



# Draft Preferred Plan Concept

Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Plan Update

NOVEMBER 2019



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Draft Preferred Plan presents a framework for land use, circulation, and urban design in Downtown Santa Rosa. It is based on input from over 850 Santa Rosa residents, employees, and visitors who participated in workshops, surveys, neighborhood meetings and other public contact events between February and October 2019. In a series of maps, graphics and accompanying narrative, it describes a vision for the future of downtown and outlines several key strategies needed to make that vision a reality.

The Draft Preferred Plan is intended to convey the key concepts and actions around which to update the Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (DSASP). It marks the culmination of the Alternatives Exploration Phase of the process. Once approved by the City Council, the Preferred Plan will guide a detailed update of the policies and standards in the 2007 Specific Plan and will help focus environmental review.

A central objective of the DSASP is to enhance the role of Downtown Santa Rosa as an energetic commercial and cultural center with a range of housing, employment, retail and restaurant options in a vibrant, walkable environment. The Draft Preferred Plan seeks to further this objective by:

- Facilitating housing production to provide a range of options for people of all incomes, abilities, and stages of life;
- Simplifying development standards;
- Providing flexibility and choice for developers; and
- Strengthening sense of place.



## 2 VISION AND KEY MOVES

The Preferred Plan Concept envisions a vibrant big city urban core centered around Courthouse Square, and a network of mixed-use village centers in other parts of the plan area that offer an array of housing options for people at various income levels and stages of life, together with shops and services catering to residents' daily needs.

In the urban core, tall new buildings attract new residents and employees to strengthen the role of the Courthouse Square area as the business and cultural hub of Santa Rosa and the wider region. In turn, new rooftops and new jobs support both the vitality of existing businesses and the establishment of new amenities in the core. Santa Rosans and visitors alike will enjoy shopping at unique and eclectic stores, dine at restaurants or meet coworkers for after-work drinks, attend a show at a new entertainment venue or civic space, enjoy the sunshine at Old Courthouse Square, and take advantage of other recreational amenities. Fourth Street is reconnected through the Santa Rosa Plaza mall as a bicycle and pedestrian connection, and design standards call for active ground floor uses such as shops, restaurants, art galleries, and entertainment venues to foster walkability along both Fourth and Fifth Streets. Underpasses at Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Olive streets are activated with lighting, public art, wayfinding, and space for pop up uses like retail, food, live performances, recreation activities, and other events to strengthen the connection to/from the core and Railroad Square.

Connectivity is further enhanced with a high-frequency trackless trolley that runs in a loop primarily along Third Street linking Courthouse Square and the Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) station, while road diets on Mendocino and E Street provide improved safety and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists accessing the urban core. The redevelopment of the City Hall complex with high density hous-

ing presents an opportunity to daylight the creeks that run under the site and showcase this natural amenity in the heart of downtown Santa Rosa.



*Future Urban Core: Third St. and Santa Rosa Ave.*

In addition to an intensified downtown core, this plan also envisions strong supporting neighborhoods. The neighborhoods supporting the downtown will retain their unique character, but be provided with flexibility and public improvements to enhance livability. Some of the neighborhoods with potential for change include:

- **Maxwell** - Mixed use development centered on a new public plaza at Ninth and Donahue anchors a new residential neighborhood in the Maxwell Court area. Residents, visitors, and businesses seamlessly coexist in a village-like atmosphere, with multi-family residential housing, live/work units, and creative, maker-oriented uses balanced with the area's existing industries. Donahue would be



*Future Maxwell Mixed Use Village*

extended to the northwest along its current alignment to connect Ninth and Maxwell Court, and standards would require uses and design techniques that activate the ground floors of buildings to promote walkability and vitality. A new high-visibility crosswalk would be added at the intersection to provide pedestrian access for local residents of the West End neighborhood and new housing on former industrial sites flanking the railroad tracks. Lighting and artwork in the Ninth Street underpass strengthen the connection between this village center and the St. Rose neighborhood to the east.

- **SMART Village** -The vacant SMART site west of the railroad tracks is developed with higher-density housing, oriented to provide easy pedestrian access to the SMART station and Railroad Square via the at-grade rail crossing to the east. Residents of the new housing on the SMART site join visitors shopping, dining, and enjoying leisure time in Railroad Square.

The vitality of this charming commercial district is further enhanced with the expansion of Depot Park to create a public plaza that puts the “square in Railroad Square,” and design standards call for active ground floors to foster walkability around the plaza and on Fourth Street. On the SMART site, new multi-family development provides residents easy access to the Downtown commuter rail station, and a new north-south roadway connects Sixth Street and West Third through the site, providing access for CityBus and improving intra-modal transfers to commuters.



- **Roberts** – conveniently located between the Roseland area, including the on-site amenities and housing at the Roseland Village Shopping Center, and the Downtown SMART Station and Railroad Square, the Roberts district acts as bridge, linking Southwest Santa Rosa to the downtown. Sebastopol Road becomes a multi-modal corridor with high-frequency transit connections into the urban core and an enhanced bicycle and pedestrian route via the Joe Rodota Trail. Development capitalizes on proximity to the Trail, and a mix of multi-family housing, live/work spaces, and creative, maker-oriented uses such as artisan shops and studios, media and print production outlets, tech startups, limited light industrial businesses and other supportive uses add character and vitality to the village center. An anchor use such as a sports facility, civic center, performing arts center, or major shopping, dining, or recreation destination gives the district identity and serves local residents in

addition to visitors. The street experience along Olive Street is enhanced to provide a stronger connection and safer path of travel for pedestrians, bicycle riders, and drivers.

- **Juilliard Park** - As a key gateway to the urban core, Santa Rosa Avenue is transformed into a grand boulevard lined with higher density housing and trees under this scenario. Uses and design techniques that activate the ground floor of buildings are required in nodes at Mills and Maple, and high-visibility crosswalks at these locations further enhance walkability and vitality. Separated bicycle lanes and high-frequency transit service along the corridor strengthen Santa Rosa Avenue as a multi-modal gateway into the urban core. West of Santa Rosa Avenue, neighborhood enhancements, such as branding and wayfinding, build on the creative energy of the South A Street Arts District (SOFA) community.



*Future Gateway Corridor: Santa Rosa Ave.*

Implementation of the Preferred Plan involves the following key moves:

- **Use Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to regulate form and height** - the structure of a vibrant core and village centers will be promoted with a map-based system that establishes a maximum FAR for various areas downtown with minimum FAR for some locations set at half of the maximum. The maximum FAR would apply to all uses on a given site and there would be no height limits. Instead, building heights would effectively be regulated by maximum FAR and the size of the parcel. This system provides simplicity and flexibility for development. Projects that propose housing and other community benefits, such as affordable housing, childcare, and publicly accessible open space will be eligible for bonus FAR incentives, which can be offered as part of a community benefit program. In some locations, the provision of on-site performance space, public art, and improved lighting may also be considered a community benefit, given the interest expressed by community members throughout the process.
- **Waive parking requirements for development within 1/4 mile of high-frequency transit and facilitate shared parking** - this move effectively “unbundles” parking in areas with viable alternatives to the automobile and lets the market decide how much to build. It loosens a constraint for developers and provides flexibility. It would be part of a holistic parking management strategy that includes shared parking between adjacent land uses with different peak parking demand times; a residential parking permit program in existing neighborhoods; on-demand bike share and scooters; etc.
- **Require ground floor activation in key areas to foster walkability and vitality** – Uses that activate the ground floors of buildings such as retail, restaurants, cafes, bars, art galleries, co-working office spaces and other uses that promote foot traffic will be allowed in all mixed use designations but required in certain key areas in order to promote concentrations that lead to walkability and vitality. In these same locations, building design that optimizes pedestrian access; facade length and articulation; and window coverage will be required.
- **Pursue public-private partnerships on key catalyst sites** - Key City or County-owned sites in the core area (ex: City Hall, Lot 2, Garage 12, the Sonoma County library) represent opportunities for development that proves the market for high-density housing in Santa Rosa, and the Preferred Plan will prioritize redevelopment of one or more of these sites as a demonstration project to catalyze similar developments.
- **Enable public spaces** - Allowing and promoting entertainment and activities in flexible, publicly accessible spaces and “urban parks” such as Courthouse Square or the new square in Railroad Square helps to attract residents and visitors downtown and is a critical component of building vibrancy and sense of place.
- **Improve wayfinding**- To showcase, connect, and improve navigation to downtown’s cultural, historical, and recreational assets, the Preferred Plan will promote policies and programs that support improved wayfinding. Examples include a “cultural points of interest” walking tour and map, unique and visually consistent signage, or informational kiosks.



# 4 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The Draft Preferred Plan introduces a streamlined set of land use designations applicable in areas with clusters of vacant and under-utilized land where change is foreseeable. Outside of these areas, no change to the land use framework is envisioned. Overall, the Draft Preferred Plan reduces the number of downtown land use designations by nearly half and provides descriptions intended to recognize and enhance the character of various distinct downtown districts.

**Core Mixed Use** - The Core Mixed Use (CMU) designation is intended to foster a vital mix of residential, retail, office, governmental, entertainment, cultural, educational, and hotel uses to activate the greater Courthouse Square area and key transit corridors throughout the day. The principal objectives of the CMU designation are to strengthen the role of this area as a business, governmental, retail, and entertainment hub for the city and the region, and to provide for significant new multi-family residential development that will extend the hours of activity and create a built-in market for existing and new retail, services, and entertainment uses. High-rise development in single-use or mixed-use buildings is envisioned in a walkable environment with public gathering places such as plazas, courtyards, or parks and easy access to public transit.

**Station Mixed Use** - The Station Mixed Use (SMU) designation is intended to foster a range of visitor-serving uses, including retail, restaurants, entertainment, cultural amenities, and hotels in proximity to the Downtown SMART station. While commercial uses are emphasized, new multi-family housing will also be allowed to support the daytime and evening vitality of the area. New development will complement

the unique character of Railroad Square, adding to the mix of uses and enhancing the walkable, pedestrian-oriented streets and public spaces that attract local residents, SMART train riders, and visitors from Santa Rosa and the wider region throughout the day and the week.

**Maker Mixed Use** - The Maker Mixed Use (MMU) designation emphasizes a balanced mix of residential, creative, and maker-oriented uses, including artisan shops, studios, media production, printing and publishing, distilleries and micro-breweries, cannabis, tech start-ups, research and development facilities, limited light industrial uses, and home-based businesses. Multi-family residential units are encouraged in single or mixed-use buildings, as are live/work units. Supportive uses that contribute to a vibrant village atmosphere, such as bodegas,



*Maker Mixed Use Precedent: Warehouse District, Petaluma*



specialty food stores, cafes, coffee shops, performing arts venues, theatres, restaurants, schools, and educational facilities are also permitted.

**Neighborhood Mixed Use** - The Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) designation is intended to provide for new multi-family residential development in mixed- or single-use buildings, together with a broad mix of uses that primarily serve local area residents, including professional office, retail, entertainment, service, and other supporting uses. Housing development typologies envisioned include low- and mid-rise apartments and condominiums, as well as small-lot single-family attached dwellings (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, townhomes). Live-work spaces and maker-oriented uses are permitted subject to performance standards. Street design that integrates pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular use and incorporates traffic-calming features and on-street parking will be required.

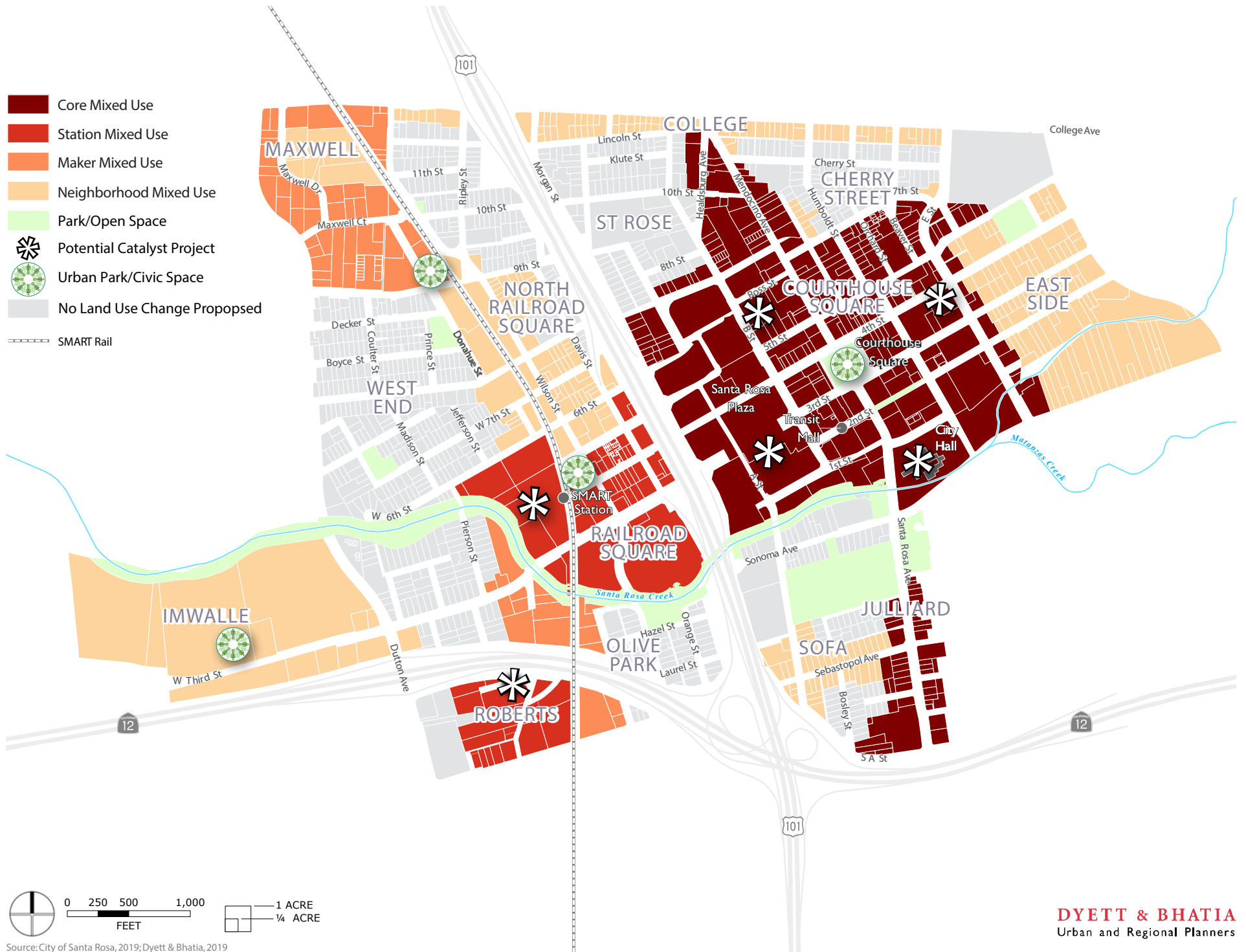
**Active Ground Floor Overlay** - This overlay requires that new development activate the ground floor of buildings with uses and/or design techniques that promote comings and goings and enhance the pedestrian environment. Active ground floor uses include retail and service establishments, restaurants, cafes, bars and brew pubs, co-working spaces, art and craft studios, and other substantially similar uses. Building design that optimizes pedestrian access; facade length and articulation; and window coverage will be required. The intent is to provide developers with a menu of options from which 2 or more items must be selected. The overlay would apply at locations within mixed use areas where retail currently exists and where enhanced walkability and vitality is desired.



*Ground Floor Activated with Use and Design Strategies*



# Map I: Preferred Plan Concept: Land Use Changes



Source: City of Santa Rosa, 2019; Dyett & Bhatia, 2019

# FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a tool widely used throughout California and the US to regulate building form and intensity. It is the ratio of total building space in relation to lot size. It can be calculated quickly based on information that is readily available to planners, architects, and developers - simply take the total building square footage and divide by the area of the lot.

As a regulatory tool, FAR provides flexibility. Unlike traditional bulk controls such as height, lot coverage, and setbacks which create a rigid envelope within which architects must work, FAR does not require a particular building shape or placement; rather it creates a flexible envelope that provides choice. FAR is typically used in combination with other bulk controls.

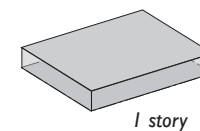
FAR is particularly useful in central business districts and in other areas of high-intensity land use with a mix of office buildings, restaurants, shops, hotels, and tall apartment buildings. Some of the advantages it offers are that:

- it applies equally to all types of structures;
- it takes into account the possibility of more than one structure on a lot;
- it allows greater variety in architectural design;
- it gives a quick measure of the capacity of buildings — a convenience to both builders and public agencies;
- it removes the inducement to squeeze extra stories into the permitted volume of a building;
- it makes the utilization of new construction methods more feasible than under traditional controls.

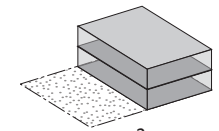
The City of San Diego moved to an FAR based approach with their Downtown plan in 2006 and since adoption 4,700 housing units have been built with another 6,700 in the pipeline. Downtown San Diego is currently producing 25 to 30 percent of all the housing being built throughout the city, and the development of this housing together with employment, retail and entertainment-oriented uses has helped make it one of the most vibrant places in California. Other California communities including Emeryville have also seen strong housing growth with a regulatory framework based on FAR.

## DETERMINING FLOOR AREA RATIO

FAR = 1.0

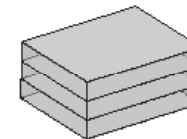


1 story

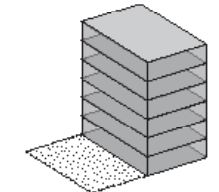


2 story

FAR = 3.0

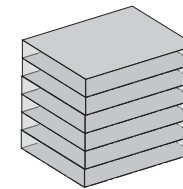


3 story

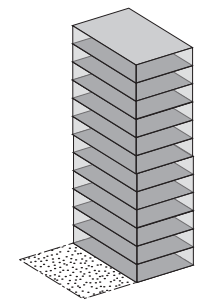


6 story

FAR = 6.0



6 story



12 story



## Calculating FAR

For the Santa Rosa Downtown Station Area, FAR would be calculated as the total area of all floors in a building as measured to the outside surfaces of exterior walls or to the center line of common walls. FAR calculations would exclude crawl spaces, structured parking, carports, breezeways, attics without floors, porches, balconies, terraces, below grade structures, and open space (common, public, or private). Additionally, for ceilings over 20 feet above floor height, the gross floor area of these areas would be doubled for the purpose of calculating floor area ratio, but not for the purpose of determining actual floor area. This is to ensure that double-height lobbies, ballrooms, and similar spaces are adequately accounted for in the FAR calculation.

The Maximum base FAR that would be allowed in different areas downtown is shown on Map-2. Projects that offer affordable housing, daycare, 3-bedroom units, urban open space, or public parking or projects that meet green building performance standards or that pay into a Streetscape Enhancement Fund can qualify for bonus FAR (up to an additional 2.0 FAR in the core area). The purpose of this provision is to create an economic incentive that encourages developers to improve the quality of their projects in ways that benefit the community. Eligibility criteria for bonus FAR would be set in the Draft Plan based on a sliding scale that considers the value of the amenity offered to the community.

For catalyst sites shown on Map-2, a minimum FAR requirement of half of the applicable maximum FAR would apply to ensure that these important sites support robust development that can help “prove” the market for high-density residential projects in Santa Rosa. For smaller parcels in areas with lower maximum FAR where it may not be possible to achieve the higher end of the permitted range, Draft Plan policies will allow for supplemental FAR to ensure that development can meet the objectives of the plan without the need for a variance.



Proposed Brady Block Project  
1629 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA  
FAR: 5.4

# VISUALIZING FLOOR AREA RATIO



## BARNES & NOBLE, 700 FOURTH STREET

Lot area: 61,969 sf  
Building area: 52,045 sf  
Stories: 2  
FAR: 0.84



## MISSION BAY (BLOCK 12E), SAN FRANCISCO

Lot area: 84,866 sf  
Height: 160' (16 levels)  
Building area: 491,114 sf (267 units)  
FAR: 5.8



## PEDERSON'S FURNITURE, 400 HUMBOLT STREET

Lot area: 31,285 sf / 177' x 240' flag lot  
Height: 74' / 6 stories  
Building area: Residential: 62,800 gsf  
Commercial: 12,560 gsf  
Total: 75,360 gsf  
FAR: 2.4 (does not include structured parking or loading/service areas)  
Apartment units: 62 (1,000 gsf per unit overall)  
Setbacks: 5' front, 5' side, 10' back





### US BANK, 50 OLD COURTHOUSE SQUARE

Lot area: 16,115 sf  
Building area: 68,572 sf  
Stories: 6  
FAR: 4.25

## Santa Rosa Built FARs



### 1700 WEBSTER STREET, OAKLAND

Lot area: 30,000 sf  
Height: 250' (25 levels)  
Building area: 270,000 sf (206 units + 8,200 sf retail)  
FAR: 9

## Built FARs in Other Communities



### SEARS SITE, 100 SANTA ROSA PLAZA

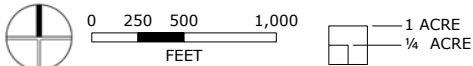
Lot area: 142,547 sf / 280' x 470'  
Height: 216' / 20 stories  
Building area: Residential: 626,600 gsf  
Commercial: 23,700 gsf  
Total: 650,300 gsf  
FAR: 4.6 (does not include structured parking or loading/service areas)  
Apartment units: 626 (1,000 gsf per unit overall)  
Setbacks: 10' for all front, back, and side

## Santa Rosa Case Study Sites

# Map 2: Preferred Plan Concept: Maximum Base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for Change Areas

- 8.0 FAR
- 6.0 FAR
- 4.0 FAR
- 3.0 FAR
- 2.0 FAR
- Park/Open Space
- ✳ Potential Catalyst Project\*
- SMART Rail

\* Minimum FAR of half the max required for catalyst unless it can be demonstrated that special circumstances exist on the site preventing development of that intensity.



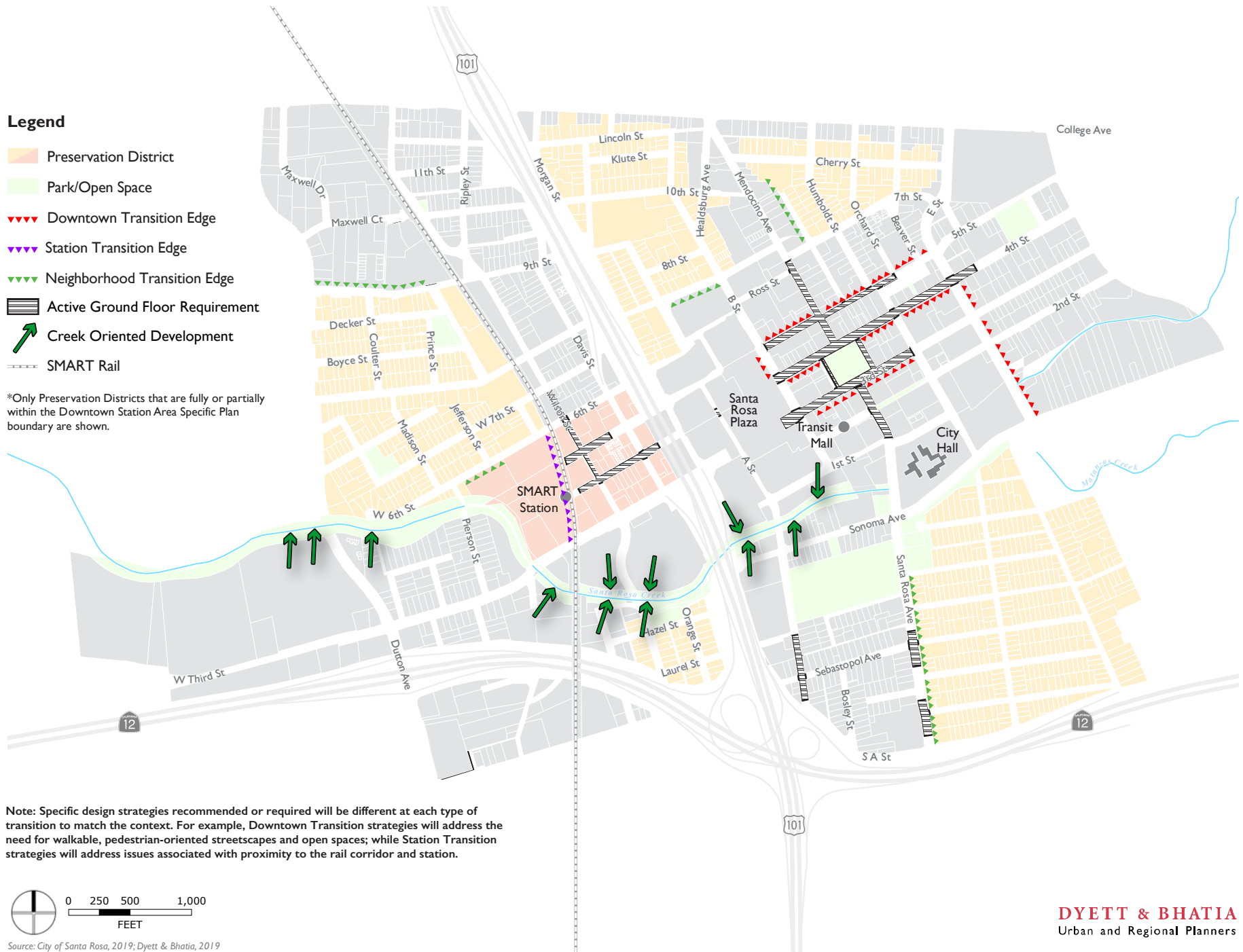
Source: City of Santa Rosa, 2019; Dyett & Bhatia, 2019

# Map 3: Preferred Plan Concept: Special Design Considerations

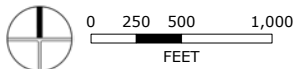
## Legend

- Preservation District
- Park/Open Space
- Downtown Transition Edge
- Station Transition Edge
- Neighborhood Transition Edge
- Active Ground Floor Requirement
- Creek Oriented Development
- SMART Rail

\*Only Preservation Districts that are fully or partially within the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan boundary are shown.



Note: Specific design strategies recommended or required will be different at each type of transition to match the context. For example, Downtown Transition strategies will address the need for walkable, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and open spaces; while Station Transition strategies will address issues associated with proximity to the rail corridor and station.



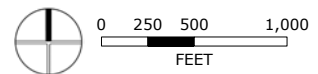
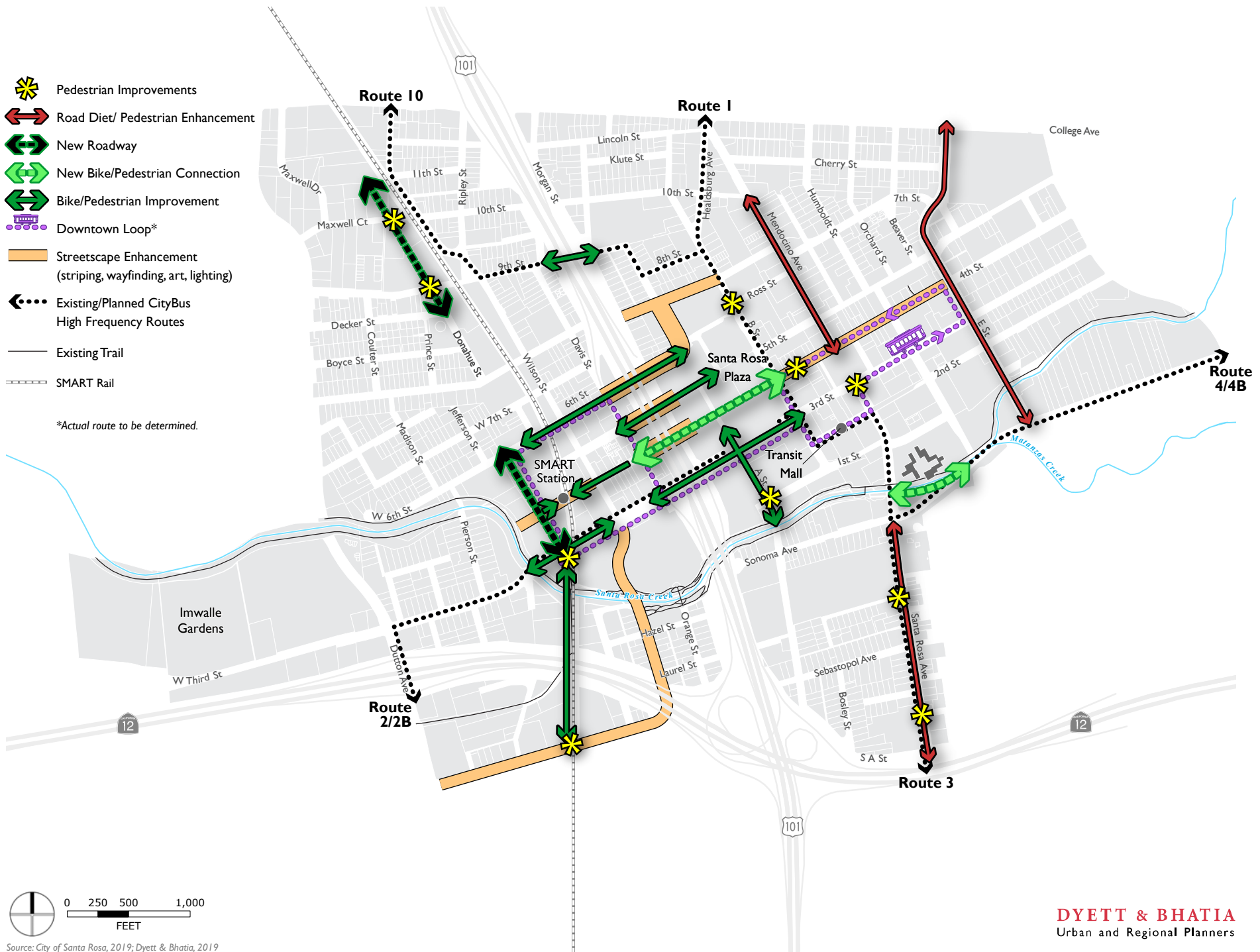
Source: City of Santa Rosa, 2019; Dyett & Bhatia, 2019



# Map 4: Preferred Plan Concept: Circulation and Connectivity Improvements

-  Pedestrian Improvements
-  Road Diet/ Pedestrian Enhancement
-  New Roadway
-  New Bike/Pedestrian Connection
-  Bike/Pedestrian Improvement
-  Downtown Loop\*
-  Streetscape Enhancement (striping, wayfinding, art, lighting)
-  Existing/Planned CityBus High Frequency Routes
-  Existing Trail
-  SMART Rail

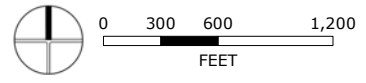
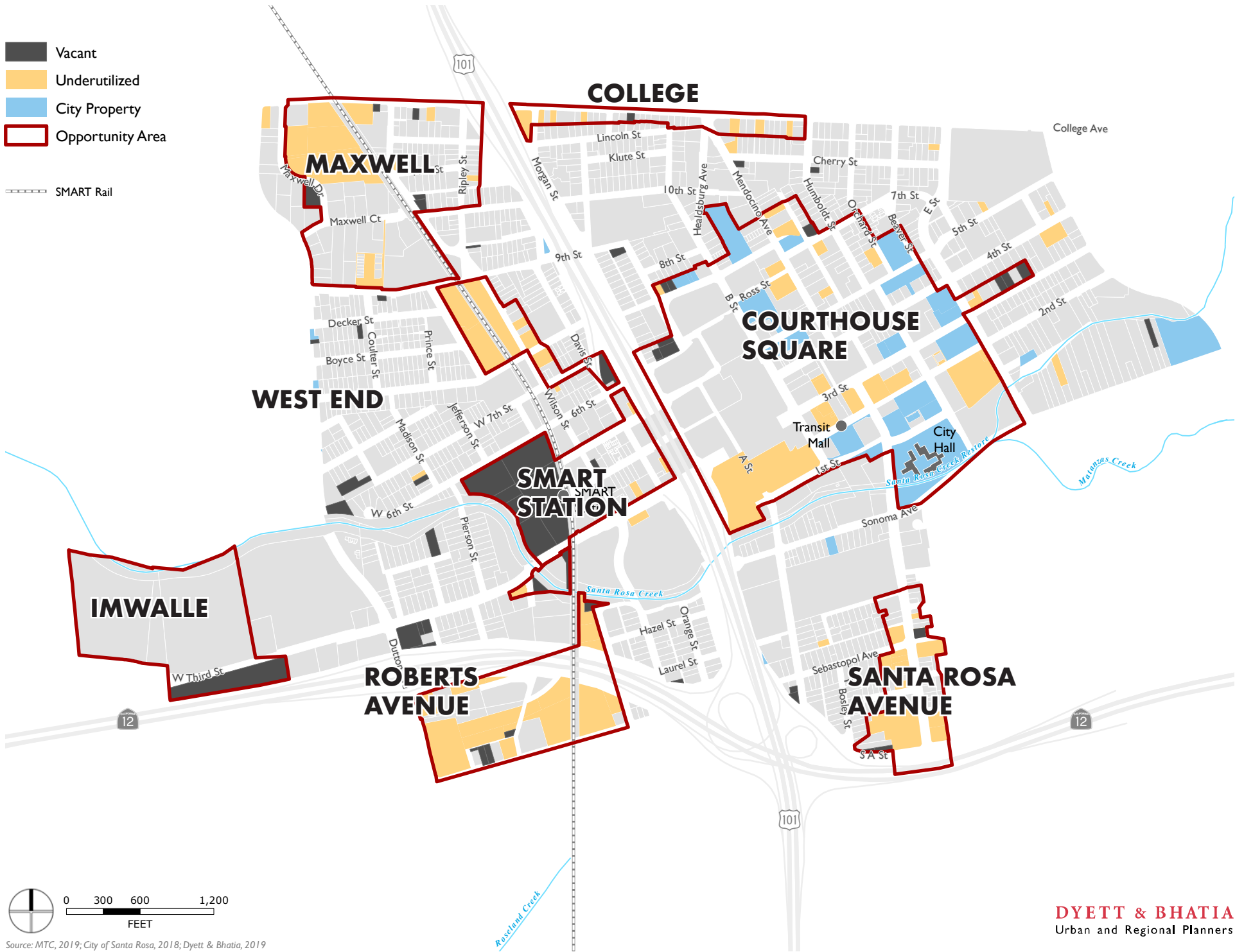
\*Actual route to be determined.



Source: City of Santa Rosa, 2019; Dyett & Bhatia, 2019

# Map 5: Preferred Plan Concept: Buildout Opportunity Areas

- Vacant
- Underutilized
- City Property
- Opportunity Area
- SMART Rail



Source: MTC, 2019; City of Santa Rosa, 2018; Dyett & Bhatia, 2019

# 5 BUILDOUT PROJECTIONS

Buildout of the Draft Preferred Plan Concept is projected to result in approximately 7,000 new housing units and 2,540 new jobs in the planning area by 2040. New development and redevelopment would take place primarily in the Opportunity Areas shown on Map 5. These are areas with clusters of vacant and underutilized parcels that present an opportunity for redevelopment. The term underutilized refers to properties where the value of the land is worth more than the buildings and structures on it, giving the owner an incentive to redevelop with new uses that command higher rents or sales prices. The table below shows where development could reasonably be expected to occur in each Opportunity Area.

Opportunity Area	A. Existing Development in 2019						B. Net Change Increment: Development Potential Under Preferred Plan Concept					
	Housing Units	Office (s.f.)	Retail (s.f.)	Service (s.f.)	Industrial (s.f.)	Total Jobs (s.f.)	Housing Units	Office (s.f.)	Retail (s.f.)	Service (s.f.)	Industrial (s.f.)	Total Jobs (s.f.)
Courthouse Sq.	281	971,439	1,282,441	348,515	0	2,602,395	2,933	138,900	162,000	225,000		525,900
Santa Rosa Ave	18	1,418	38,691	16,875		56,984	136	41,700	27,200	50,400		119,300
Roberts Rd.	1		25,782		56,290	82,072	1,208		22,000	25,500	21,600	69,100
SMART Station	32	82,969	141,181	37,371	53,610	315,131	791	83,250	48,800	61,096		193,146
Imwalle/3rd	1				22,193	22,193	245			6,300		6,300
Wilson Donahue	5		19,890		103,339	123,229	356		16,356	10,200		26,556
Maxwell Ct.	107		37,509		302,910	340,419	1,079		13,085	12,728	21,600	47,413
Other*	2,000	599,665	709,732	249,764	144,776	1,703,937	251		8,400	10,800		19,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,445</b>	<b>1,655,491</b>	<b>2,255,226</b>	<b>652,525</b>	<b>683,118</b>	<b>5,246,360</b>	<b>6,999</b>	<b>263,850</b>	<b>297,841</b>	<b>402,024</b>	<b>43,200</b>	<b>1,006,915</b>

\*Development outside of the Opportunity Areas

## Employment Density Assumptions

- Service (includes education, healthcare, arts, service, and institutional jobs) = 1 job per 300 s.f.
- Retail = 1 job per 400 s.f.
- Office = 1 job per 300 s.f.
- Industrial = 1 job per 600 s.f.



<b>Opportunity Area</b>	<b>C. Projected Total Development in 2040 (A+B)</b>					
	<i>Housing Units</i>	<i>Office (s.f.)</i>	<i>Retail (s.f.)</i>	<i>Service (s.f.)</i>	<i>Industrial (s.f.)</i>	<i>Total Jobs (s.f.)</i>
Courthouse Sq.	3,214	1,110,339	1,444,441	573,515	0	3,128,295
Santa Rosa Ave	154	43,118	65,891	67,275	0	176,284
Roberts Rd.	1,209	0	47,782	25,500	44,116	117,398
SMART Station	823	166,219	189,981	98,467	53,610	508,277
Imwalle/3rd	246	0	0	6,300	22,193	28,493
Wilson Donahue	361	0	36,246	10,200	0	46,446
Maxwell Ct.	1,186	0	50,594	12,728	277,562	340,884
Other*	2,251	599,665	718,132	260,564	144,776	1,723,137
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,444</b>	<b>1,919,341</b>	<b>2,553,067</b>	<b>1,054,549</b>	<b>542,257</b>	<b>6,069,214</b>

### **Industrial Jobs Assumptions**

Because the Preferred Plan Concept would convert some industrial land uses to Maker Mixed Use, the following assumptions were made:

- Existing heavy industrial square footage is fully replaced with Neighborhood Mixed Use in Maxwell Ct.
- Industrial use square footage is fully replaced with Neighborhood Mixed Use in Wilson-Donahue
- Assumes 60 percent of industrial square footage is replaced in the Roberts Ave. Opportunity Area.

**DYETT & BHATIA**

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