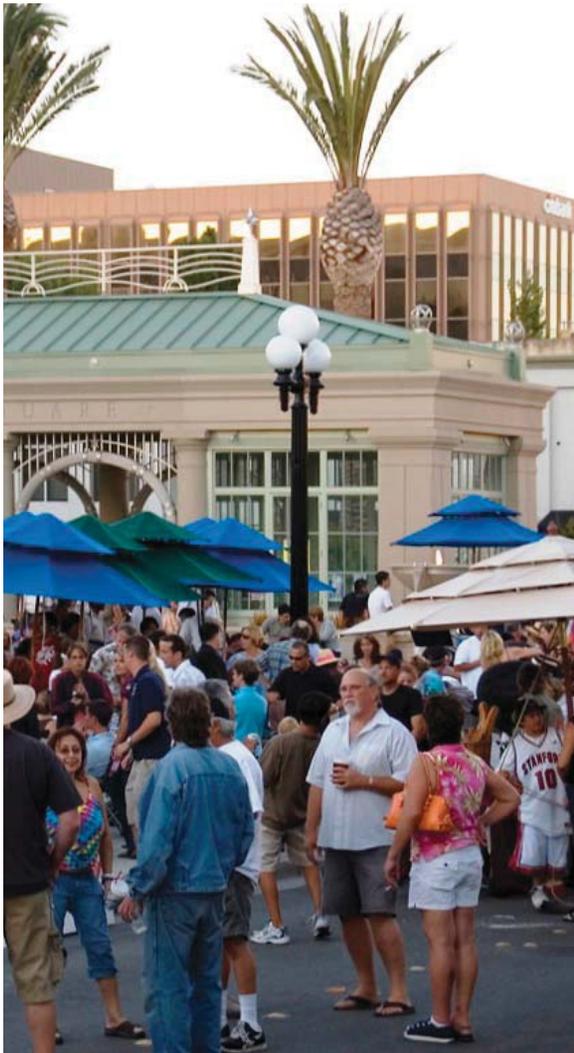


BOOK I: COMMUNITY INTENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES



1.1. THE VISION

At the outset of the 21st Century, Redwood City's Downtown is finally ready to live up to its long-awaited potential – to be the premier livable downtown on the San Francisco Peninsula, midway between San Jose and San Francisco. Downtown Redwood City has long been the Peninsula's forgotten urban gem, hidden by by-pass roads and buried within suburban expansion. Over the last decade, however, the City has worked hard to channel major public and private investment into Downtown, including new public buildings, housing, entertainment venues, transit facilities, and street improvements. These efforts are breaking through Downtown's past barriers to success and transforming it into an exciting regional city center. Its residents, customers, workers, and visitors will have the ideal combination of varied shops and services, rich cultural and civic opportunities, the presence of City and County government, Downtown workplaces, convenient transit connections to the region, and a spectrum of in-town living and working opportunities. All of these amenities will be within a welcoming, distinctive, and human-scaled walkable district – with the choices and sophistication of a larger center and the history, charm and livability of a medium-sized city.

Within a 3-block radius of Downtown's Historic Courthouse, you can now or will soon be able to:

- Borrow a library book
- Eat at an outdoor restaurant on a special dining street
- Visit a museum
- Catch an express train to San Jose or San Francisco
- Pick vegetables at a farmer's market
- Select an engagement ring
- See a movie
- Stock up on groceries at a supermarket
- Drop off your dry cleaning
- Work out at a gym
- Take a University of California extension class
- Enjoy live music
- Meet friends by the fountains in Courthouse Square
- Or, just buy an ice cream cone

Why is Downtown ready for success now, more than in the last three generations? Major changes in Americans' habits of shopping, dining, working, and residing are being driven by profound demographic and cultural transformations. With its good "bone structure" of walkable streets and blocks, landmark buildings, a climate which is "best by government test," a solid employment base in offices and businesses, convenient transit stations, recently built and renovated public facilities, civic activities, a rich variety of stores, and a new hub of entertainment and nightlife venues, Downtown Redwood City stands ready to benefit from the urban synergy that Americans now flock to experience at "Lifestyle Centers" and revitalized malls. But in contrast with the "instant places" of themed malls and shopping centers that the market has constructed to satisfy these growing demands, Downtown has and will continue to maintain the history, diversity and emotional depth of being the authentic heart of a vital community.

The *Downtown Precise Plan* (DTPP) is an important tool for the community's use in reaching its goals and achieving sustainable development by planning for the impact of economic growth on environmental resources and service infrastructure for Downtown. In re-tuning development policies, the Plan will take best advantage of demographic and market trends that bypassed Downtown in the past; this time, the Plan will bring them into "center stage" in the present and future, by:

- Bringing in Downtown housing which is affordable to a variety of income groups to provide previously unavailable residential lifestyle choices, to enhance security by adding "eyes on the street," and to also insure an active clientele for shops, restaurants, and services.
- Concentrating retail uses on Broadway and around "anchors" of civic activity, so that customers, transit access, parking facilities, and destination identity are shared.
- Shaping new buildings to define a distinctive, unique and livable form for a medium-sized city downtown on the Peninsula, well-scaled to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Maintaining access, human scale, walkability, and the right "feel" for Redwood City - strongly rooted in its history but alive to the dynamic possibilities of Bay Area industry and culture.



1.2. BUILDING THE VISION

The Downtown Precise Plan is based upon a clear *Vision* of what the community wants Downtown to become. This section of Book I describes the goals, principles and specific pieces of that *Downtown Vision*. They are intended to be implemented in a manner whereby every built piece contributes to the formation of a vibrant and beautiful city center. The following *Goals and Guiding Principles* provide guidance for actions not specifically covered by the *Regulations* or *City Actions*. The *Regulations* to implement the *Vision* are in Book II. The *City Actions* to implement the *Vision* are in Book III.

1.2.1. GOALS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Redwood City community has established this *Downtown Precise Plan* to orchestrate public and private investment in the Downtown to accomplish the following:

A) Revive Downtown by creating a beautiful and memorable urban district interwoven with the City’s identity

The Precise Plan’s central goal is to restore Downtown as the indispensable hub of the City where a mix of diverse services, conveniences, experiences and lifestyle choices are provided in a way that preserves Downtown’s rich supply of historic resources, while remaining appropriate to the social and economic conditions of life in the 21st Century. The community intends to create a visually appealing and memorable urban district that is the primary iconic image that stands for Redwood City. The Precise Plan sets clear and detailed standards for quality design of the reuse and restoration of precious historic buildings and spaces as well as the careful design and construction of new buildings. The buildings will also help shape the spaces in-between into good places that can be remembered and enjoyed. A variety of community outdoor places, primarily urban, will be part of this place-making and will accommodate all people comfortably, regardless of age, economic status, disability, or ethnicity. These community outdoor places may include sidewalks and streets, parking lots and facilities, paseos and plazas, even privatized rooftops and courtyards, as well as Courthouse Square and Theatre Way.

B) Actively encourage and promote the preservation of Redwood City’s historic resources, and reduce the deferral of judgment on how to preserve them as much as possible

Rather than simply hope for preservation, or passively encourage it—the City of Redwood City intends to use the Downtown Precise Plan as a powerful tool to manifest the greatest degree of preservation feasible. Typically, decisions on what changes may be made to historic resources

are determined on a case-by-case basis, deferring judgment on many such matters to a future time. However, to provide a sense of security to the local preservation community, the DTPP attempts to provide as much guidance in advance as possible. The DTPP clearly informs property owners, developers, and tenants of the City’s intentions for preservation and dissuades a false sense of entitlement to those who would prefer to completely remove historic resources in order to maximize their property’s development potential. The plan provides specific regulations, up front, to those wishing to build on or near historic sites in an appropriate manner.

C) Create a network of great public open spaces

A network of sunny and comfortable public open spaces, linked to each other, housing, jobs, and adjacent neighborhoods by attractive and walkable tree-lined streets, will be an important part of making Downtown a livable urban neighborhood. Downtown parks should be designed with this urban context in mind, and should be meaningful, enjoyable, useful spaces. Parks should be numerous enough that most Downtown residents and workers are within a three-minute walk of one, but should not be so large in number as to be underused, a drain on scarce resources, or to limit the space available for housing. Public open spaces in Downtown should come in a variety of types to serve a variety of needs, such as plazas, paseos, playgrounds, large greens, and small pocket parks. These spaces should be situated in busy locations that are accessible and free of barriers, and are safe due to high visibility and “eyes on the street.” Redwood Creek should be utilized as a natural resource, a public open space, and the first leg of a green connection between Downtown and the waterfront.

D) Provide the choice of “convenience living”

A balanced and synergistic mixture of employment and a range of well-designed rental and for-sale housing types in close proximity to entertainment, restaurants, special events, shopping and public services that will be supported by and linked to public transportation, providing “car-less” access to other communities as well as to the San Francisco International Airport.

E) Create the entertainment center of the Peninsula

The combination of the 20-screen Century Theatres cinema and the live performances offered by the Fox Theatre and a number of smaller entertainment venues position Downtown as one of the premier entertainment destinations of the Peninsula. This destination is supported by the opportunities inherent in the programming of both Courthouse Square and Theatre Way to be active year around with a variety of community events as well as a place for everyone to “hang out.” Also, art facilities and other cultural venues which support and reinforce entertainment should be encouraged.

F) Create a strong employment district and “vital center”

The modern workplace and “vital center”¹ features settings that foster informal meetings and idea exchange that enhance creativity and productivity. When

these settings are in close proximity to cafes, restaurants, meeting halls, art, high quality public transportation, and cultural resources, an employment district is created that the most sought-after employees prefer.

G) Make pedestrians the priority

Downtown is a comfortably walkable urban place, and the Downtown Precise Plan aims to make it more so as change occurs. In the event of conflict between motor vehicles and pedestrians, it is City policy that pedestrian comfort, safety, convenience, and enjoyment have priority.

H) Integrate transit and bicycle use

The Precise Plan encourages the creation of a model of transit integration, featuring a convenient transit station on display in the center (rather than at the edge) of Downtown, seamlessly connected to Broadway, Courthouse Square, El Camino Real and adjacent neighborhoods. It is intended that the transit station be so well integrated into the activity patterns, viewsheds, and pathways of the district that the train becomes the primary mode of transportation chosen by the daytime and evening commuting populations within walking distance of the station. In addition, modern streetcars are envisioned as a means of convenient circulation within Downtown, as well as a way to connect Downtown and the Caltrain station to adjacent districts and transit hubs.

Bicycles have become a viable alternative to the automobile. They are clean, efficient, and provide a healthy way to travel to and through the Downtown. It is intended that the City integrate more bicycle routes, bicycle storage, and other bicycle-friendly improvements in the Downtown.

I) Provide “just enough” parking and create a “park-once and walk” district

It is the goal of the Downtown Precise Plan to plan, manage and operate the overall supply of parking (both public and private) in a manner that will provide “just enough” parking at the right price to serve the needs of people living, working and visiting Downtown. In addition, it is important to organize the parking facilities in relation to Downtown destinations and activities in a manner that will create a “park-once and walk” district. Facilities shall be well lit, aesthetically pleasing and well maintained as an important component of the overall network of community outdoor places. Parking facilities should be located unobtrusively, and should never be permitted to interfere with the appealing environment of Downtown.



1.2.2. REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

This section describes *how* Redwood City intends to successfully realize the *vision* described in the previous sections.

A) Broad Strategies

1. Capitalize on the current preference for “lifestyle centers²⁹” by “locating the lifestyle center in Downtown.”³⁰ Make the most of Redwood City’s size and central location and provide the vitality, amenities and range of entertainment, shopping and cultural offerings that suburban residents are used to finding in San Francisco or San Jose.
2. Position Downtown as the most convenient place to be by simultaneously promoting (1) dense housing options; (2) enhanced public transit service and station amenities; (3) a wide range of entertainment, cultural, retail, and restaurant offerings; and (4) a growing employment district
3. Prioritize the use of limited city resources on investments that enhance the perceived value of the district. Rather than subsidizing a few individual development projects, invest in ways that enhance the identity, visibility, and convenience of Downtown with an eye toward achieving benefit to the widest possible range of properties and user populations. Examples of this approach already completed are Courthouse Square, “Theatre Way”, the Jefferson Garage and the Broadway Streetscape. (See Book III – City Actions for more details).

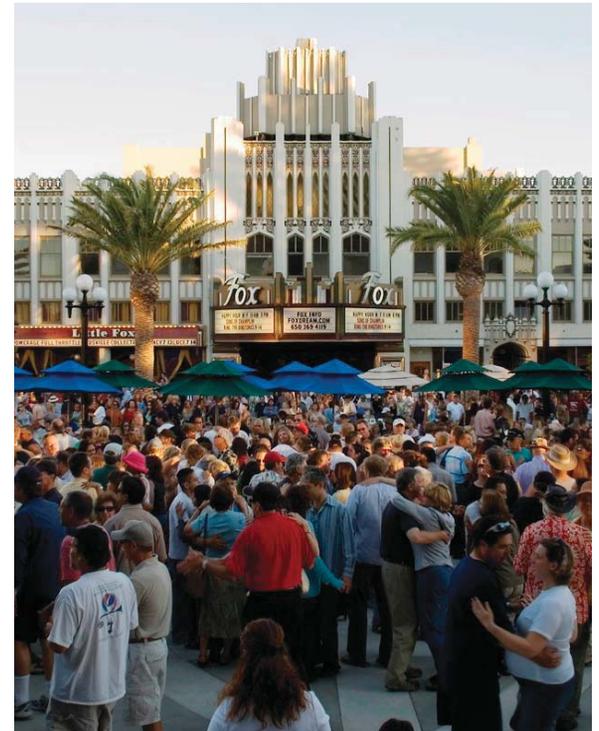


Item 8, Redwood City Downtown Vision

B) Focused Strategies

1. *Focus short-term resources in the “Core of the Core” area.* Place the highest priority on achieving short-term revitalization in the area around Courthouse Square, Theatre Way, and the train station. Cluster short-term city investment here first. Similarly, focus on promoting private investment in this area first.
2. *Cluster activity-generating uses.* Focus activity-generating retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses in the center of Downtown in a manner that supports but does not overwhelm market demand. Use land use regulations and capital improvement investments to direct such uses to the core. Surround that activity core with supportive daytime and nighttime populations.
3. *Leverage the strong regional demand for housing as the primary engine of revitalization.* Offer sufficient development intensities to properties in Downtown to provide the conditions that allow developers to construct homes, offices, and hotels without city subsidy.
4. *Build on the success of the Fox Theatre, the Century Theaters cinema, smaller entertainment venues, and the Downtown events programming.* Establish Redwood City as the primary entertainment center of the Mid-Peninsula. Promote continued investment in complementary entertainment venues and cluster those venues as close as possible to the two large theatres.
5. *Incorporate Sequoia Station into Downtown.* Take advantage of Sequoia Station’s success as a local shopping destination by connecting it visually and practically to the historic Downtown core.
6. *Capitalize on the potential benefits of enhanced commuter rail service.* Instigate the redevelopment of properties located between Broadway and Sequoia Station in a configuration that creates a link between the train and Courthouse Square, and that places an exciting gateway into the historic Downtown on display to transit riders.
7. *Reinforce Downtown’s role as the center for civic life in Redwood City.* Make Downtown the preferred location for office and service-oriented civic buildings. As new construction occurs in the vicinity of City Hall, the Library, the Post Office and the County Historic Museum, take every opportunity to enhance the visibility, connectivity, and prominence of civic buildings within the fabric of the district.
8. *Encourage and nurture the emerging renaissance beginning along Main Street.* Promote the re-use of existing buildings by one-of-a-kind local businesses. Provide these properties with a bit more flexibility in terms of permitted uses to support the evolving eclectic mixture of uses along the corridor. Retain the essential requirements for physical configuration that will further the street’s identity as historic and pedestrian-oriented.

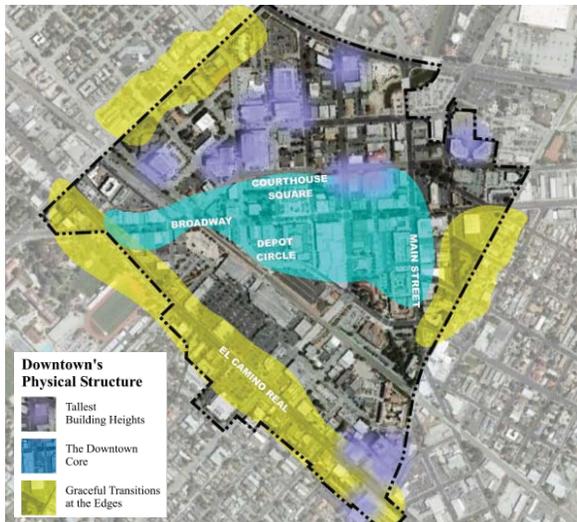
9. *Increase the visibility and presence of Downtown to the large number of motorists on El Camino Real and Veteran’s Boulevard.* Enhance the four primary entrances to Downtown with signage, gateway treatments and landmarks; Broadway at El Camino Real, Broadway at Woodside Road, Jefferson at Veterans, and Jefferson at El Camino Real.
10. *Collaborate with Caltrain, the High Speed Rail Authority, and other stakeholders to better integrate the railroad into Downtown.* Special attention should be paid to removing the barrier effect between the northeast side and southwest side of Downtown created by the tracks.
11. *Continue to streamline the development application and review and approval process.* Limit exceptions and variances to cases of exceptional design and creativity particularly responsive to Plan goals and principles in a way not anticipated in the Plan. Enhance the role of administrative review in instances of applicant conformance to the adopted Plan. Provide investors with complete and detailed specifications required for city approval in a self-explanatory document available online and at the Planning Counter.



1.2.3. THE FUTURE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF DOWNTOWN

By necessity, the basic increment of regulation of development is that of an individual property. Because regulatory codes are tools that are formulated to be applied in this way, property-by-property, a code provides no clear view of what the specific regulations (i.e., for aspects such as building height, land use, setback, etc.) are meant to produce in terms of a complete street environment or city district. It cannot give you “the big picture.” This section provides an overview of the physical outcomes that are intended to result from implementing the combined regulations and planned public actions contained in Books II and III of this plan. *Its specific contents are not part of the formal regulating code, and new development proposals will not be required to mimic the specific designs presented in the illustrations.* It is not the intent of this Plan to control the specific design of buildings, site improvements or street landscaping, nor is it the intent of the plan to pre-specify what type of use or business should be located on any particular site. Since no one can predict every opportunity that might arise as investors, architects, contractors and engineers apply their creative energies to proposals for new construction in the Downtown, this section is provided to reveal the conceptual basis of the regulations contained in Book II and how all of the separate pieces are meant to come together in the form of a unique Downtown district.

Redwood City’s Downtown District is significantly older and larger than the downtowns in most of the other towns arrayed along the Peninsula between San Francisco and San Jose. The community intends to rebuild the Downtown



THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF DOWNTOWN

on the traditional framework of that history and scale. Whereas most of the Peninsula’s downtowns are defined by a single pedestrian thoroughfare, or “main street,” Redwood City’s will have a variety of prominent pedestrian streets. And whereas most of the suburban downtowns along the Peninsula are characterized by a fairly even distribution of one, two and three story buildings, Redwood City’s is envisioned as possessing the more dramatic silhouette of a medium-sized city center.

Urbanism vs. High Density Suburbia

Whereas much of Redwood City is suburban in character, Downtown’s character will be distinctly *urban*. This means a more compact development pattern, taller buildings set closer to each other and to the sidewalks, a greater mixture of uses and activities, much more pedestrian activity, and a preponderance of the built environment over the natural (or naturalized) environment, when compared with most other portions of the City. Downtown is also intended to be the most public district in the city, offering a wider variety of public spaces and civic buildings than any other city district.

In implementing this plan it is important to distinguish good urbanism from the high-density suburban development seen in some Peninsula cities. Some distinguishing characteristics of urbanism are:

- *Space.* Suburban buildings are often objects sitting in space. Urban buildings enclose and shape space and make the space a comfortable place for people.
- *Streets.* Suburban development views the street as a negative, focuses inwardly away from the street and seeks to protect itself from the street. To do so suburban development is often set back from the street behind parking or landscaping and it takes its primary access from parking lots and driveways on-site. Urban development welcomes streets as the most important part of the public realm and relates primarily to the pedestrian zone of adjacent streets. Urban buildings are at or close to the back of the sidewalk. No parking is permitted between the buildings and the back of the sidewalk.



URBANISM

- *Block Structure.* Suburban development is shaped by a sparse street pattern and superblocks. This isolates adjacent developments from each other, makes walking difficult, and concentrates auto trips on a few overwhelmed arterial streets. Urbanism is shaped by a dense, interconnected street pattern and small blocks. This allows for convenient, direct walking routes and for a dispersal of auto trips.
- *Development Increment.* Suburban development is focused on “campuses” which are large in scale, focused inward, and meant to be relatively self-contained. Urbanism is made up of numerous smaller buildings (often several independently-operated buildings per block) which are oriented to and linked by the street and which function as a mutually supporting ensemble.
- *Access Modes.* Suburban development is designed almost solely for automobile access and it is often almost 100% auto dependent. Buildings are set back behind large parking lots and access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users is inconvenient. Urban development is designed for multi-modal access and it welcomes pedestrians, bikes, cars and public transit. It places buildings close to the street to provide convenient access for pedestrians, bikes and transit users.

Downtown Areas and Sub-Areas

Although all of Downtown will be noticeably more urban than the rest of the City, it is not intended to be uniformly urban. As one proceeds from the edge of Downtown toward Broadway, Downtown will become increasingly compact, mixed-use and dense. Regulations in Book II and planned city actions in Book III of the Precise Plan guide public and private investment with an eye to creating two identifiable areas (*The Downtown Core* and *The Greater Downtown*), with distinct sub-areas within them such as *Broadway*, *Main Street*, *Courthouse Square*, *The El Camino Real Corridor*, and *Graceful Transitions at the Edges*. Taken together, these areas and sub-areas form the full structure of the Downtown District. The envisioned form of each of these elements of Downtown’s structure is described in the following pages.



HIGH DENSITY SUBURBIA

Building Heights

In modern cities, building heights can be a very strong feature of the built environment. Modern construction technology allows buildings to rise above the traditional city almost without limit, while many modern zoning codes force heights far lower than was common in earlier eras. Often, a single tall building may be placed in a low-rise area, causing a conflict. Other times, a taller, relatively dense area may be subjected to height limits which are too strict, effectively halting development. Too often, heights are regulated without thought of their design or economic impacts.

Downtown Redwood City should evolve into a district with a distinct urban flavor, which is unique in the city. It should grow in a way that creates an attractive, appropriately-scaled skyline and which reinforces the feeling of a vibrant center with clear edges.

The DTPP encourages the tallest buildings to be placed in the Downtown Core, putting the highest concentrations of people nearest to transit and the retail/entertainment heart of the area. This will also create an attractive, dynamic punctuation to the skyline. At the edges, heights will gracefully transition down to a level which is compatible with adjacent low-rise neighborhoods.

Prior to the adoption of this plan, a previous precise plan was adopted for the Downtown. While the maximum permitted building heights in the earlier document were similar to those in Section 2.7 of this Plan, this Plan features two important improvements. First, in areas with concentrations of historic resources, heights are reduced for the front of all properties to maintain the historic character of these streets. Second, around key public open spaces heights are reduced in order to preserve a reasonable amount of sunshine, so that they can be as enjoyable as possible as often as possible.

All maximum permitted building heights have been set to respond to market conditions, so that they are not a disincentive to high-quality, context-appropriate development. Over time this should lead to the creation of a cohesive physical form for the heart of the city.



THE REDWOOD CITY SKYLINE



MAXIMUM PERMITTED HEIGHTS - ORIGINAL DTPP



MAXIMUM PERMITTED HEIGHTS - NEW DTPP

A) The Downtown Core

The Downtown Core is the center. It is where the majority of ground-level shops are concentrated, and therefore where pedestrian activity is most lively and where the most pedestrian amenities are located. The Downtown Core is the most urban part of the Precise Plan Area; its streets will be shared equally by vehicles and pedestrians. Downtown's streets double as outdoor open spaces—attractively shaped volumes defined by contiguous mixed-use, retail, residential, office, theater, and civic buildings from corner to corner, featuring a bare minimum of front or side yard setbacks.

Main Street

Main Street is where the city and its Downtown began. Before Broadway had any shops, and even before the first Courthouse was constructed, the new city's commerce and housing were centered on Main Street. Given its special history and precious heritage commercial building stock, the historic Main Street is envisioned as a special corridor in the Downtown, distinguishable in character from Broadway, yet an integral part of the Downtown Core area. Precise Plan specifications for new investment in Main Street properties will restore the prominence of the corridor by ensuring that ground level retail shops, cafes, small restaurants, and offices are designed to enhance the appeal of Main Street as a walking street, and that new and renovated buildings are designed to reflect the historic character and scale of the corridor.



MAIN STREET

Broadway

Broadway is the central spine of the Downtown Core, and the street most identified with Downtown Redwood City. Broadway is home to Downtown's primary activity-generating destinations such as Courthouse Square, the Fox Theatre, On Broadway Theater and Shops, the History Museum, and will offer an expanding array of shops, eateries, services, and amenities opening out on to its sidewalks. While Broadway provides for vehicle movement and curbside parking, it is also a linear public open space, as much of a promenade as it is roadway. Broadway is the address of the city's greatest concentration of historic buildings, and new buildings along the street will be required to reflect that history. The frequent punctuation of Broadway's streetwalls by historic buildings and the special design requirements for buildings constructed adjacent to historic buildings will result in a richly varied streetwall along Broadway's blocks.



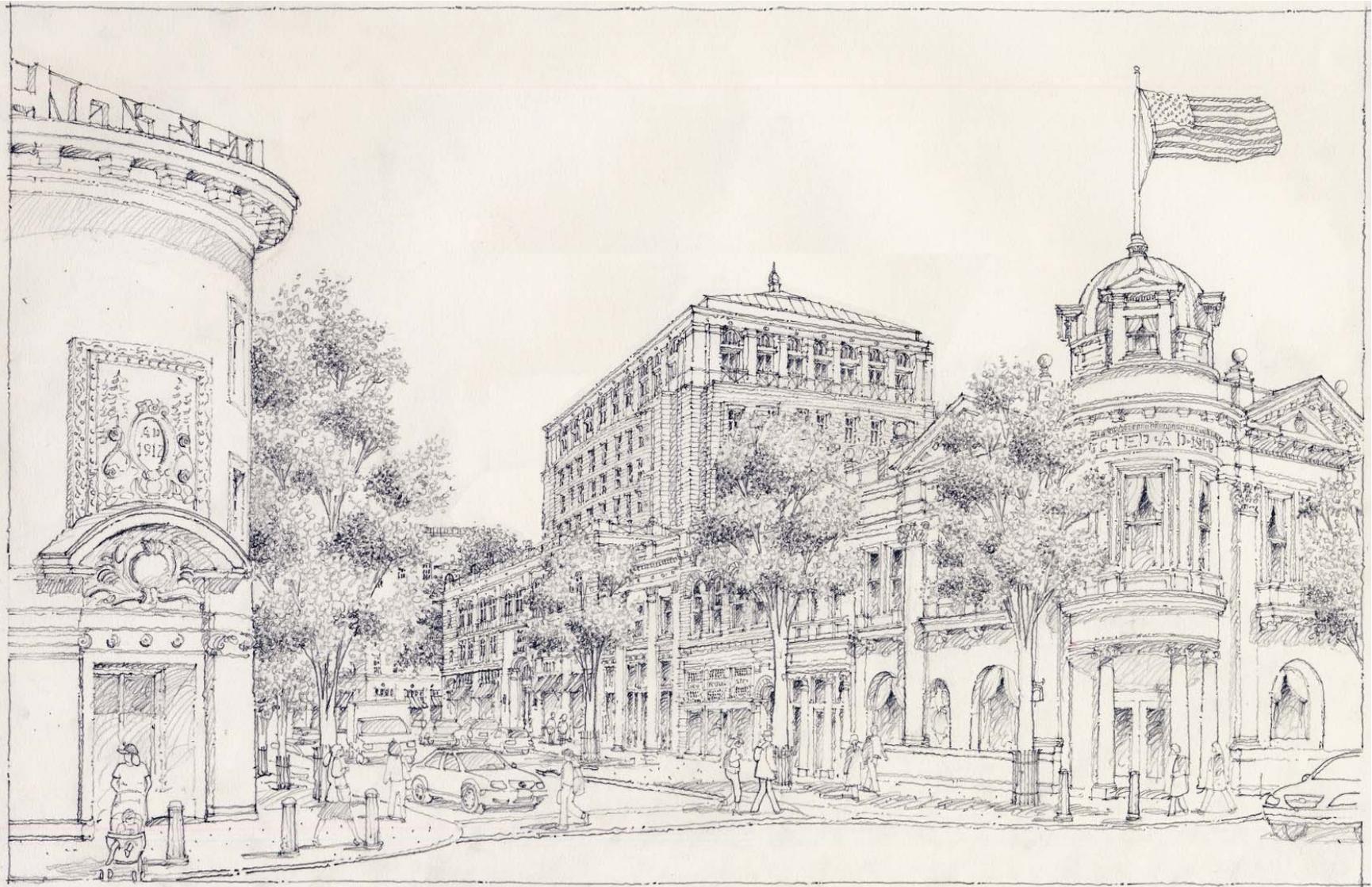
BROADWAY



MAIN STREET AND BROADWAY BUILDING FABRIC



BROADWAY AT MAIN, EXISTING CONDITIONS



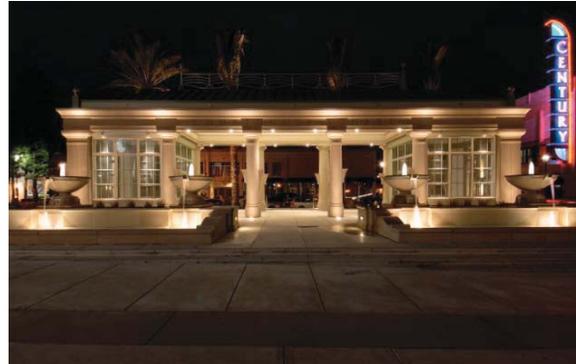
POTENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS ON BROADWAY AT MAIN STREET

Courthouse Square

Downtown is the center of the city; the Downtown Core is the center of Downtown; and Courthouse Square is the physical and symbolic center of the Downtown Core. Courthouse Square is the public place defined and enclosed by the façades of the historic County Courthouse building and the Fox Theatre (both listed on the National Register of Historic Places), and buildings lining Hamilton Street and Middlefield Road flanking the historic Courthouse. A formal public plaza occupies the center, and is presided over by the restored Courthouse building – now occupied by the San Mateo County History Museum. This public place – formed by the historic Courthouse building and the public space it presides over – was the first formal public space in the city. As part of the revitalization effort, the community has restored its most distinguished public place by demolishing the Courthouse Annex that for a time occupied the space between the Courthouse and Broadway, and by restoring the grandeur of the historic Courthouse building (in the future, the remaining annex on the north side of the Courthouse block may be demolished and the remaining space around the Courthouse building restored as public open space). Courthouse Square – featuring the restored and much more visible Courthouse Building and dome, along with the new public plaza, will be the iconic image most identified with Redwood City, as well as the community’s primary outdoor “living room.”



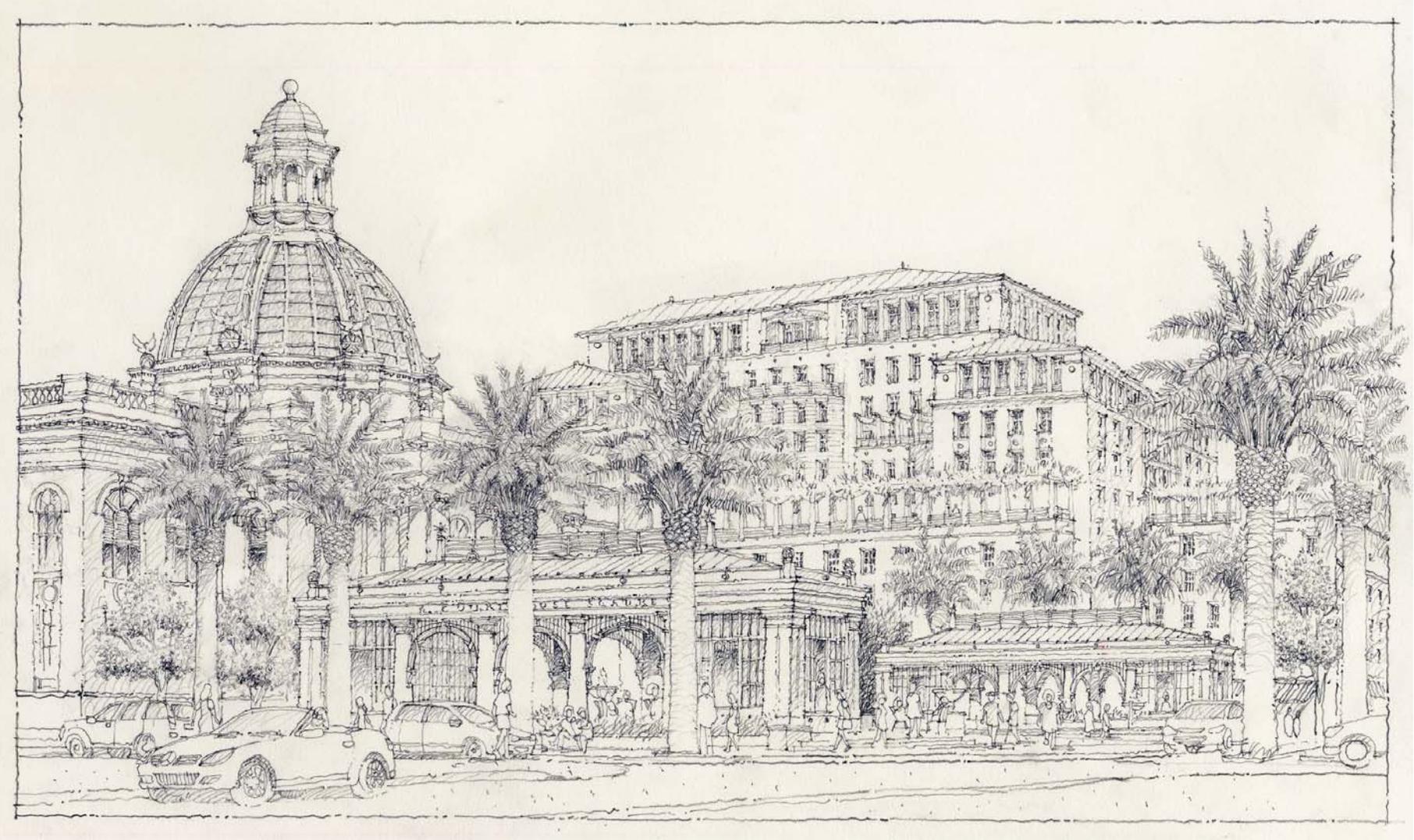
COURTHOUSE SQUARE BUILDING FABRIC



COURTHOUSE SQUARE



COURTHOUSE SQUARE, EXISTING CONDITIONS



POTENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT ADJACENT TO COURTHOUSE SQUARE

B) The Greater Downtown

In addition to being the center of community activity, Downtown is a city neighborhood with a difference. It will offer the city's widest range of housing types, the greatest mixture of homes, offices, and lodging in walking distance of theaters, shops, restaurants, cafes, and various nightlife amenities, as well as its own commuter rail and transit center. The portions of the Greater Downtown in which this urban neighborhood character will be most visible are those that do not feature continuous ground level shopfronts, and in which the residential buildings, office and hotels are on display at ground level. Regulations governing The Greater Downtown will result in artfully composed urban buildings built close to the sidewalk, and featuring grand scale entrances, flat urban façades with richly articulated windows and doorways, building forecourts, terraced urban gardens, front stoops, and bay windows enlivening the sidewalk environment.

El Camino Real

El Camino Real has the most distinguished history of any thoroughfare in the State of California. However, over recent years much of the corridor's image has been tarnished as it has succumbed to serial widening, strip centers, and the disinvestment brought about by the freeway system and by the shifting preference of the shopping industry for large sites visible from the freeway. With strip development types rapidly falling out of favor with retail investors, the community intends to make the most of the Peninsula's pervasive strong housing market as an "engine of reinvestment" to revive the fortunes of declining commercial properties.

Redwood City is committed to the revitalization of El Camino as a grand, multimodal, and attractive boulevard. This is a vision shared by many in the region. The Grand Boulevard Initiative (GBI) is a collaboration of 19 cities, counties, local and regional agencies united to improve the performance, safety and aesthetics of El Camino Real. Starting at the northern Daly City city limit (where it is named Mission Street) and ending near the Diridon Caltrain Station in central San Jose (where it is named The Alameda), the GBI brings together for the first time all of the agencies having responsibility for the condition, use and performance of the street. The members of the GBI are working together to realize the vision that El Camino Real will achieve its full potential.

The Grand Boulevard Initiative's work is based on 10 guiding principles, which are perfectly in sync with the Downtown Precise Plan. In 2008, Redwood City was the second city in the GBI to officially adopt these principles:

1. Target housing and job growth in strategic areas along the corridor
2. Encourage compact mixed-use development and high-quality urban design and construction
3. Create a pedestrian-oriented environment and improve streetscapes, ensuring full access to and between public areas and private developments

4. Develop a balanced multimodal corridor to maintain and improve mobility of people and vehicles along the corridor
5. Manage parking assets
6. Provide vibrant public spaces and gathering places
7. Preserve and accentuate unique and desirable community character and the existing quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods
8. Improve safety and public health
9. Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections with the corridor
10. Pursue environmentally sustainable and economically viable development patterns

Redwood City has been recognized for its leadership in the Grand Boulevard effort. In 2008 Redwood City won a Visionary Award from the GBI for the best planning effort along the corridor, and the same year the affordable housing project known as Villa Montgomery on El Camino Real at Vera Street was given a Vanguard Award as a development which best exemplifies the principles of the GBI.

A conceptual design has been created for improvements along the entirety of El Camino through the DTPP area. This design includes traffic improvements, formal rows of trees, widened sidewalks, decorative pedestrian-scaled lighting, and attractive street furniture. The first phase of these improvements was completed prior to the adoption of this plan in 2010 between Brewster Avenue and Broadway. The remainder of the corridor will be improved aesthetically consistent with the first phase, as resources become available.

The DTPP, combined with the public investments in the street itself, provides the conditions that will ultimately result in the transformation of El Camino Real corridor into a remarkable, walkable, mixed-use boulevard which serves as an impressive gateway into the community. Guided by the DTPP, new investment will gradually replace the older commercial strip development with residential buildings (as well as office and lodging uses designed to mix compatibly with residential neighbors) that are oriented toward the thoroughfare, with civic-scale entrances and grand-scale first floor façade composition designed to match the scale of a wide road and prominent address. Pedestrian walkways will be buffered from moving traffic by street trees, decorative boulevard lights and landscaping designed to project the image of a memorable grand boulevard segment.

Graceful Transitions at the Edges

The Downtown Precise Plan Area is flanked on three of its four sides by residential neighborhoods: historic Mezesville (also referred to as Centennial) to the northwest, historic Stambaugh-Heller to the southeast, and Roosevelt to the southwest. Many multi-family homes line the side streets just to the southwest of the commercial development that lines El Camino Real. While new investment flowing into the center of the Downtown District is envisioned as substantially increasing the scale and visibility of the district, new investment along the district's edges will take the form of lower rise structures with deeper setbacks and other buffering devices to insure a sensitively designed transition from urban to suburban "fabric." In instances where single-family detached homes on residentially-zoned land are contiguous with new Downtown buildings, those buildings will provide additional step-backs in the building mass as well as deeper buffering yards to provide a pleasing relationship between neighboring properties.



EL CAMINO REAL, EXISTING CONDITIONS



EL CAMINO REAL, THE VISION

(Endnotes)

1 “The New Economy values the vital centers of regions, towns, and neighborhoods. These centers promote the interaction, accessibility, and creativity on which the New Economy depends. Creativity is encouraged by work and living environments that allow for a lot of interaction among people. Chance encounters in hallways, restaurants, neighborhoods, and conferences lead to new partnerships and solutions to tough problems. The proximity, density, and publicness of vital centers stimulate interaction among people. Vital centers are typically filled with the kinds of places conducive to planned meetings as well as chance encounters—places to eat and drink, conference and meeting facilities, recreation space and facilities, parks and plazas, business service centers.” Henton, Doug and Walesh, Kim: [Linking the New Economy to the Livable Community](#) (paper) San Francisco: The James Irvine Foundation, April 1998, p.16.

2 Lifestyle centers are downtown-style configurations of shopping/eating/entertainment use featuring shopfronts opening directly onto urban public spaces with plenty of amenities, frequently featuring housing, office and/or lodging uses in upper stories.

3 Comment by Robert Gibbs, Gibbs Planning Group: “Research shows the average shopper will visit more frequently and spend more \$/min. Primary investors in retail development are finding that the Lifestyle Centers are just urban enough so that folks get their urban fix and don’t bother with cities. The key is to have the Lifestyle Center in your Downtown.”