2016; County of Marin, 2009; ESRI, 2017; PlaceWorks 2019.



**Table 2C. Potential impacts from natural hazards and climate change**

*For more information, refer to Appendix II: Downtown Area Profile Report.*

- **Wildfire.** Northern parts of the Plan Area lie within the Moderate and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Northern and western portions are within the Wildland Urban Interface.
- **Flood hazard.** The south-eastern portion of the Plan Area is within the FEMA 100-Year Flood Hazard Zone, from E Street to the eastern Plan Area boundary along the San Rafael

- Canal; and from Fourth Street to the southern Plan Area boundary.
- **Sea-level rise and flooding.** By 2050, Downtown will face little inundation from sea-level rise alone. However, coupled with a 100-year storm, 2050 sea-level rise will cause flooding in a small south-eastern portion of the Plan Area. By 2100, flooding and ponding will be

- deeper and extend further into Downtown.
- **Geology.** The south-eastern portion of the Plan Area lies within a very high liquefaction zone, and the northern and western portions are located within a moderate landslide susceptibility zone.

## 2.6 Downtown's Challenges and Opportunities

**The analysis of existing conditions and community outreach revealed several challenges to new development in Downtown San Rafael, summarized below. Downtown also presents unique opportunities for accommodating new development and uses, and enjoys several advantages in terms of location, access, and historic character that differentiate it from other communities.**

### Challenge 1

#### **Development constraints limit infill opportunities and inhibit housing diversity**

- Many Downtown parcels are too small to be redeveloped efficiently, and many existing buildings are challenging to repurpose for modern housing and commercial needs.
- A high water table and flooding issues in some areas limits the viability of below-grade construction for parking.
- Downtown has insufficient supply and variety of housing, and thereby lacks a diverse resident population which affects its economic vitality.

### Challenge 2

#### **Inadequate active transportation facilities and barriers to connectivity**

- Downtown's bicycle infrastructure is inadequate and not well-integrated into the city-wide network.
- Downtown has regional arterials as one-way couplets that are frequently congested, creating traffic bottlenecks and barriers to safe pedestrian and bicycle movement.
- The quality of pedestrian facilities in Downtown such as sidewalks, seating, lighting, and wayfinding signage is of inconsistent quality.

### Challenge 3

#### **Unclear historic status of many older Downtown properties**

- An incomplete survey of Downtown's historic resources creates uncertainty for potential developers and investors.
- Similar to many historic downtowns, San Rafael faces the challenge of balancing historic preservation and economic growth.
- There is inadequate direction on the adaptive use and rehabilitation of older structures that may not meet historic preservation criteria.

### Challenge 4

#### **Potential impact of climate change and sea-level rise in parts of Downtown**

- Parts of Downtown are currently impacted by seasonal flooding during heavy rains, and by tidal surges. The extent and intensity of flooding is projected to increase by 2050, impacted by sea-level rise.
- Low-lying areas within Downtown will need to consider adaptation and resiliency to climate change, in particular the properties along San Rafael Canal and the Montecito Commercial Area.

## Challenge 5

### Impact of evolving retail trends on Downtown

- Increasingly, brick-and-mortar retail stores are being challenged by the steady rise of online shopping.
- Downtown San Rafael needs to augment and diversify the range of its uses and attractions beyond shopping and dining to thrive economically.

## Challenge 6

### Rising homelessness and concerns about safety

- The Bay Area is facing a housing crisis. Downtown, as the County-wide center for social services, has a large number of unsheltered residents that has affected the image of Downtown for many, and discouraged visitors.
- Downtown has to navigate how to attract new market-rate development while also providing affordable and special needs housing, as well as social and mental health services.

## Opportunity



### Central location and an established regional center with diverse jobs and a strong economic base

- Good access and connectivity within the region.
- An important civic role as the Marin County seat.
- An established employment hub, with major employers such as Kaiser and BioMarin, and a large daytime workforce.
- A recognized destination for culture and recreation, with several local events attracting visitors from all over the Bay Area.

## Opportunity



### Authentic walkable, historic downtown with a unique cultural legacy, mild climate and access to nature

- An established walkable, mixed-use environment well-positioned to meet the growing national demand for "urban living".
- A recognized California Cultural District with an authentic "main street"; enhanced by historic landmarks, cultural institutions, and a rich history related to music and the farm-to-table movement.
- A spectacular natural setting, mild climate, and easy access to a variety of open space and recreation opportunities.

## Opportunity



### Major transportation hub, with potential for mixed-use development

- Downtown's San Rafael Transit Center is Marin County's most important transportation hub. The SMART rail line has further enhanced Downtown access for potential workers and residents.
- Proximity to transit and amenities can support new mixed-use development and housing to boost Downtown's economy.
- Good connectivity could be an opportunity to provide affordable housing with lower parking requirements.

