

Pacheco Gregg, Patti

From: Streeter, Patrick
Sent: Tuesday, November 05, 2019 5:28 PM
To: _CHB - Cultural Heritage Board
Subject: Downtown Plan Update
Attachments: DSASP Draft Preferred Plan Concept.pdf; 20191105 Barriers to Downtown Development.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Categories: CHB

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Chair Edmondson and Members of the Cultural Heritage Board

The Downtown Station Area Specific Plan update is nearing the conclusion of Phase II – Alternatives Analysis. During this phase, the project team proposed three potential alternatives as to how the plan update could take form and then conducted outreach regarding the feasibility and preference for concepts found within the three alternatives. This phase included meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee and the Community Advisory Committee, a community workshop, small group presentations, meetings with various boards (including the CHB) and stakeholder groups, pop-up outreach, online surveys and activities, and a joint Planning Commission/City Council study session. The resulting Draft Preferred Plan Concept (DPPC) represents the “preferred alternative,” which is actually a hybrid of concepts selected from each of the alternatives that were reviewed. The project team is seeking feedback on the DPPC, which will ultimately be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council at a joint study session on December 3rd. Once the Council provides direction on the Preferred Plan, the project will enter Phase III - preparation of the Draft Plan. The fourth and final phase, adoption of the Final Plan and Supplemental EIR, will take place in the new year. The DPPC is attached to this e-mail, included in tomorrow’s agenda materials, and available for review on the project website.

Additionally, an Existing Conditions Report was recently posted to the project website: <https://www.plandowntownsr.com/background-documents> and a diagnostic memo outlining barriers to downtown development since adoption of the 2007 plan is attached.

Thank you for your participation in this very important project. Please contact me with any questions or comments.

Patrick Streeter, AICP | Senior Planner

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Patrick Streeter and Clare Hartman, City of Santa Rosa
From: Andrew Hill
Re: Barriers to Downtown Development and Strategies to Address Them
Date: November 5, 2019

Dear Patrick and Clare:

As part of an initial phase “deep dive” into existing conditions in the Downtown Station Area, the consultant team undertook an analysis of recent data and trends and conducted small group interviews with a range of stakeholders, including downtown business owners and advocates, major landowners, and real estate developers. The purpose of this exercise was to develop an understanding of barriers to downtown development and strategies that could address them. This memo summarizes the key findings of that exercise, discussing the economic barriers, process barriers, and regulatory barriers identified before presenting a set of strategies that can help to address them.

ECONOMIC BARRIERS

The Downtown Station Area Specific Plan was adopted in 2007, just before the onset of the Great Recession, when the bursting of the housing bubble in the US triggered a global financial crisis. Between 2007 and 2010, housing production dropped dramatically throughout the Bay Area, and while the region as a whole saw a rebound starting in 2012, even today housing production has not yet returned to pre-recession levels. Compared to other parts of the Bay Area, housing production in Napa and Sonoma Counties did not rebound as quickly following the end of the Great Recession, and the situation was exacerbated with the devastating loss of homes in the North Bay Fires of 2017. Today in Santa Rosa, the number of building permits issued annually is trending upward, thanks to efforts by the City to implement the Housing Action Plan, streamline the entitlement process, and stimulate housing construction with an array of fee reductions, and there are more units under construction in the city (year to date) than the market has seen since 2014. However, much of this permitting activity and all of the construction is for single-family housing outside of the Downtown Station Area.

Approximately 65 percent of the existing housing stock in the Downtown Station Area is multi-family housing, and given its central location, proximity to transit, and concentration of jobs, it makes sense to promote new higher density multi-family housing in the Downtown Station Area. The principal challenge for multi-family residential development, however, has to do with the rents and sales prices that the market will bear downtown. Achievable rent or sales price is one of the key factors used by developers and lenders in evaluating the feasibility of new residential development. Available data indicates that average rent per square foot in Santa Rosa is significantly below that

in benchmark Bay Area communities and slightly below that in the neighboring Sonoma County communities of Rohnert Park and Petaluma. In the larger context of rising construction costs in the Bay Area, this means that developers are more attracted to other communities where the margins are better and the profits are higher. Even within Santa Rosa, average citywide rents are so similar to those downtown that there is no fiscally compelling reason for a developer to incur the higher costs associated with infill development downtown. Further, existing multi-family development downtown is largely in small developments of four units or less with relatively few larger multi-family buildings that offer an indication of comparable rents for that type of construction. This tends to discourage institutional investors such as insurance companies and pension funds that have significant capital to invest in large-scale real estate developments.

Today, the Downtown Station Area has about 9.5 percent of the office space in Sonoma County, and the area around Courthouse Square is well established as a regional center for financial and government offices. Going forward, it is reasonable to assume it will capture a commensurate share of new office development if the city is able to provide housing that is attractive and affordable to a growing workforce. The biggest challenges for non-residential development downtown relate to retail, particularly given the rapid evolution of that sector with the rise of e-commerce. Across the nation, the demand for physical retail space is declining as consumers chose to buy more online while at the same time demonstrating a preference for “experiential retail” that offers more than just goods for sale. Nearly half of the existing non-residential square-footage in the Downtown Station Area is retail space, which means the area is particularly susceptible to this trend.

The best performing retail in the Downtown Station Area today is located at the Santa Rosa Plaza Mall and in Railroad Square, where commercial rents are well above the citywide average, an indicator of relatively healthy retail performance. Santa Rosa Plaza is a regional retail draw with national and international chains in a traditional mall format, while the Railroad Square commercial district offers a unique blend of local retailers in an historic setting. To the extent that these areas continue to offer differentiated retail experiences, they represent the best potential for successful retail in the future, although they will need to compete with downtown Healdsburg, Windsor and Petaluma - other well-amentized retail destinations in the county that offer free parking and easy access. Overall, in the context of a competitive regional retail landscape and evolving consumer preferences, new retail growth in the Downtown Station Area is likely to be the result of incremental improvements to existing properties with a focus on creating a differentiated experience that provides shoppers with a unique sense of place.

Addressing these economic challenges will require a multi-faceted strategy that closes the competitive gap between downtown Santa Rosa and other Bay Area communities and incentivizes downtown development by building on the unique assets of the Downtown Station Area. Elements of this strategy are identified at the end of this memo.

PROCESS BARRIERS

Extended project approval timelines or uncertainty in the application process adds both risk and cost for developers. By contrast, when the steps in the process and the requirements for project approval are clear, developers are better able to manage costs and ensure project feasibility. In small

group interviews, real estate developers active in Santa Rosa indicated that lengthy City review and permitting process had been a barrier to downtown development; however, they were unanimous in their praise for process improvements put in place recently by the City. These improvements include the Resilient City Development Measures adopted into the Zoning Code to fast-track housing development following the Tubbs and Nuns fires of October 2017. The measures allow most residential uses by-right throughout the Downtown Station Area, with the exception of properties located east of E Street that were not included in the 2007 Plan. Further, design review for new development and major remodels is delegated to the Zoning Administrator, with the exception of projects located in the H- combining district. These measures have streamlined design review and reduced timelines by up to 70 percent. The City has also set up an Expedited Permitting Program, cutting time for planning, engineering and building review from 18 to 6 months.

The Resilient City Development Measures were established as a short-term measure and are set to expire on May 11, 2021. Beyond that, the challenge will be for the City to continuously improve development application procedures to ensure they provide reliability for developers to effectively support project delivery. This will require support from elected and appointed City officials to move catalytic projects forward without “watering them down,” as well as efforts from staff to ensure that all departments are equally proactive in shepherding projects through the approval process. Additionally, continuing to market process improvements and demonstrate their effectiveness can help combat any perception in the wider Bay Area development community that Santa Rosa is not open for business.

REGULATORY BARRIERS

Regulatory barriers to downtown development include elements of the 2007 Plan itself, as well as other City regulations that are not calibrated to the objectives of the Plan in a way that facilitates implementation.

Small group interviews with stakeholders identified a perception among developers that the 2007 Plan is unnecessarily restrictive and complex, especially given current market constraints and the feasibility of developing certain housing product types. For example, the Plan identifies seven different subareas downtown, as well as six different street typologies and three corridor types, each of which have separate and overlapping requirements. This makes it challenging to clearly understand what requirements apply to a given property without careful cross-checking of requirements. Further, certain requirements seem arbitrarily restrictive, such as the requirement in the Park and Gardens subarea that buildings be a minimum of two stories and a maximum of three, leaving little flexibility for design. In the same vein, the pervasive requirement for ground floor retail is not linked to market demand, resulting in a requirement that negatively affects the feasibility of development.

Stakeholders also cited other requirements in City ordinances as barriers, including parking requirements in the Zoning Code, inclusionary housing provisions from the Housing Allocation Plan Ordinance, and development impact fees. In fact, the City is already taking action to address

these concerns. In August 2018, the City Council approved implementation of the Downtown High-Density Residential Incentive Program, an aggressive fee reduction program that reduces impact fees and defers water and wastewater fees for higher density projects that break ground downtown before August 2023. The City has also eliminated development impact and utility connection fees for units that are 750 square feet or less and reduced fees for units between 750 and 1,200 square feet. Amendments to the Housing Allocation Plan Ordinance are anticipated for adoption this fall with a view to providing additional regulatory and financial incentives and alternative compliance measures to maximize production of affordable housing units. Nevertheless, what this points to is a gap between the vision of the 2007 Plan and the effectiveness of actions put in place to implement that vision.

One other regulatory consideration has to do with the City's Cultural Heritage Survey (CHS). Originally completed in 1977 and updated in 1989, the CHS identifies six historic districts and seven historic buildings in the Downtown Station Area; however, the last update to the CHS was completed 30 years ago, and since that time a number of properties in the planning area have become "age-eligible" for historic designation, meaning they are over 50 years old and require some level of evaluation to determine whether or not they are historically significant. A comprehensive update to the CHS that considered "age-eligible" properties and applies current best practices for evaluation would provide more certainty for downtown development and streamline the project approval process.

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

The following represents a preliminary set of strategies to address the barriers discussed above. These strategies are intended to inform the Draft Preferred Plan Concept and will be developed further for the Draft Specific Plan Update.

- Continue working to attract developers of high-density housing projects to Downtown Santa Rosa with a combination of reduced fees and streamlined processing times that provide a competitive advantage. While development costs will remain dominated by high Bay Area construction costs, doing everything possible to keep City-imposed costs (impact fees, exactions, development conditions, approval processes) within a market-reasonable range is an important step for catalyzing development.
- Leverage City-owned properties in key locations downtown for demonstration projects that "prove" the market for higher density multi-family development, with a view to catalyzing similar projects and attracting institutional capital. Pursuing a public-private partnership can be a vehicle for realizing "pioneer" multifamily residential projects that otherwise would not be financially feasible without public subsidy and support.
- Create and attract jobs in higher average wage industries to stimulate demand for market rate housing downtown. This can help address the deficit in achievable rents as compared to other Bay Area communities and attract more interest from the real estate development community. In parallel, an affordable housing and anti-displacement will be needed to protect vulnerable residents. Housing within reach for a full range of income demographics is an essential ingredient for a successful downtown.

DYETT & BHATIA

Urban and Regional Planners

- Cultivate sense of place. Adding rooftops downtown will build demand for retail and restaurants and support vitality. Art and culture have an important role to play as well, as evidenced by the successful programming of the square in Downtown Windsor. Visitor-serving and employment-oriented uses, including hotels, offices, and maker spaces, can help ensure vitality throughout the day, the week, and the year.
- Provide clear standards for new development downtown, coupled with flexibility to encourage creativity and innovation in project design. As a rule of thumb, regulate only what needs to be regulated and let the market decide on other aspects. Map-based standards and graphics tell a story efficiently.
- Ensure that the implementing actions in the plan are sufficient to achieve the goals. It's not enough to include a policy that seeks to attract a grocery store. To be effective, that policy needs to be built on an understanding of the factors that drive the site-selection decisions of food retailers and a strategy for addressing them.
- Set up for implementation with a parking management strategy, an infrastructure financing plan, actions for CEQA streamlining, and a targeted evaluation of potentially historic resources in areas where development is most likely to occur.



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-Marin 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



Future Gateway Corridor: Santa Rosa Ave.

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.

4 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

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.

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.

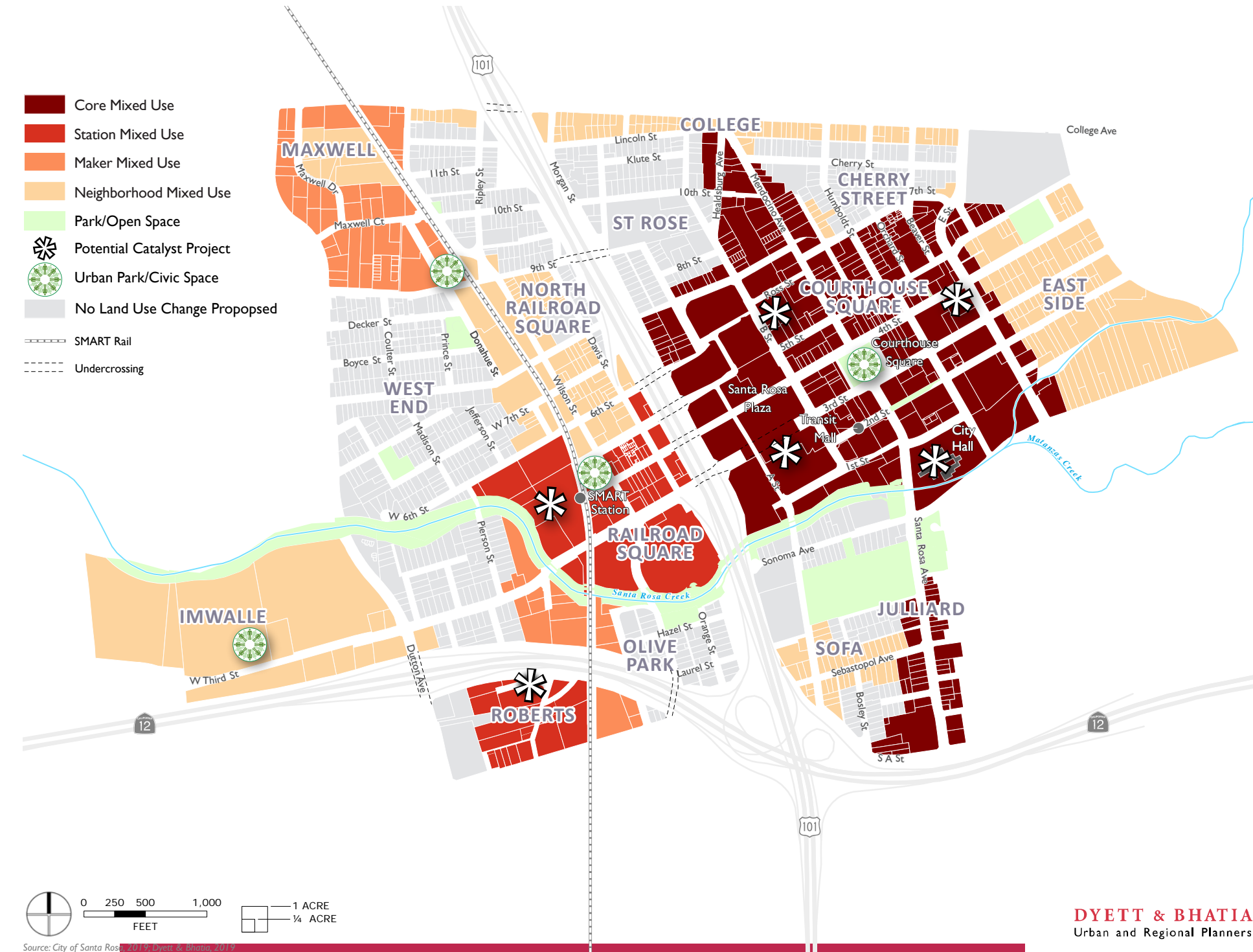
Neighborhood Mixed Use - The Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU) designation is intended to provide for new multi-family residential development in mixed- or single-use buildings, together with a broad mix of uses that primarily serve local area residents, including professional office, retail, entertainment, 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 1: Preferred Plan Concept: Land Use Changes



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.

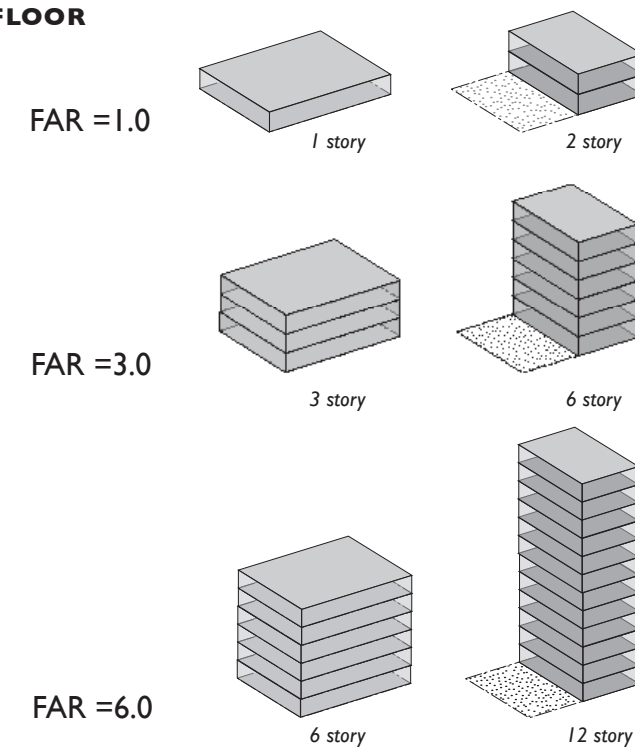
As a regulatory tool, FAR provides flexibility. Unlike traditional bulk controls such as height, lot coverage, and setbacks which create a rigid envelope within which architects must work, FAR does not require a particular building shape or placement; rather it creates a flexible envelope that provides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



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



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



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



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



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



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

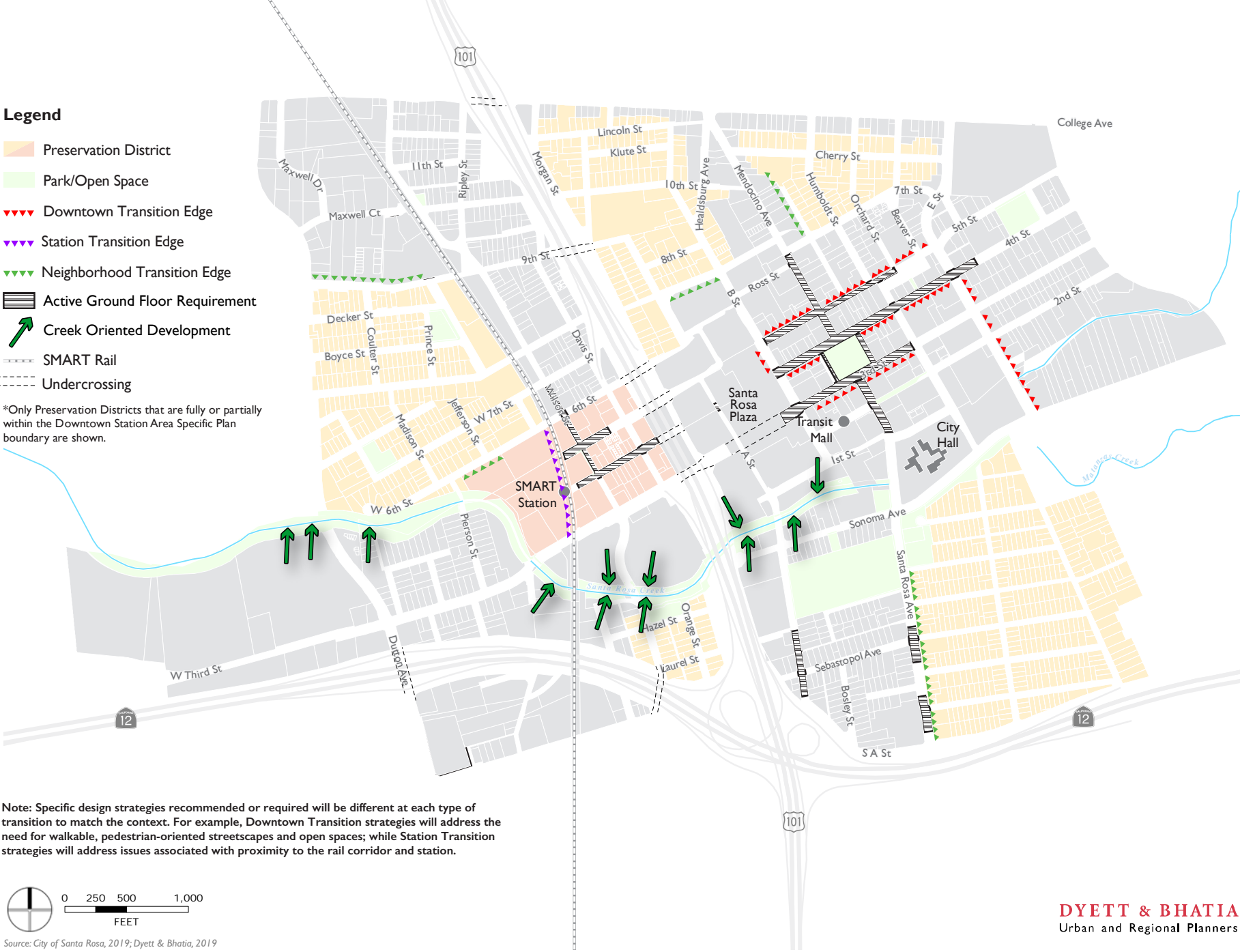
Santa Rosa Case Study Sites



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

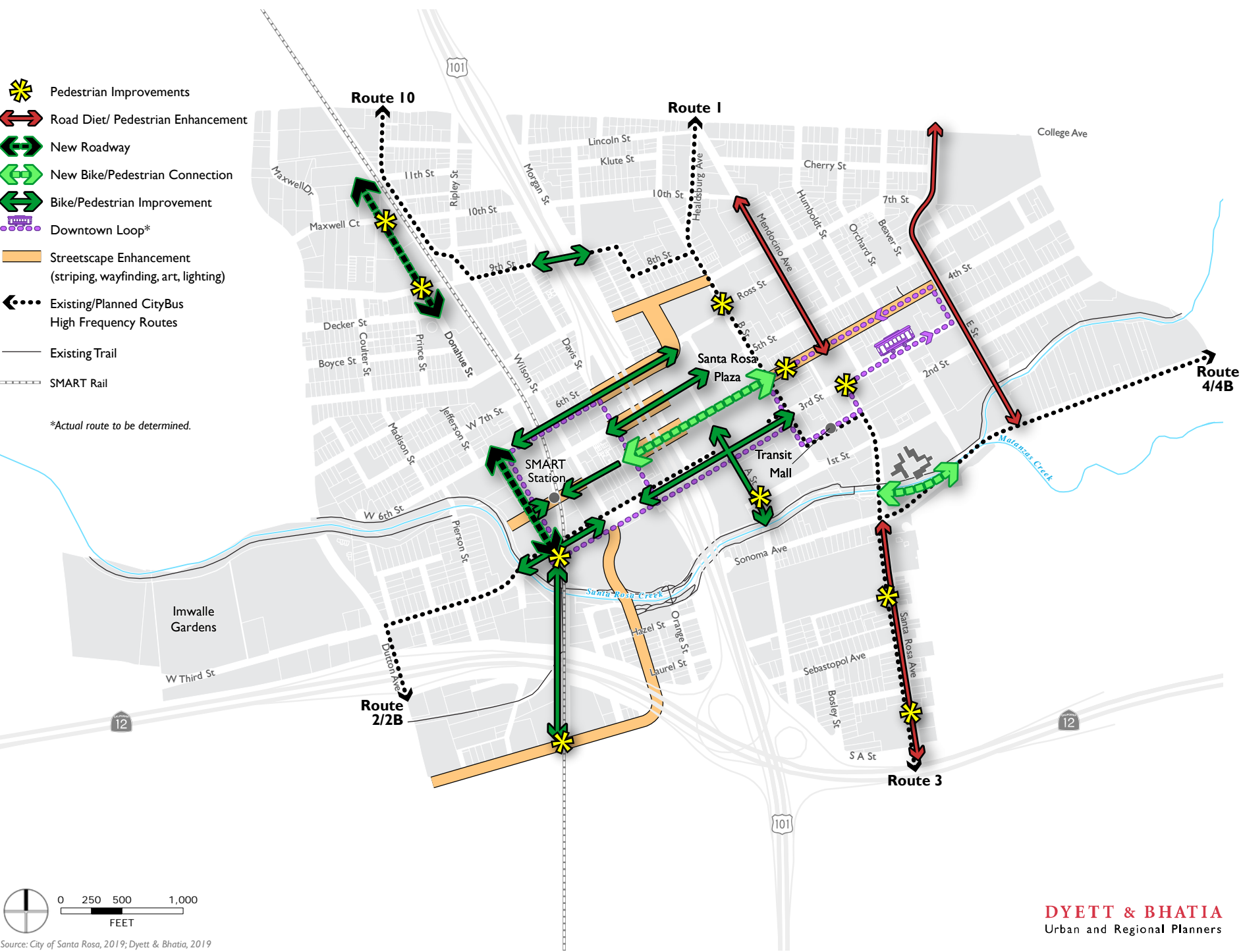


Map 3: Preferred Plan Concept: Special Design Considerations

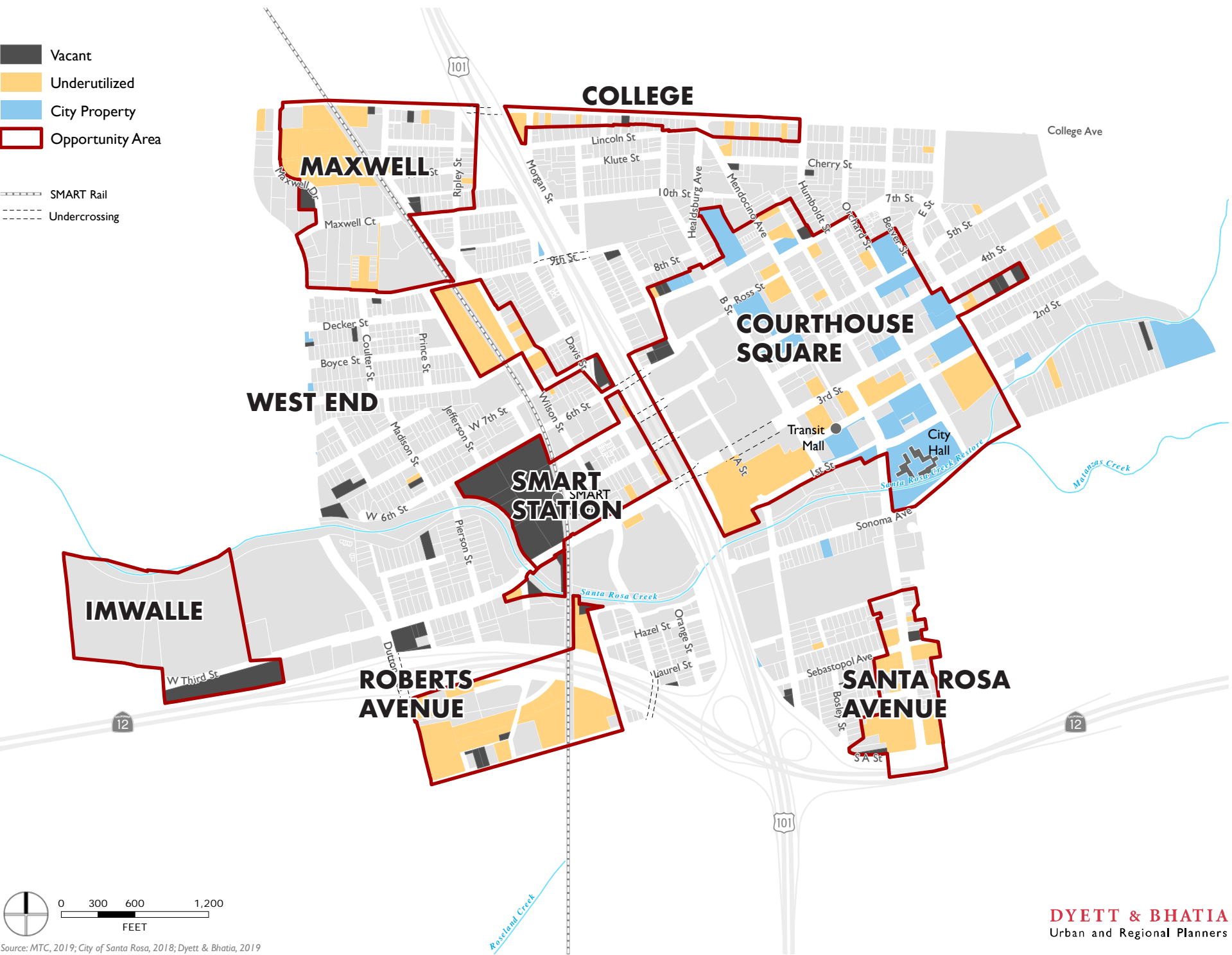


Note: Specific design strategies recommended or required will be different at each type of transition to match the context. For example, Downtown Transition strategies will address the need for walkable, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and open spaces; while Station Transition strategies will address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

Map 4: Preferred Plan Concept: Circulation and Connectivity Improvements



Map 5: Preferred Plan Concept: Buildout Opportunity Areas



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 and 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	1079		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
TOTAL	2,445	1,655,491	2,255,226	652,525	683,118	5,246,360	6,999	263,850	297,841	402,024	43,200	1,006,915

*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.

Opportunity Area	C. Projected Total Development in 2040 (A+B)					
	Housing Units	Office (s.f.)	Retail (s.f.)	Service (s.f.)	Industrial (s.f.)	Total Jobs (s.f.)
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
TOTAL	9,444	1,919,341	2,553,067	1,054,549	542,257	6,069,214

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.



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