

City of Watsonville

Downtown Specific Plan + EIR

City Council Briefing | November 9, 2021



Study Area



downtown
watsonville
specific plan

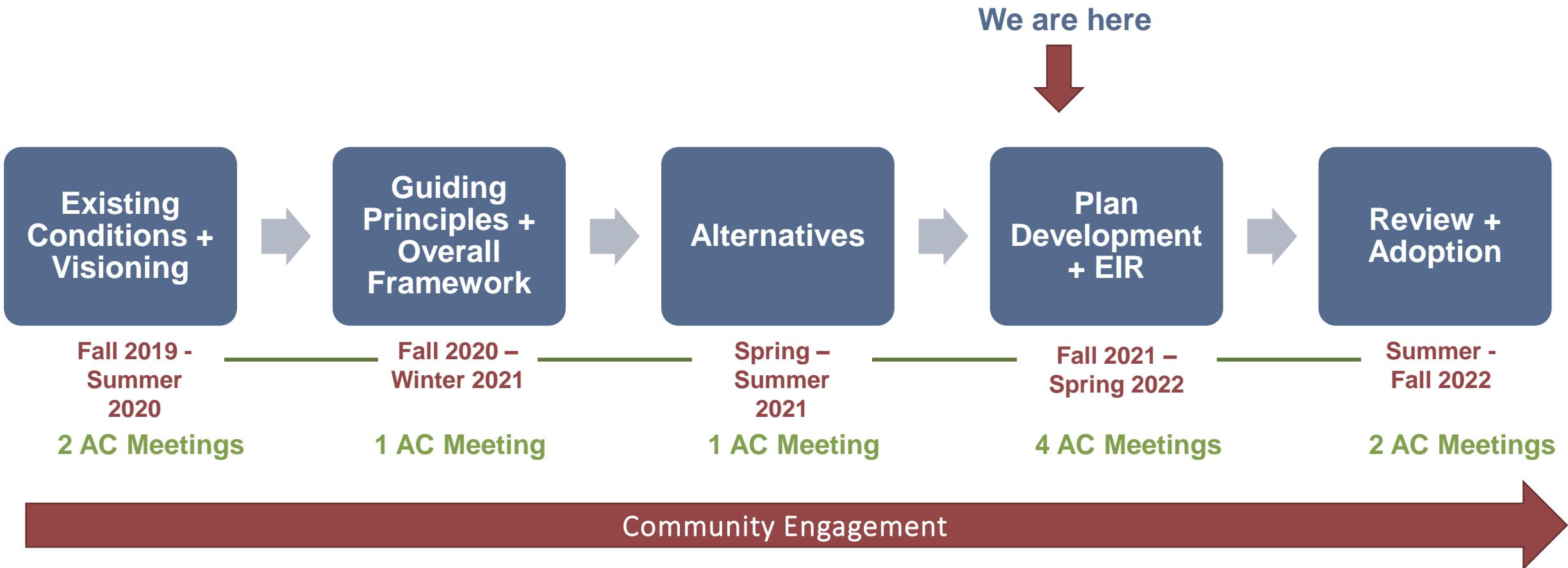
- Specific Plan Boundary
- Rail Line
- Park/Open Space
- Waterway



0 200' 500'
100' 400'

Progress Report to Date

Specific Plan Process Overview

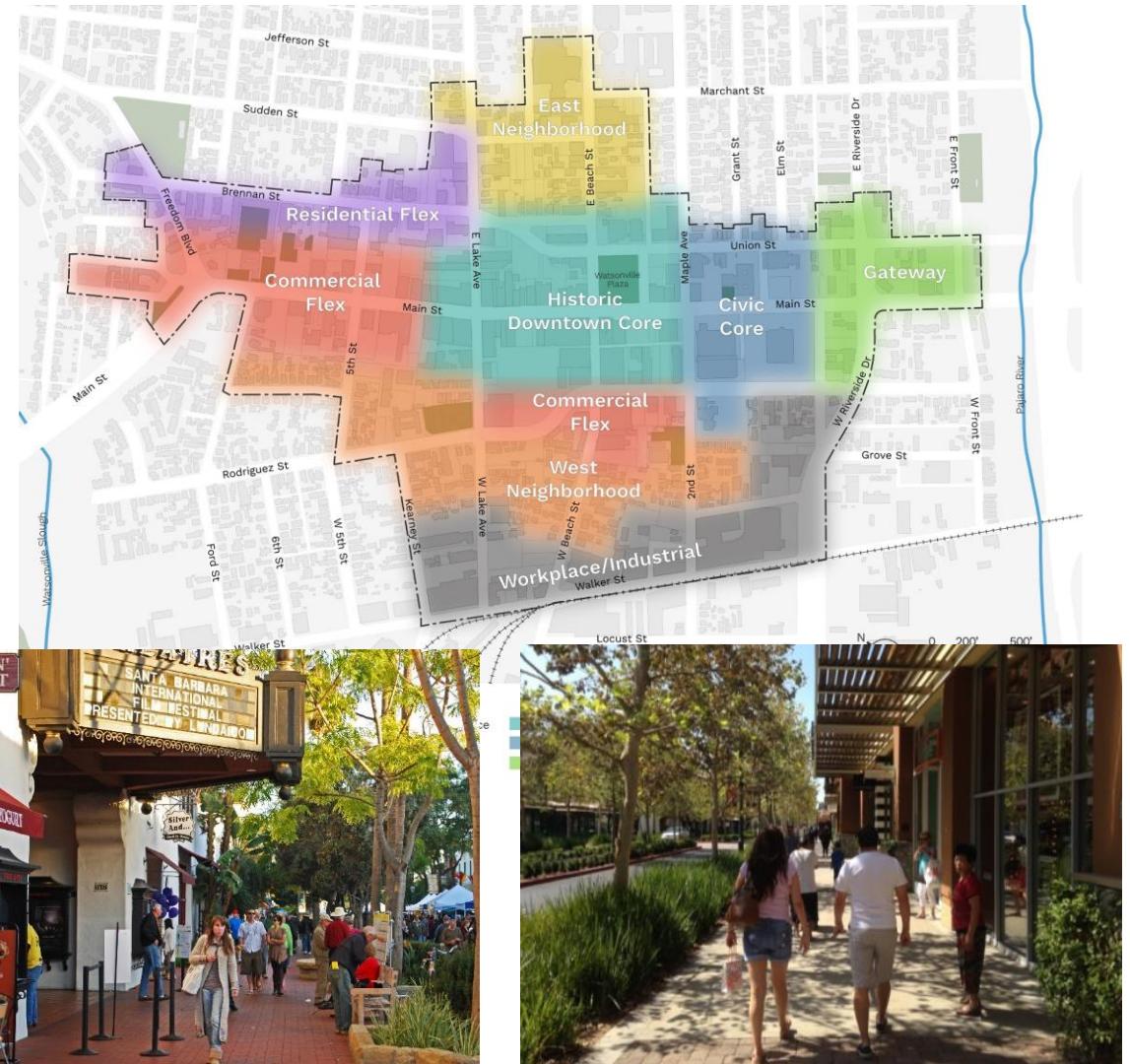


Community Engagement Efforts to Date

- Stakeholder Interviews & Focus Groups
- Advisory Committee Meetings (5) and Interviews
- Community-Wide Workshops (2)
- Online Engagement
 - Draft Themes and Guiding Principles Feedback (100 comments)
- Community-Wide Surveys (2)
 - Strengths, Issues, and Opportunities Survey (666 respondents)
 - Public Spaces, Character Areas, Streetscape & Bike Network (257 respondents)

Efforts since Last Update in March 2021

- Big Ideas for Downtown
- Character areas
 - Refinement of boundaries
 - Placemaking priorities
- Public realm design refinements
 - Street network
 - Bicycle network
 - Discussions with Caltrans
- Opportunity sites
 - Conceptual plans
- Community Survey #2 Results



What we've heard so far

What we have heard so far... (Big Ideas)

- Retain Downtown's charming historic architecture and character
- Build on and extend Downtown's walkable scale
- Activate Downtown with new uses, special events and programming
- Provide more housing choices and maintain affordability



What we have heard so far... (Big Ideas)

- Re-imagine Main Street right-of-way to prioritize the pedestrian experience and create a sense of space
- Provide **streetscape improvements** - additional lighting, shaded sidewalks, plantings
- Improve **bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and safety**
- Address **traffic speed and congestion** concerns



Street Network Updates

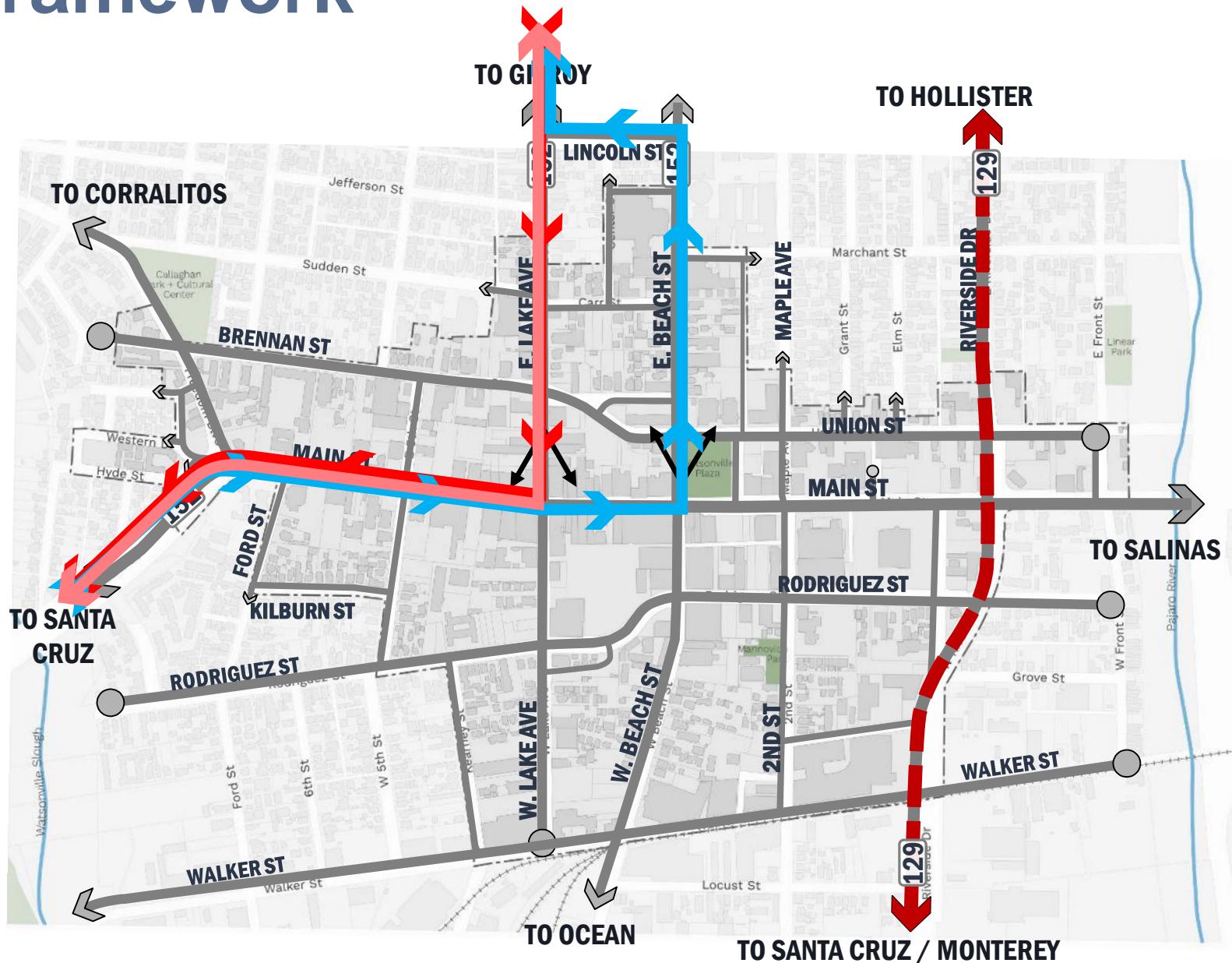
Downtown Street Framework

CALTRANS ROUTES:

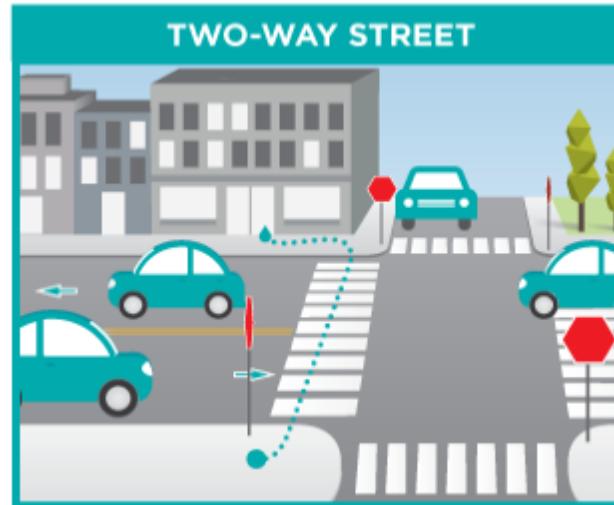
- SR-129 (To Salinas / Hollister)
- SR-152 (To Santa Cruz & Gilroy)

Caltrans SR-152

- Short-Term: Remain 1-way
- Long-Term: Become 2-way



One-way to Two-way Conversions



	Traffic Safety	▼
	Faster traffic speeds and fewer signalized intersections	
	Business Access	▼
	Frustrating; circle back to your destination and turning delays	
	Emergency Services Access	▼
	Only one direction for entry	
	Economic Development	▼
	Limited visibility and unforgiving if you pass business	
	Bicycle Access	▼
	Limited network	
	Walking Access	▼
	High speeds make it difficult to cross street	

	Traffic Safety	▲
	Slower traffic speeds and more signalized intersections	
	Business Access	▲
	Customer-friendly; less unnecessary circulating traffic	
	Emergency Services Access	▲
	Double direction for entry	
	Economic Development	▲
	Double the storefront visibility	
	Bicycle Access	▲
	2-way demand met in safer, traffic-calmed environment	
	Walking Access	▲
	Predictable crossings in traffic-calmed environment	

Main St (SR 152 between Lake & Beach)

Short term and long-term improvements



*60 ft Curb-to-Curb
2 travel lanes + left turn + parking both sides + parklets*

E Beach Street (SR 152)

One-way to two-way conversion

Short term and long-term improvements



*50 ft Curb-to-Curb
2 travel lanes + parking both sides + sidewalk/parklet zone*

E Lake Ave (SR 152 east of Main)

One-way to two-way conversion

Short term and long-term improvements



*43 ft Curb-to-Curb
2 travel lanes + parking both sides, turn lane at intersections*

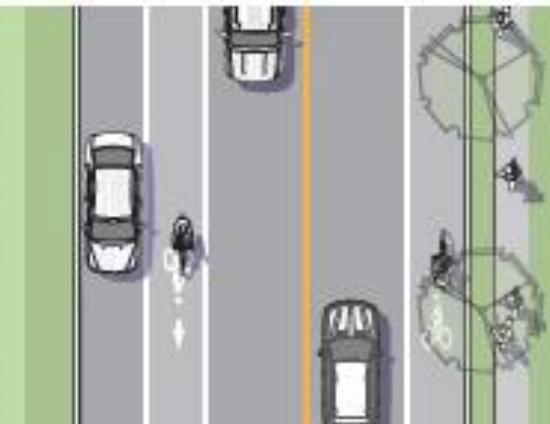
Bicycle Network Updates

Bicycle Facilities

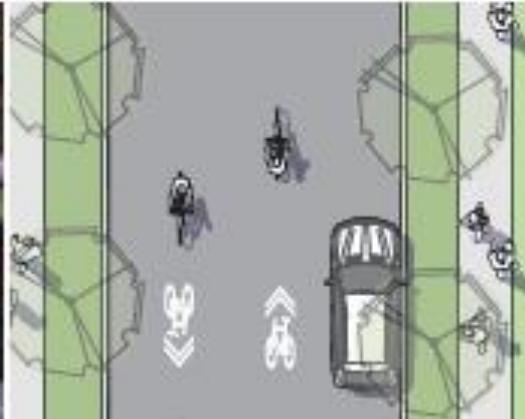
Bike Path (Class I)



Bike Lane (Class II)



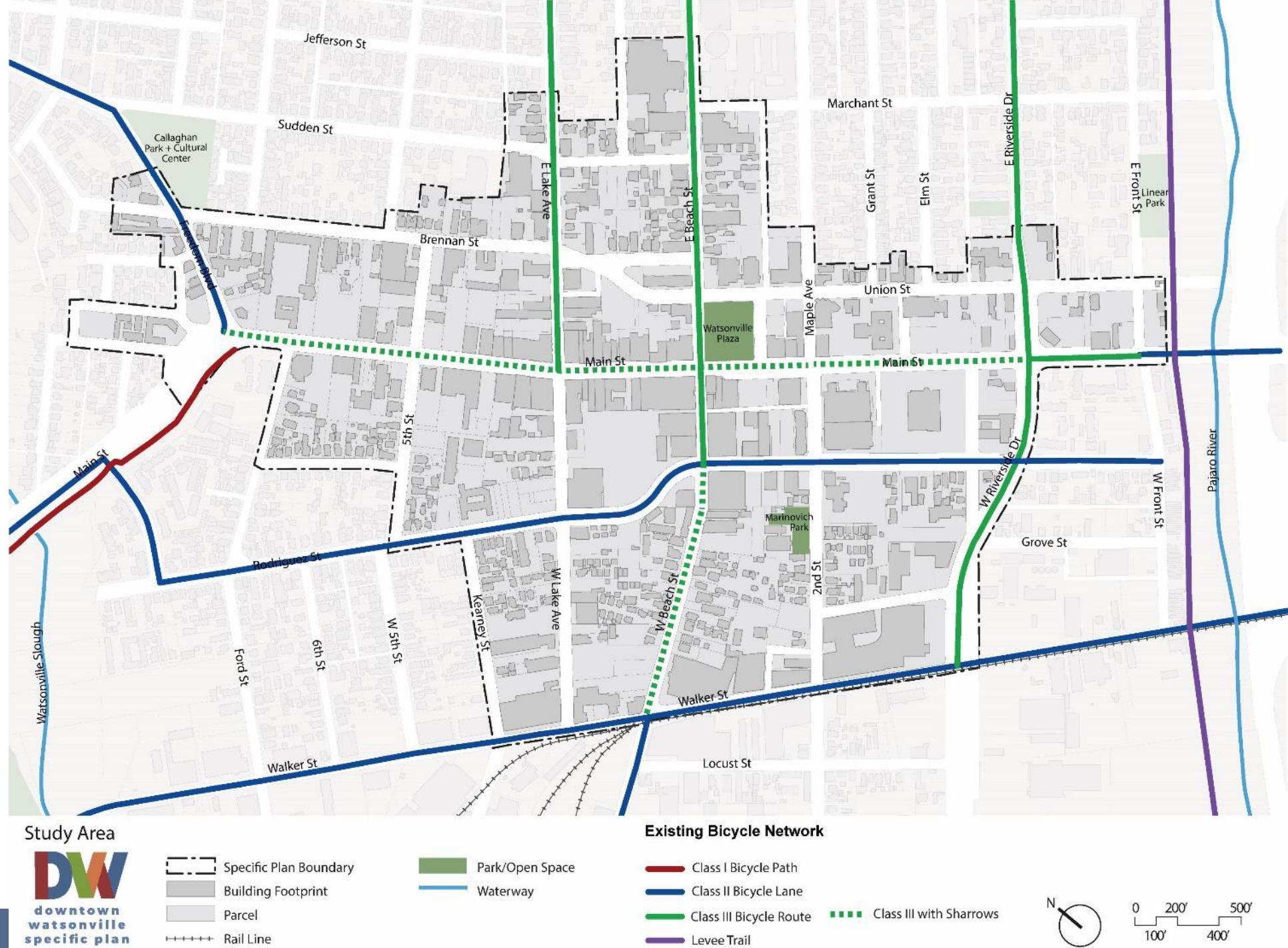
Bike Route (Class III)



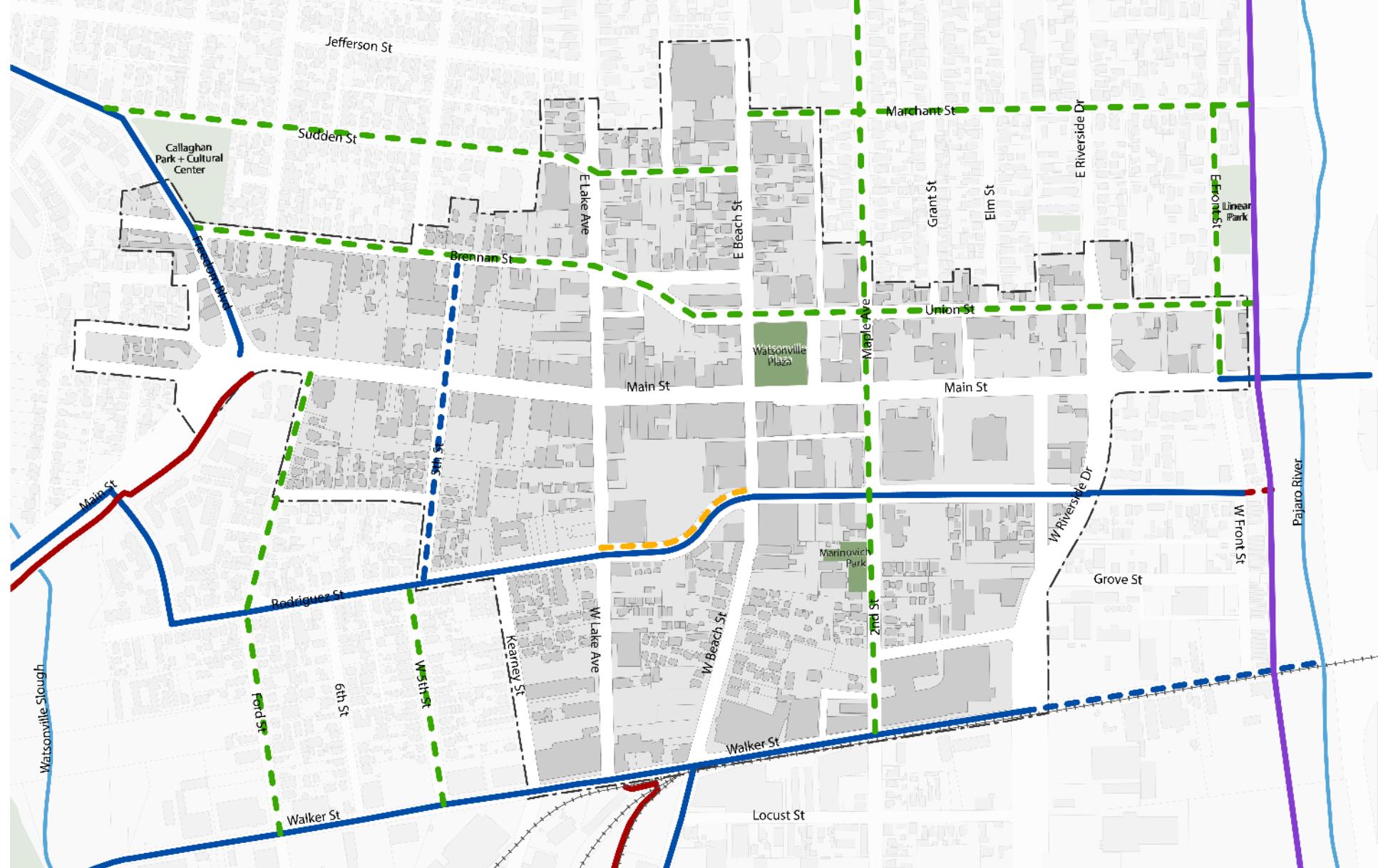
Separated Bikeway/Cycle Track (Class IV)



Existing Bicycle Facilities



Proposed Bicycle Network



Study Area



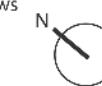
downtown
watsonville
specific plan

Existing Bicycle Network & Opportunity Corridors

- Class I Bicycle Path
- Class II Bicycle Lane
- Class III Bicycle Route
- Class IV Bikeway

Recommended Bicycle Facilities

- Class II Bicycle Lane
- Class III with Sharrows
- Class IV Bikeway

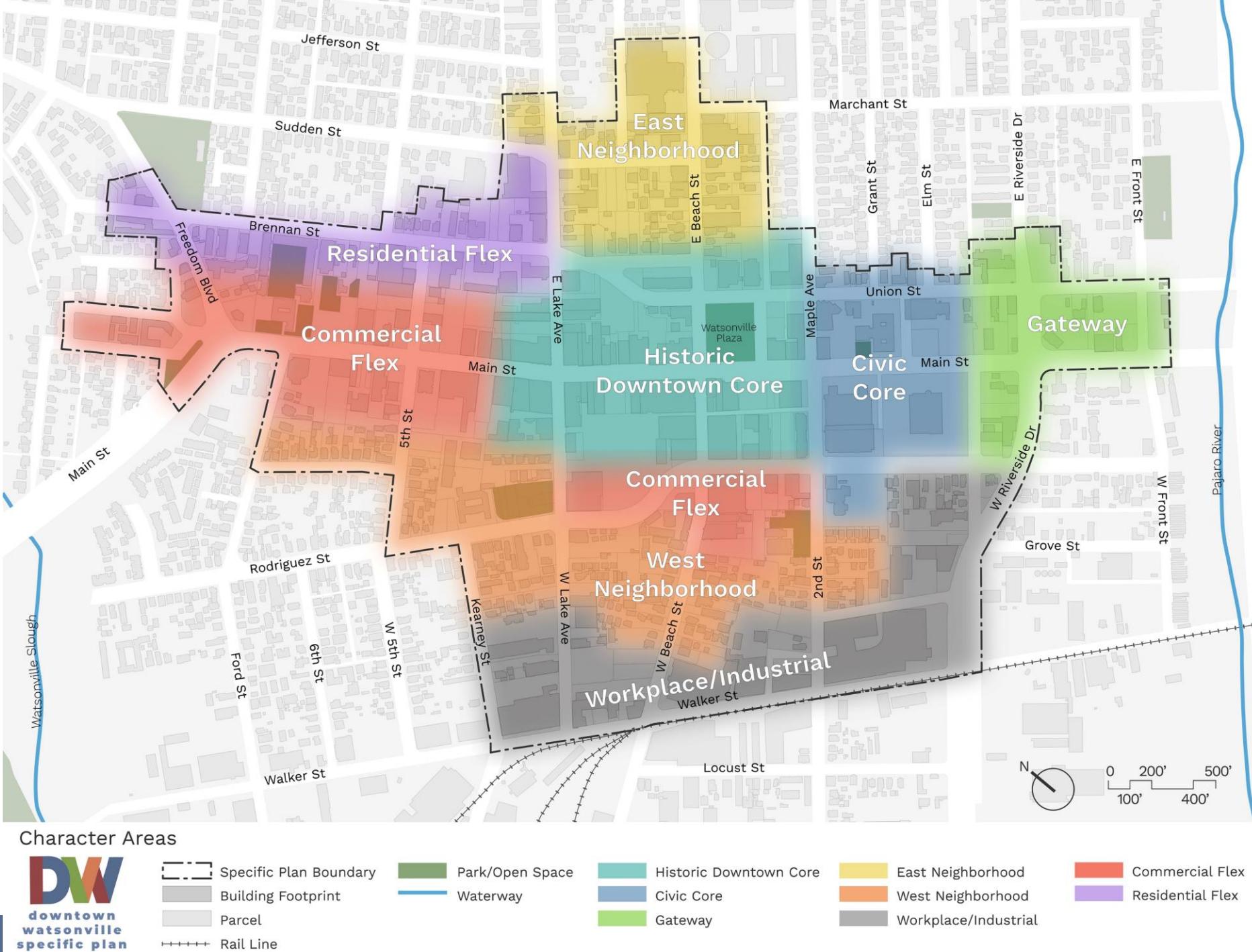


0 200' 500'
100' 400'

Downtown Character Areas and Opportunity Sites

Revised Downtown Character Areas

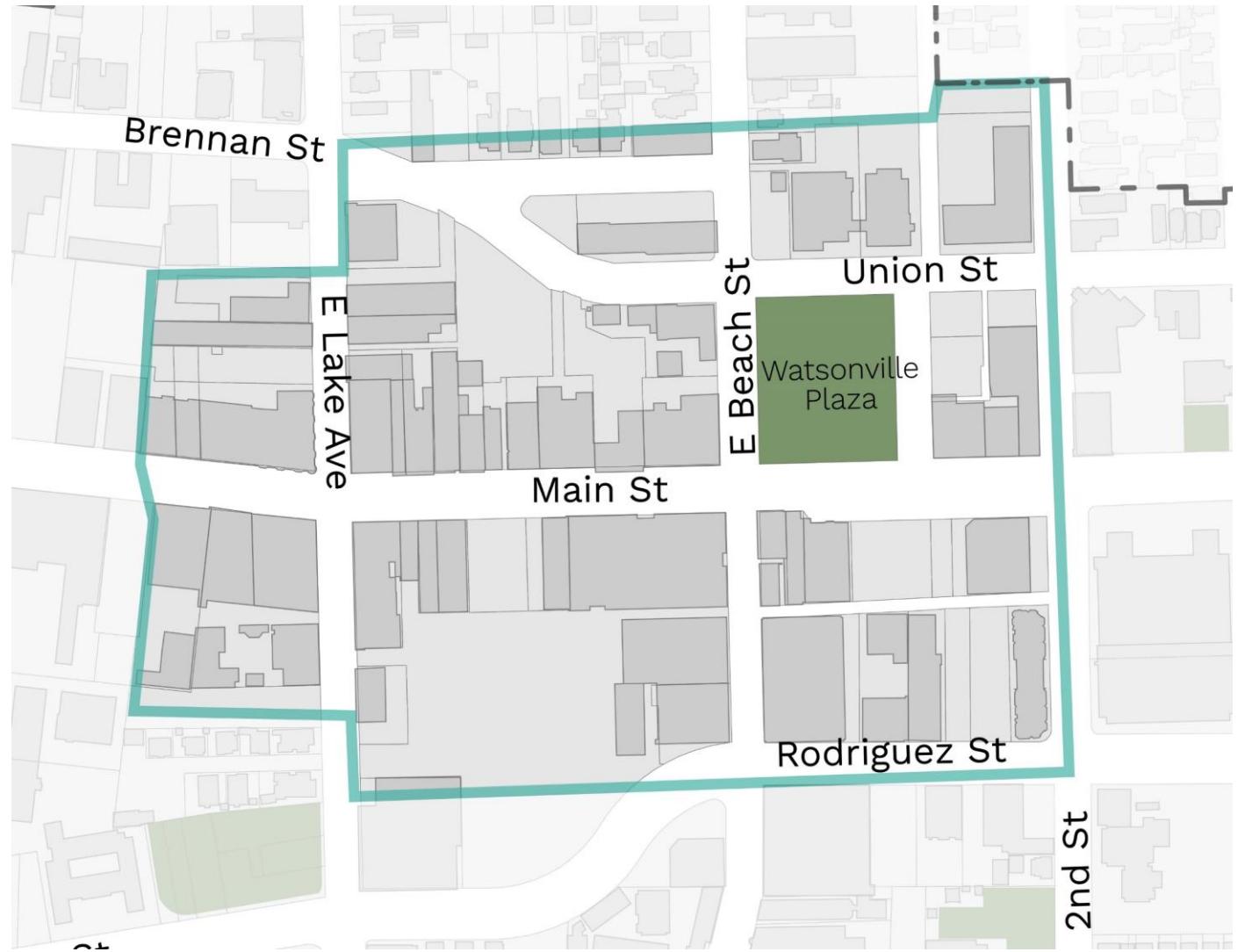
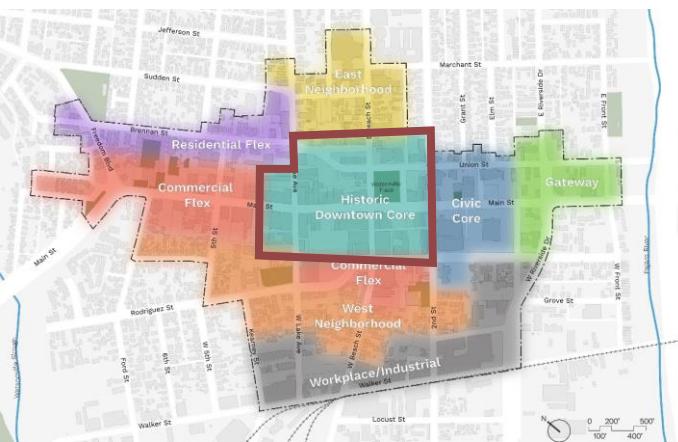
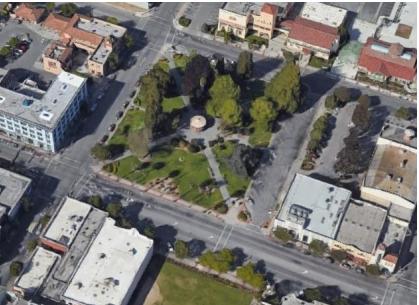
- Downtown Core
- Civic Core
- Gateway
- Commercial Flex
- Residential Flex
- Workspace / Industrial
- East Neighborhood
- West Neighborhood



Historic Downtown Core

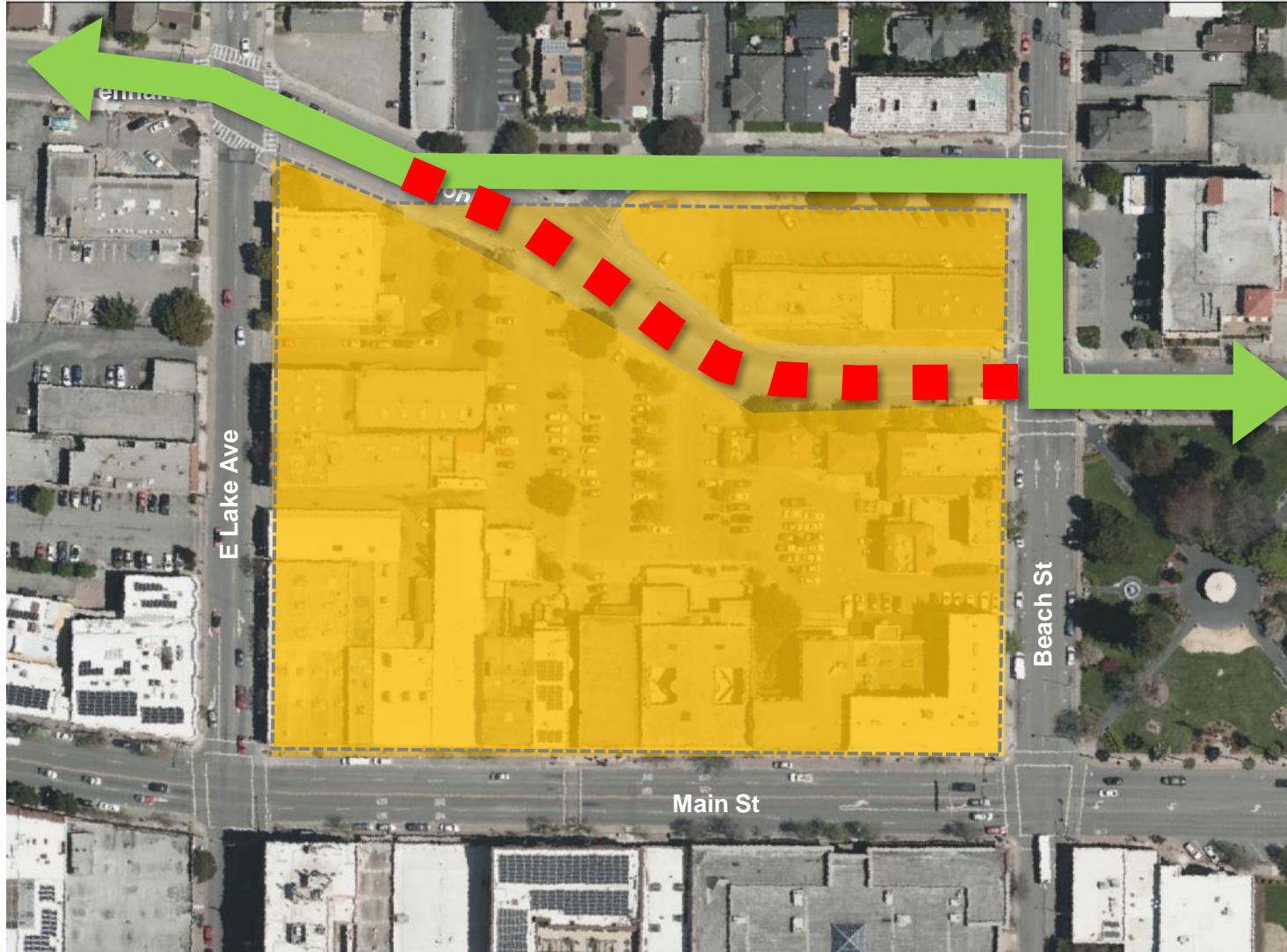
Key Existing Characteristics, Proposed Land Use and Character,
Potential Catalytic Opportunity Site

Historic Downtown Core

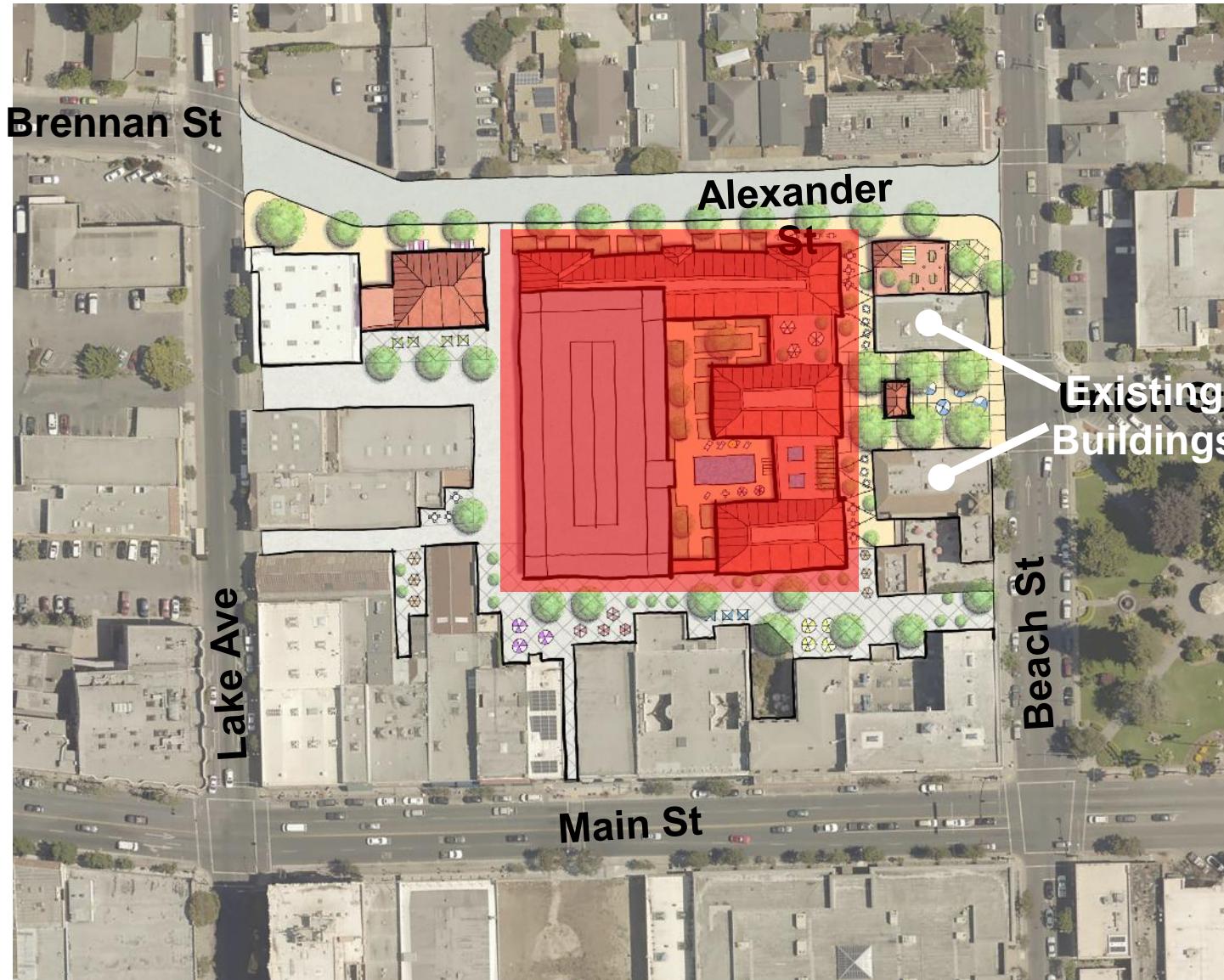


Historic Downtown Core – Potential Catalytic Opportunity Site

Mansion House Block – Main St, Beach St, Alexander St, and E Lake Ave



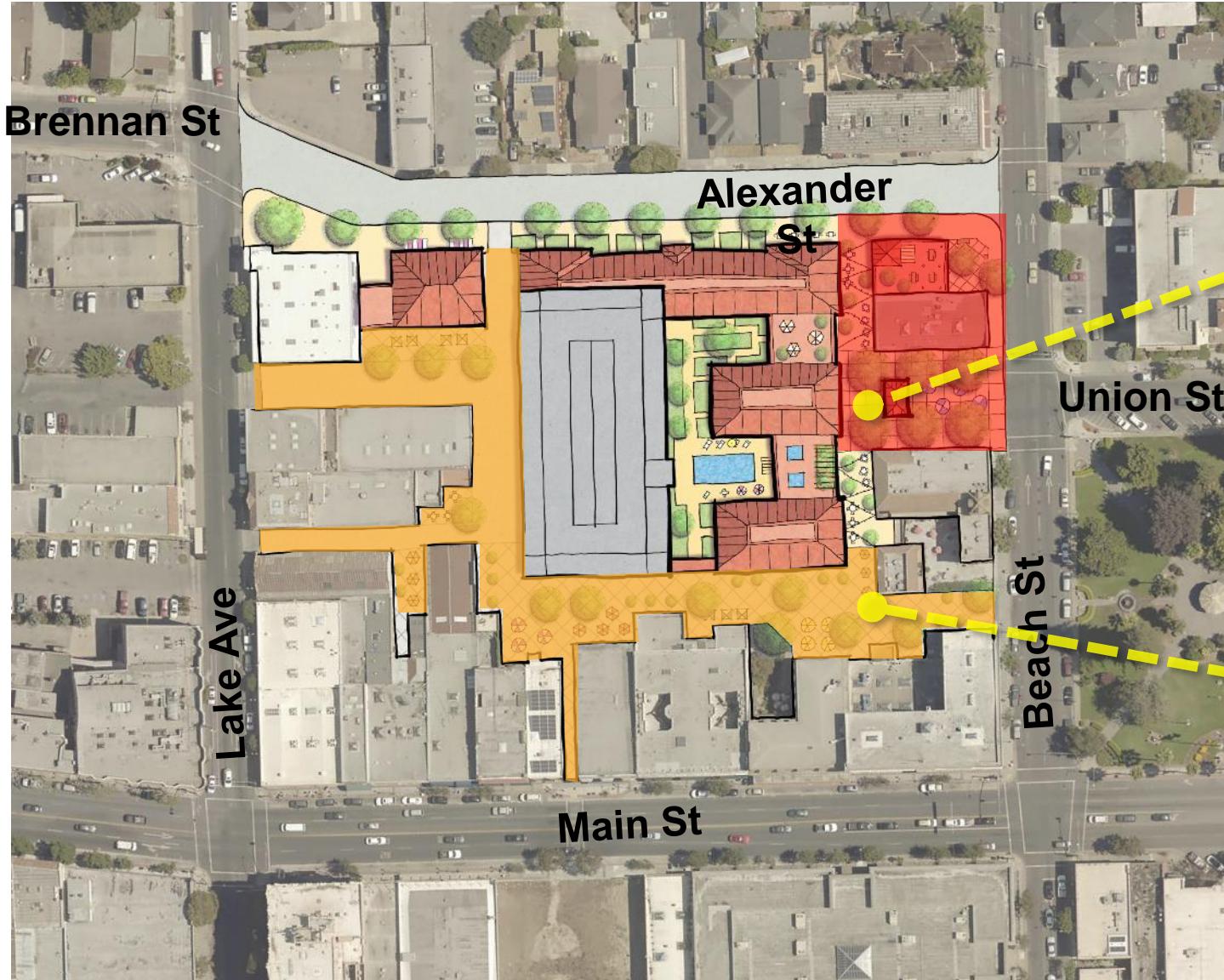
Historic Downtown Core – Potential Catalytic Opportunity Site



Mansion House Block



Historic Downtown Core – Potential Catalytic Opportunity Site



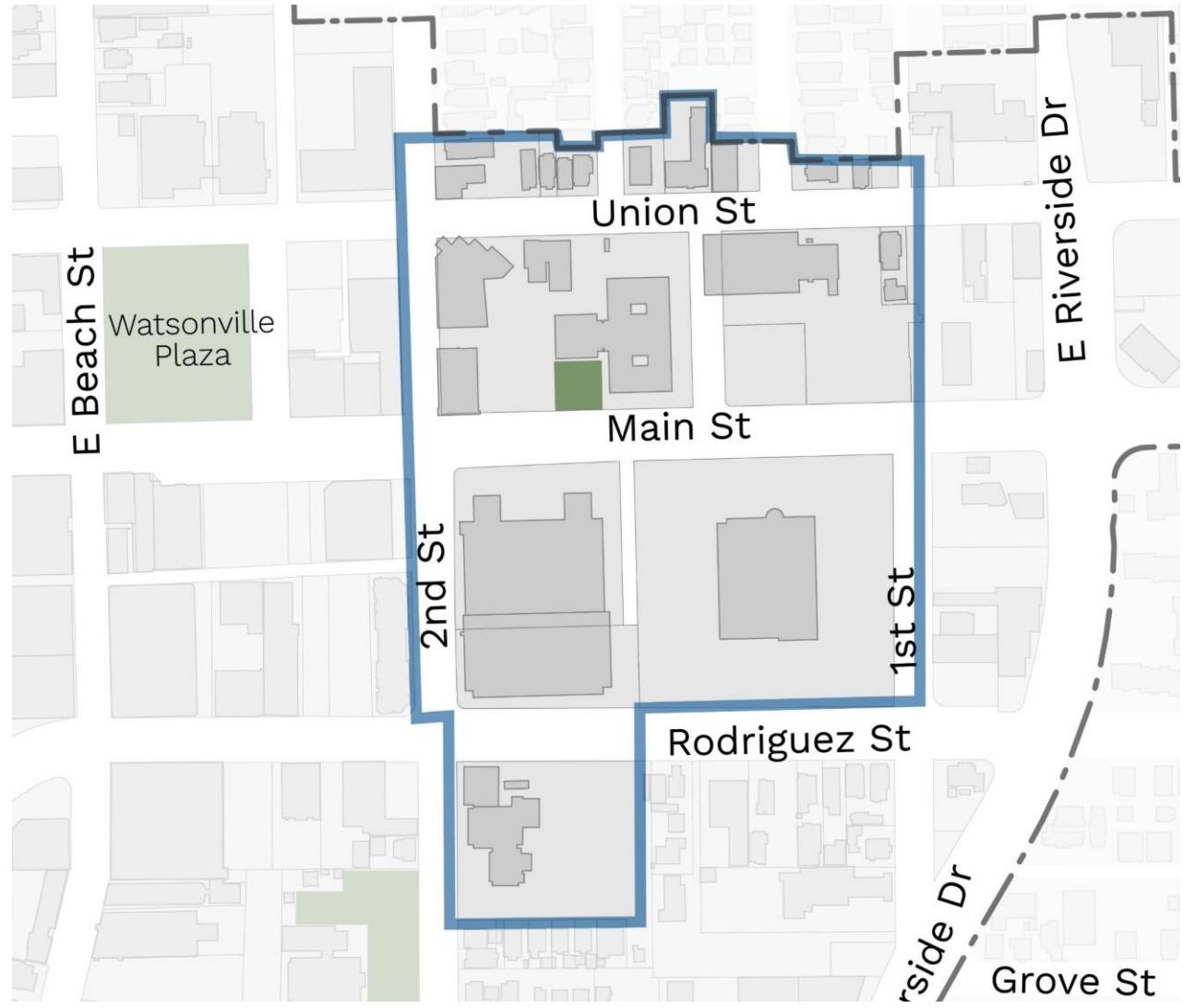
Mansion House Block



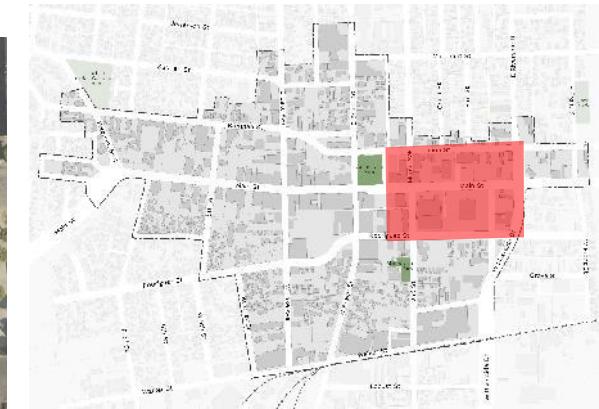
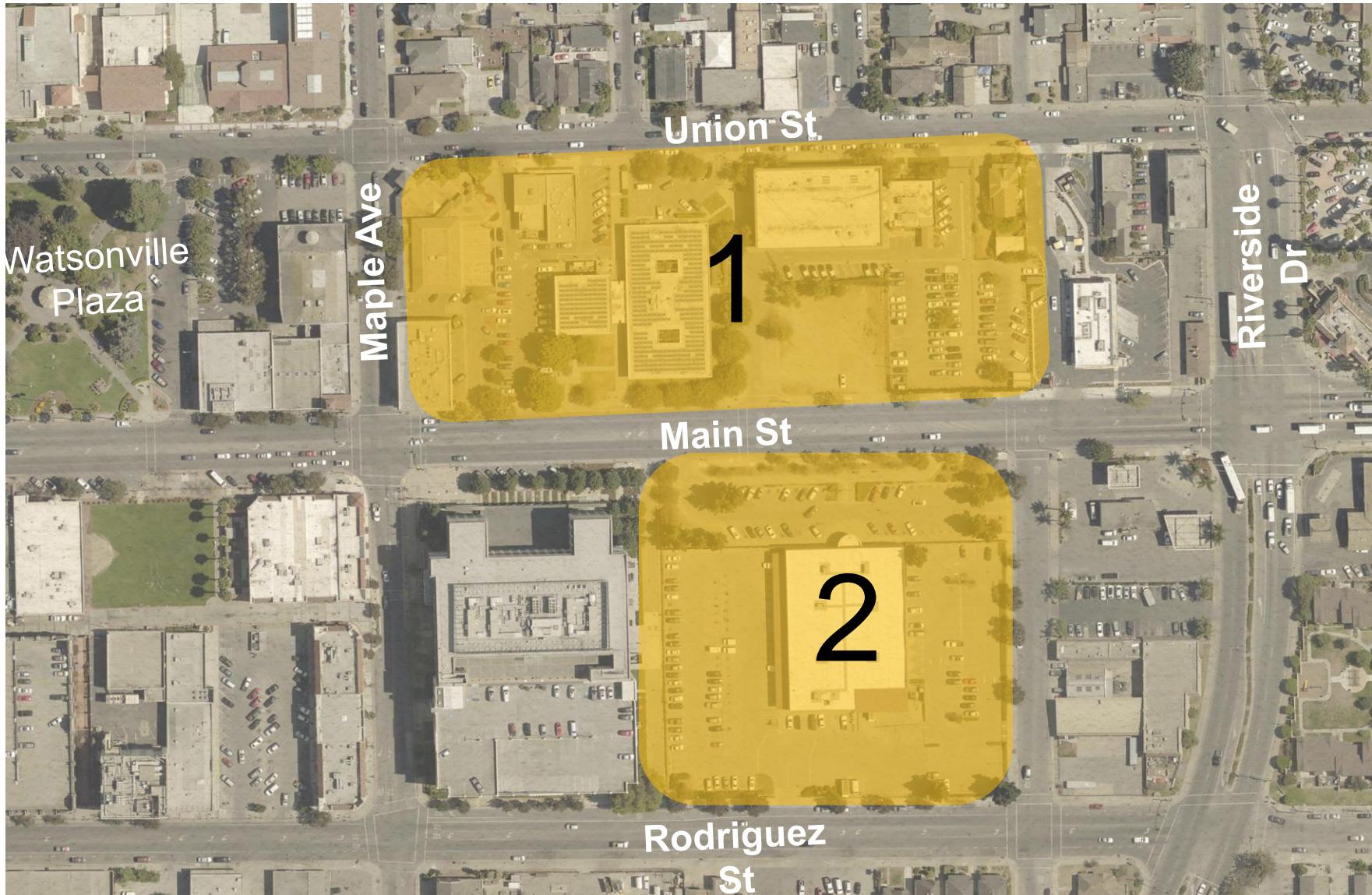
Civic Core

Key Existing Characteristics, Proposed Land Use and Character,
Potential Catalytic Opportunity Site

Civic Core



Civic Core - Potential Catalytic Opportunity Sites



1. Existing City Hall / Civic Campus
2. US Postal Service Site (Long Term)

Civic Core - Potential Catalytic Opportunity Sites

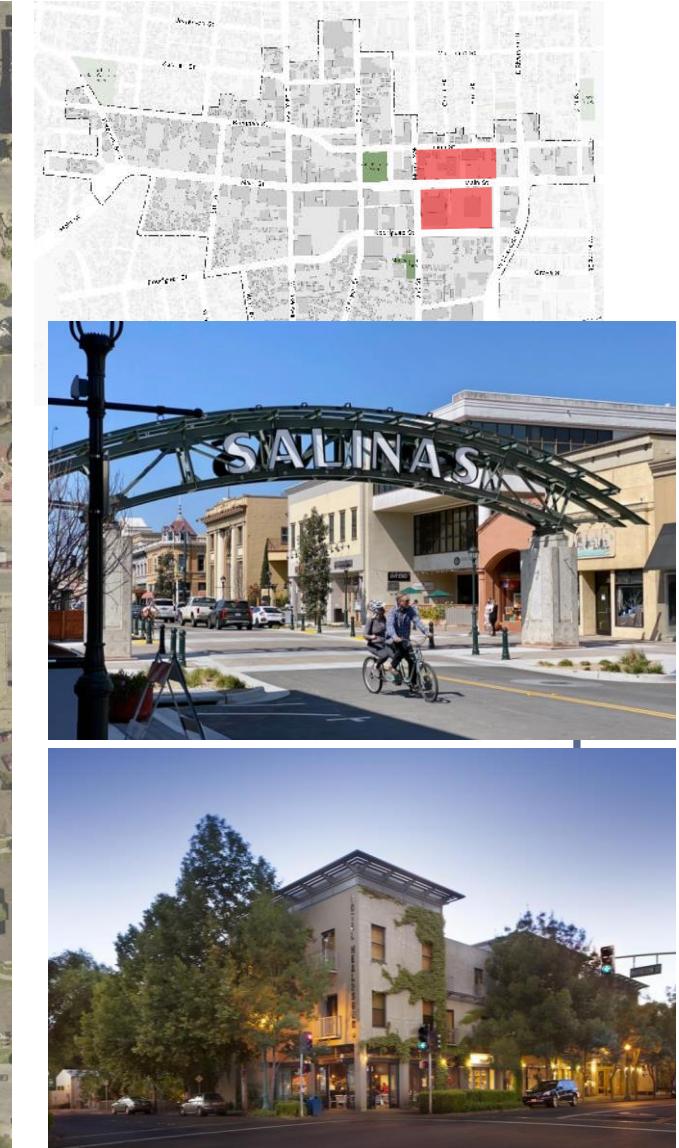
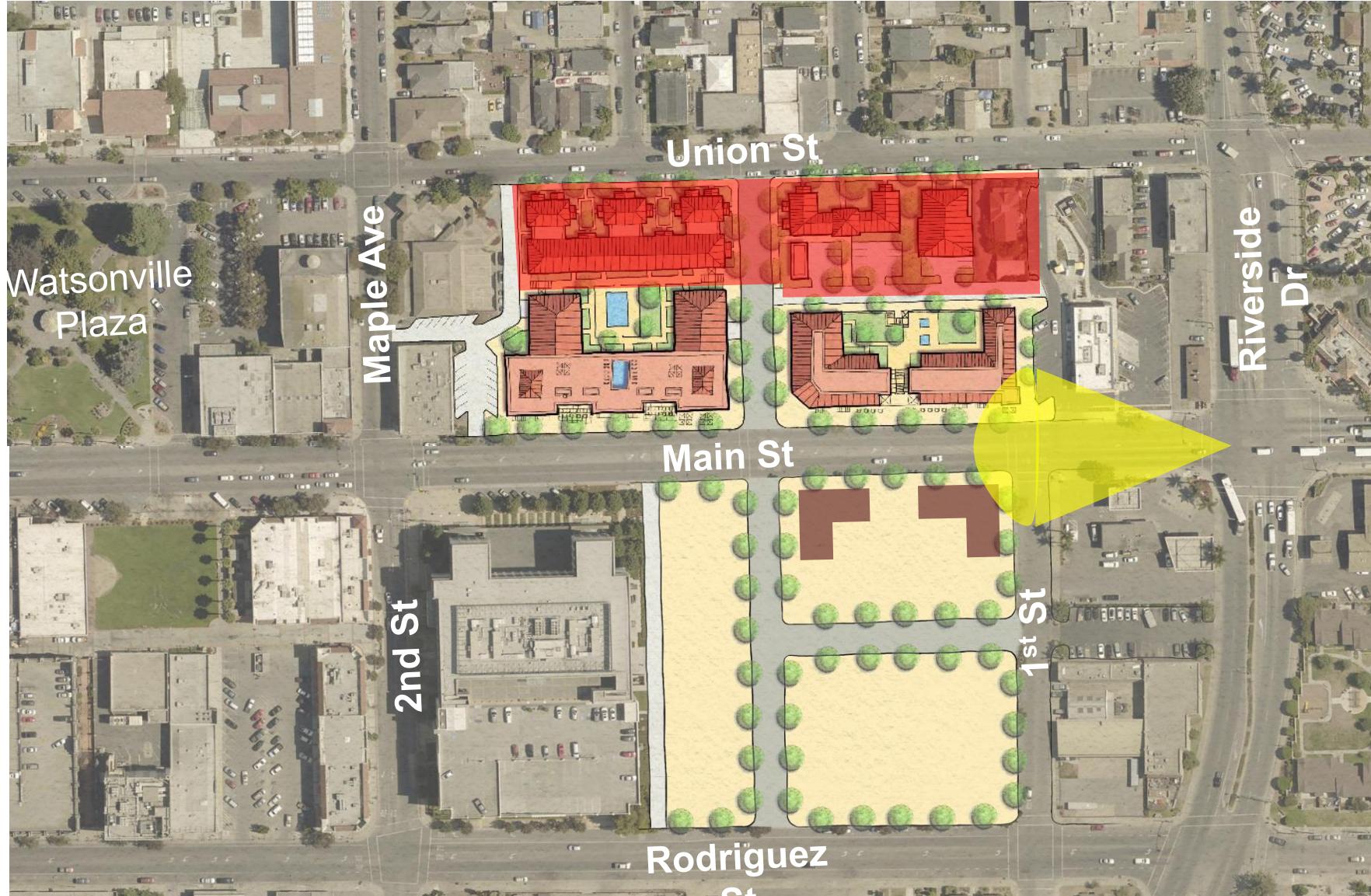


1. Existing City Hall / Civic Campus
2. US Postal Service Site (Long Term)

Civic Core - Potential Catalytic Opportunity Sites



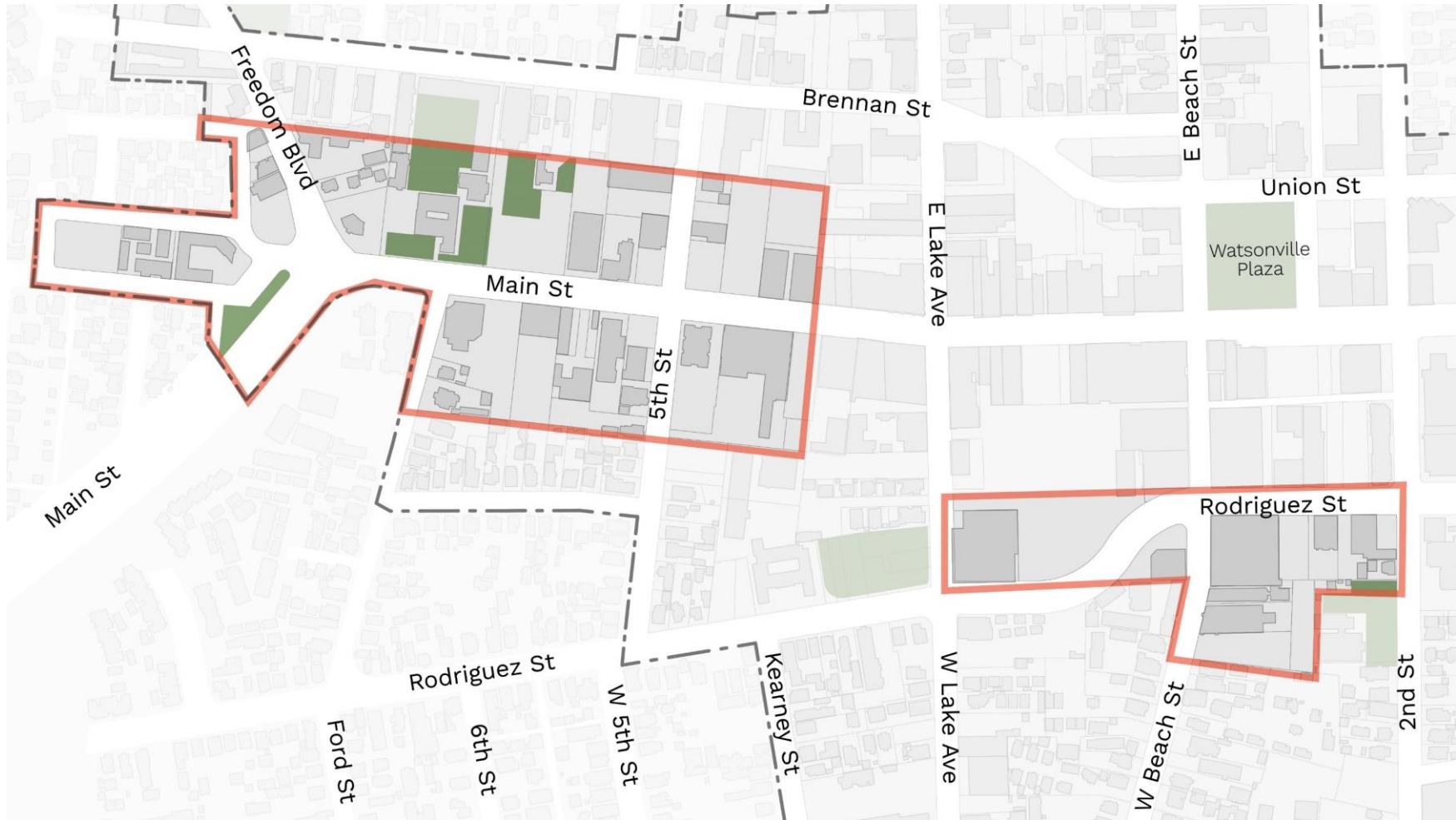
Civic Core - Potential Catalytic Opportunity Sites



Other Character Areas

Key Existing Characteristics, Proposed Land Use and Character

Commercial “Flex”



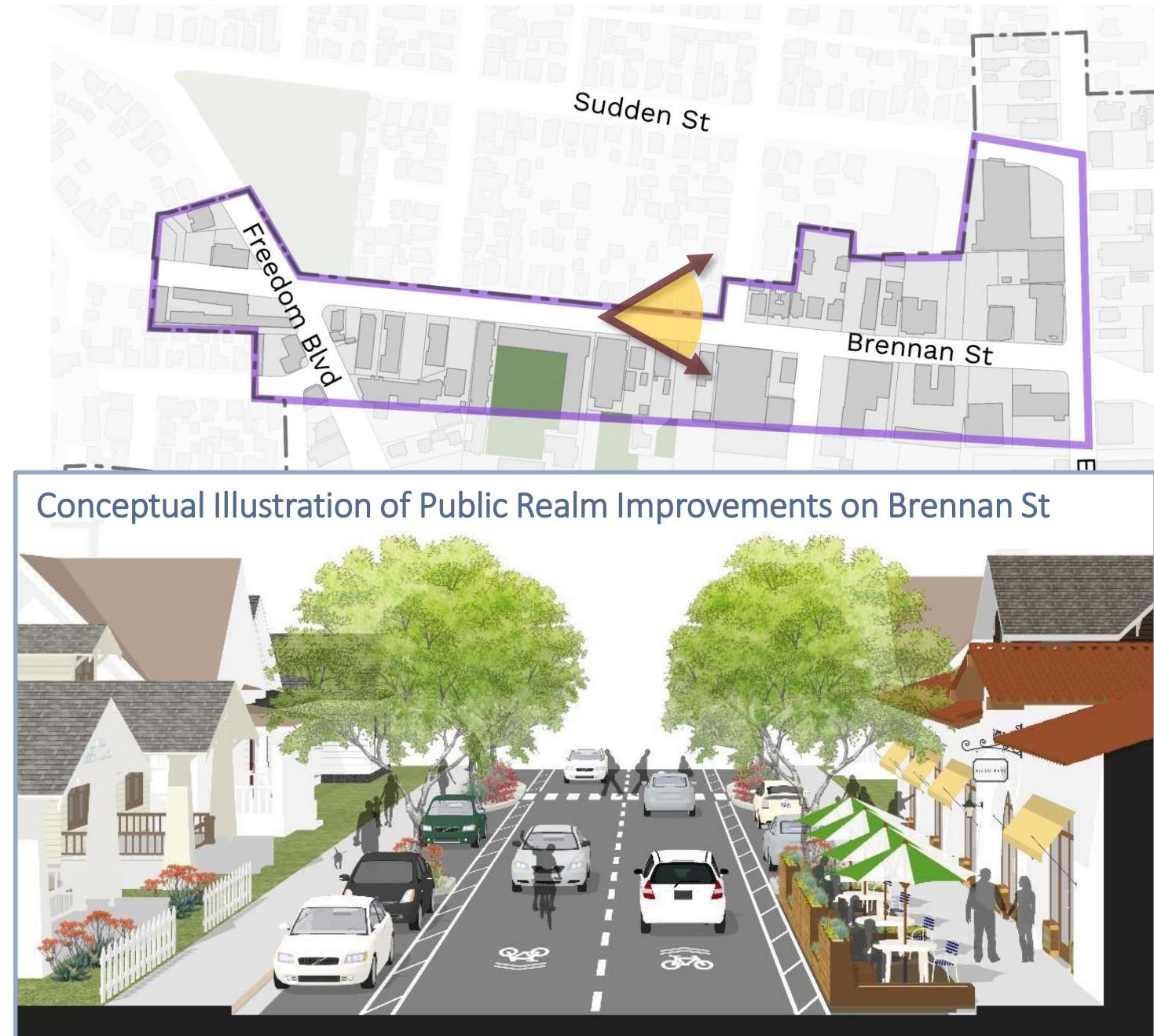
Gateway District

- Opportunity to **establish a gateway into Downtown** on Main St, near Riverside Dr
 - Gateway signage & monuments
 - Prominent Gateway buildings built at or near the street
- **Transition building form and use, and public realm environment** when entering the Civic Core and Historic Downtown Core
- **Consistent and unifying public realm improvements**

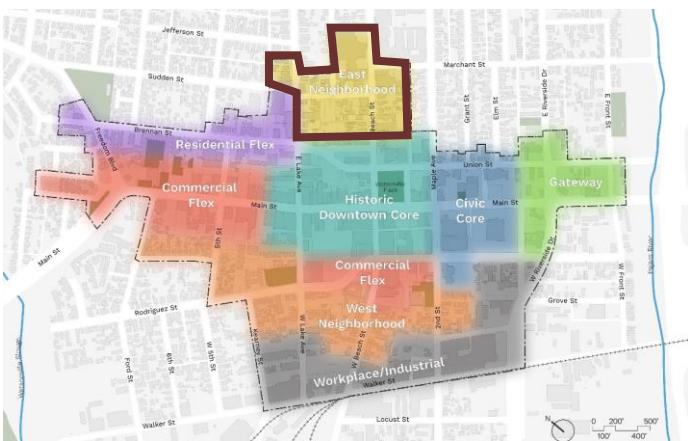
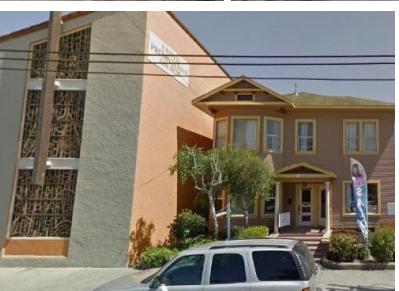


Residential Flex

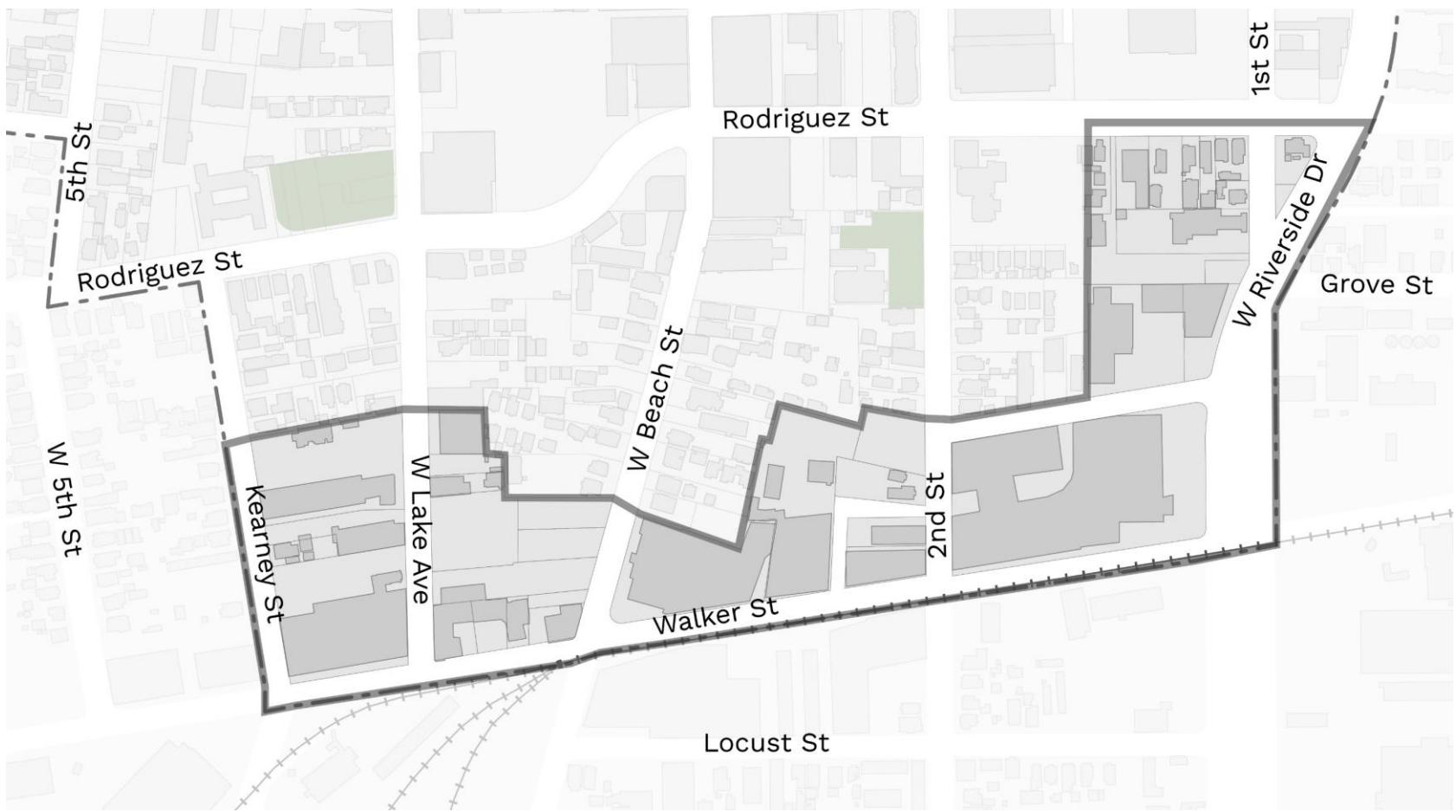
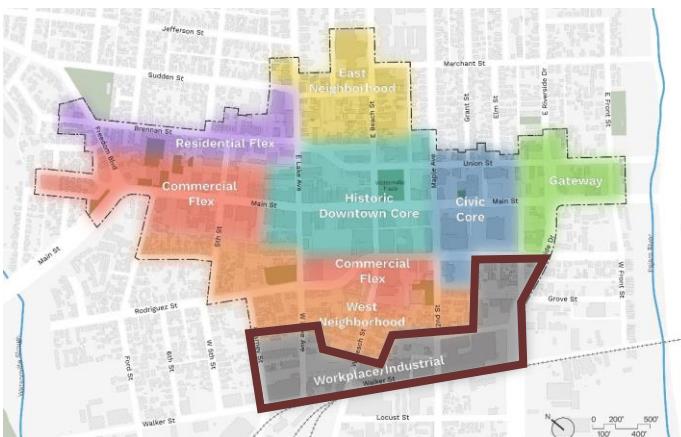
- Along Brennan Street; opportunities to provide new housing choices in **Downtown**, either as stand-alone projects or as vertical mixed-use infill:
 - Potential for increased density/intensity (3-4 story heights) that transition (scale down) sensitively to surrounding single family neighborhood context
- Streetscape and public frontage improvements that:
 - support new and existing businesses on west side of street while providing appropriate transitions to the single-family homes on the east side of the street



East and West Neighborhoods



Workplace/Industrial



Coding The Downtown Vision

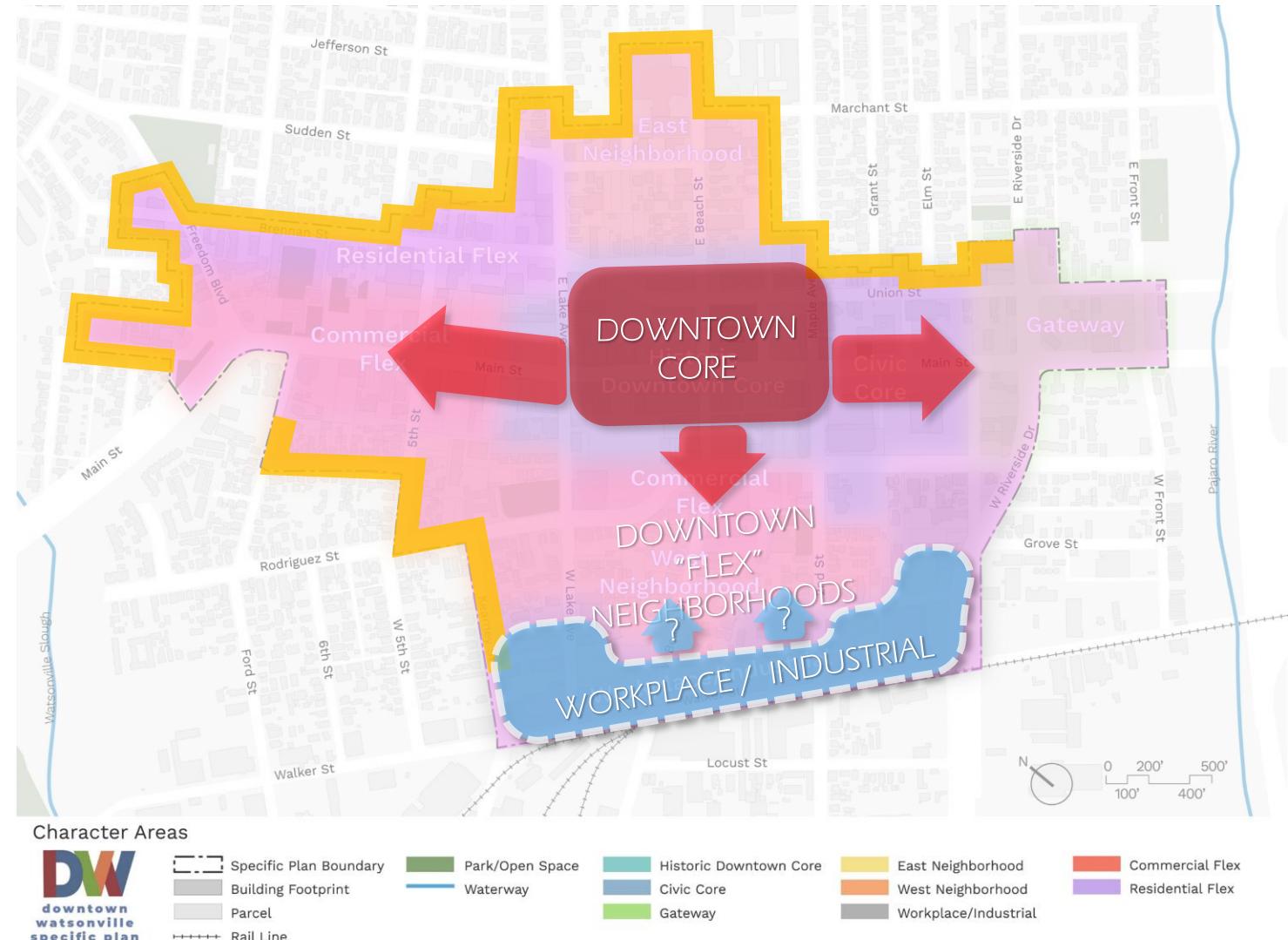
Implementing the Vision of the Character Areas

THE DEVELOPMENT CODE

The “Development Code” is a tool for regulating and implementing the vision for downtown that has been expressed through character areas.

Environments to Implement:

- Active core of Downtown
- Extensions of the core
- Workplace industrial environment
- “Flex” Downtown Neighborhoods (*general mixed-use environment*)
- Sensitive neighborhood-adjacent “edges” of downtown



Conventional vs. “Form-Based” Zoning

Form-Based (+ “*Context Aware*”) Zoning Features / Advantages:

Core idea is **creating and shaping public space with buildings** – a.k.a “*Placemaking*”

- Emphasizes Built Form, with standards for building form and mass consciously based on context and/or desired character
- Strong attention to streetscape and public realm design - and the **role of public and private frontages** in shaping and activating the public realm
- Provides **flexibility** with regard to land use, emphasizing active, mixed-use places that can evolve and adapt to the needs of a place over time



Active Public Realm Environment *(Public & Private Frontages)*

Active Public Realm Environment

Downtown's Active Public Realm

- A network of **streets and public spaces** connect and unify the great variety of uses and building forms Downtown.
- The Code prioritizes the relationship between the ground floors of buildings and the public realm – a.k.a **“Frontages”**



Active Public Realm Environment

Creating “Active Frontages”

- To facilitate an active public realm environment, **Frontages must be designed and calibrated** (to ground floor use and urban context) to provide a mutually beneficial relationship between the public and private realms.



Commercial



Residential



Civic / Office



Commercial

Active Public Realm Environment

Flexible Frontages

- Flexible Frontage design can accommodate a variety of active ground floor uses (residential, live-work, or commercial), with only minor adjustments needed to adapt to the needs of the time.
- This is especially useful where active ground floor uses (shops and restaurants) are desired in the future, but the market does not yet support them.



The Active Downtown Core

(Built Form & Urban Character)

The Active Downtown Core

Activated Public Realm

Main Street and the area around Watsonville Plaza are intended to be the most active environment downtown.

- Buildings shape and activate the public realm with continuous streetwall;
- Ground floor facades in the form of shopfronts with most active uses;
- Sidewalks are comfortable and well furnished, allow for sidewalk dining and other activities



The Active Downtown Core

Shopfront Transparency

Shopfronts provide visual interest to the street while benefitting from exposure / merchandizing to customers.



The Active Downtown Core

Seamless Indoor/Outdoor Spaces

Indoor/outdoor shopfronts blur the line between public and private realms, enhancing the experience of both.

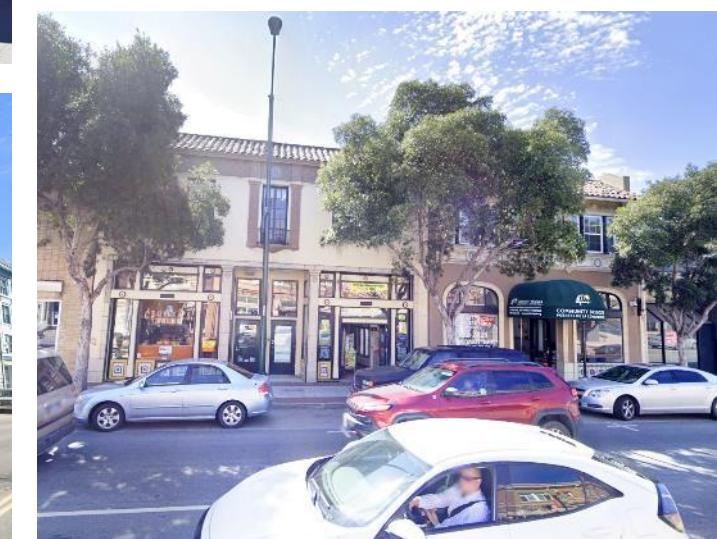


The Active Downtown Core

Building Heights

Buildings Heights will be tallest in the Downtown Core in order to activate and define the public realm.

- Building Heights of up to 4-6 stories;
- New buildings must be compatible with and transition elegantly to existing buildings.

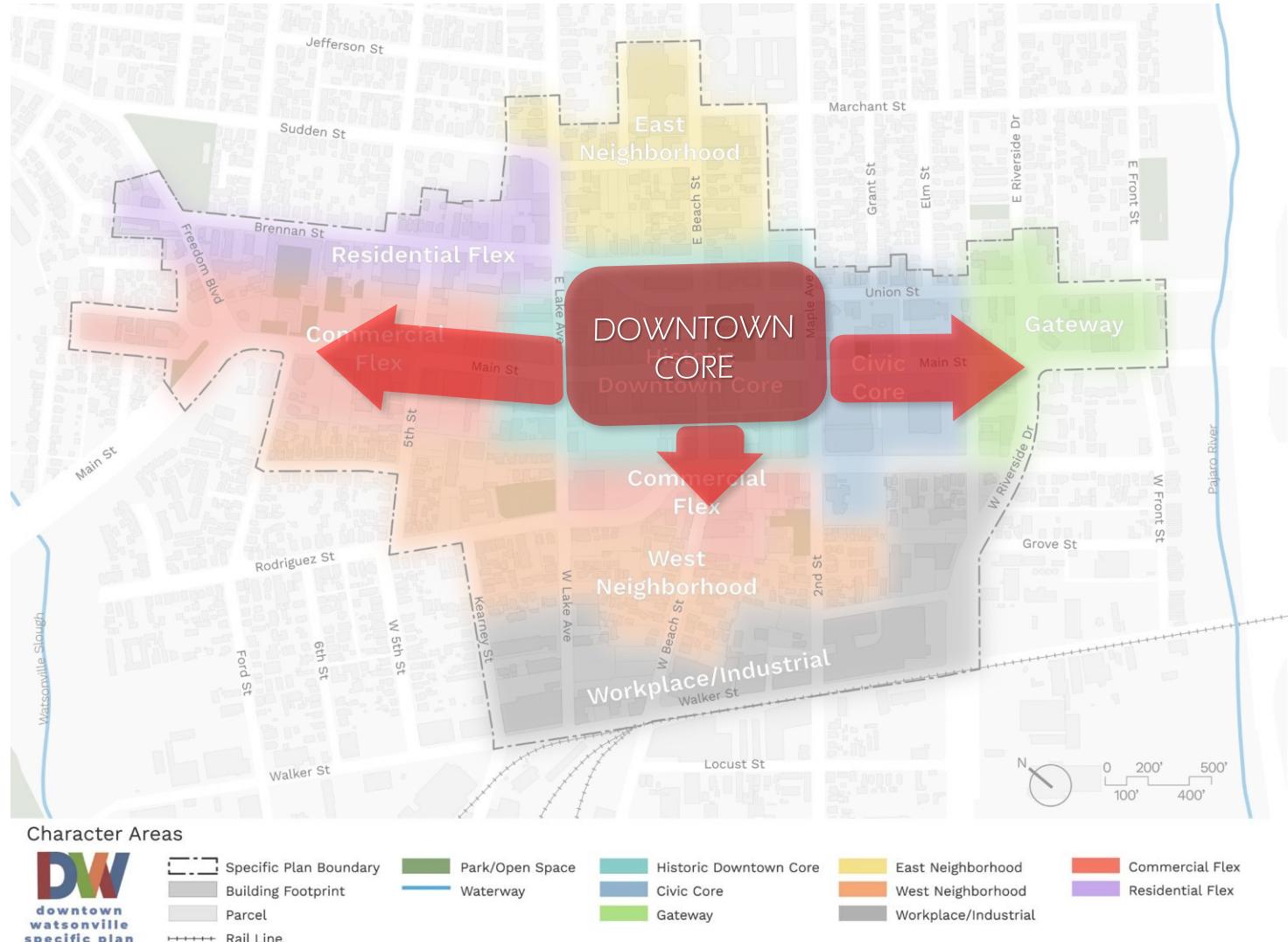


The Active Downtown Core

Downtown Corridors

Extensions outward of the Core environment along the primary streets.

- Built form and character (including public realm character) similar to core;
- Greater flexibility with regard to use (including residential and office) outside of the core.



The Active Downtown Core

“Retail Ready” (Flexible) Frontages

- “Retail-Ready” Frontages could be required along select street frontages - extending from the Downtown Core - to ensure future flexibility with regard to ground-floor use.

FIGURE PT-4 “RETAIL READY FRONTAGES”



Flex Downtown Neighborhoods

*(Built Form & Urban
Character)*

Downtown “Flex” Neighborhoods

Flexible Mixed-Use Neighborhood

The neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown Core can include wide range of (compatible) uses in coherent neighborhood patterns:

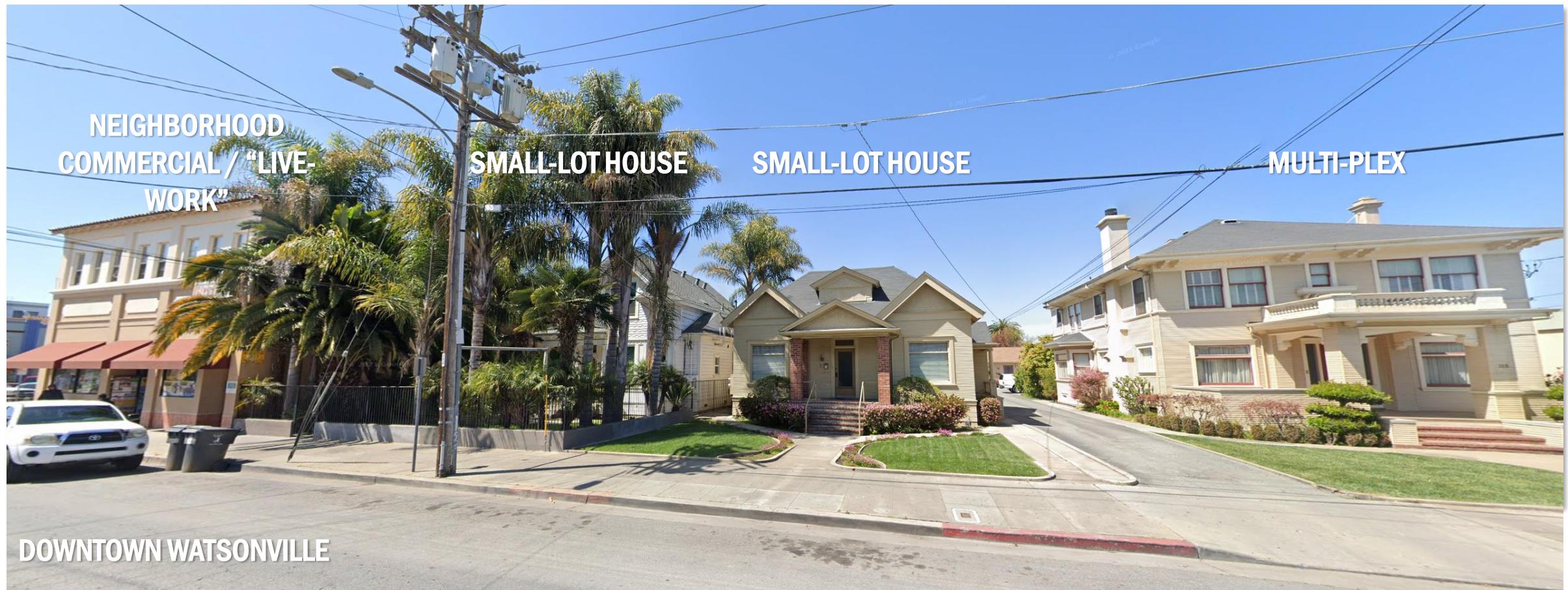
- Active, comfortable, public realm environment, with a **distinct neighborhood character**;
- Flexible mix of uses in generally **“neighborhood-scale” buildings**;
- Building scale typically 2-4 stories; **“Context-aware” / compatibility standards critical**. Particularly along neighborhood edges.



Downtown “Flex” Neighborhoods

Neighborhood-Scale Building Types

Code may define specific “Neighborhood-Scale” building types allowed in this Zone:



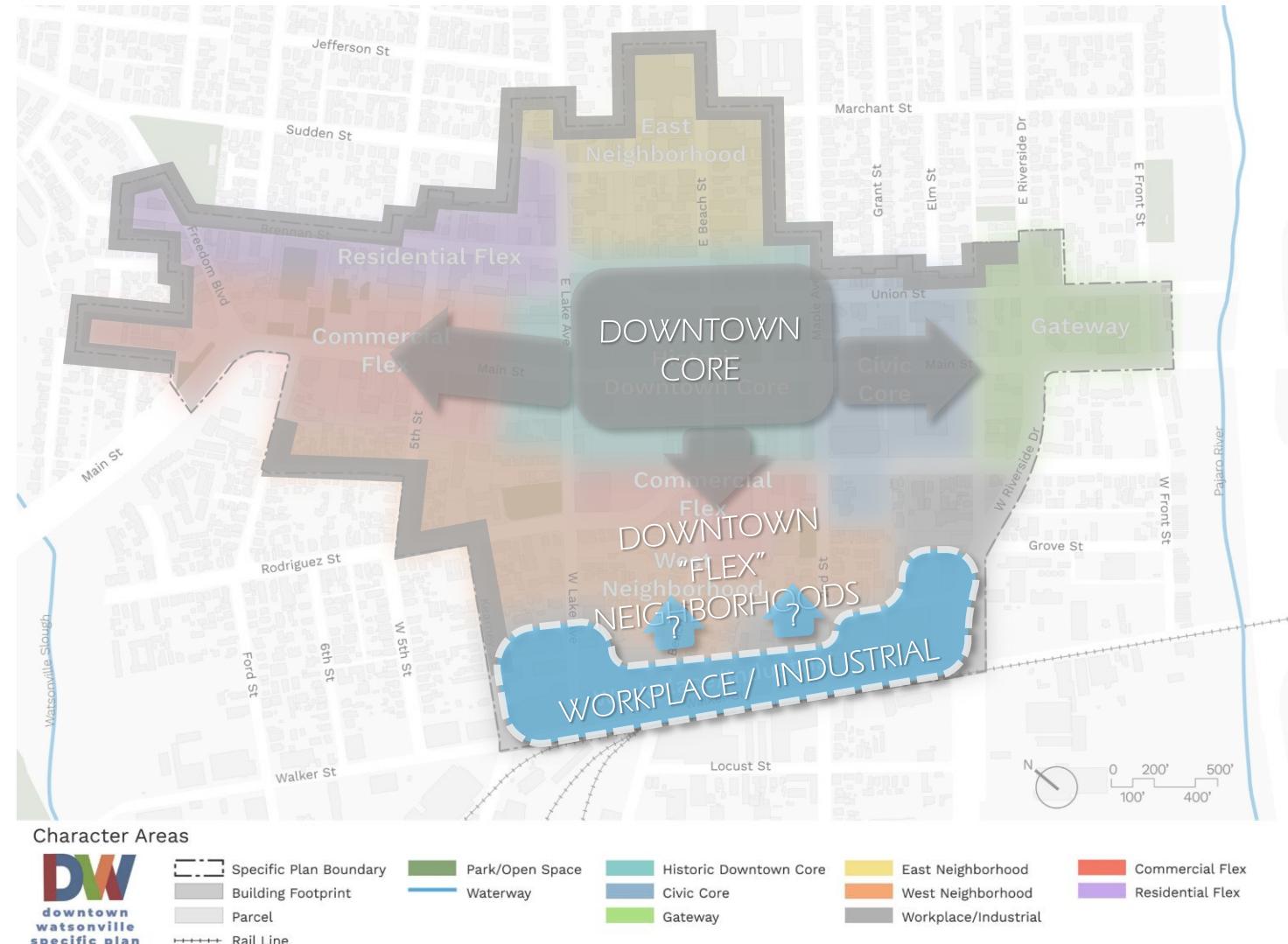
Workplace / Industrial

Downtown Workplace District

The existing industrial district along Walker street may be preserved and evolved over time to support the changing needs of downtown.

Priorities to confirm:

- Supporting the needs of existing businesses / **preserving existing industrial uses?**
- Providing guidelines for adaptive reuse of industrial buildings?
- Enabling **infill development** of new uses? Where?
- Tactical public realm improvements that unify the district?



Workplace Industrial Environment

- **Support / Preserve Existing Uses** - New industrial or residential uses could be subject to discretionary review in order to prevent the unintended displacement of businesses.
- **Adaptive Re-use & Tactical Public Realm Improvements** - A variety of new uses could creatively re-use structures which are no longer needed for industrial.
- **Tactical public realm improvements** could unify this part of downtown as a unique district
- **Infill Development** - Vacant or underutilized sites may be redeveloped with new uses, especially near existing and potential multi-modal connections.



Example Regulating Plan

Example Regulating Plan

Zones and Overlays

zones

Downtown Core

Downtown Neighborhood

Downtown Industrial

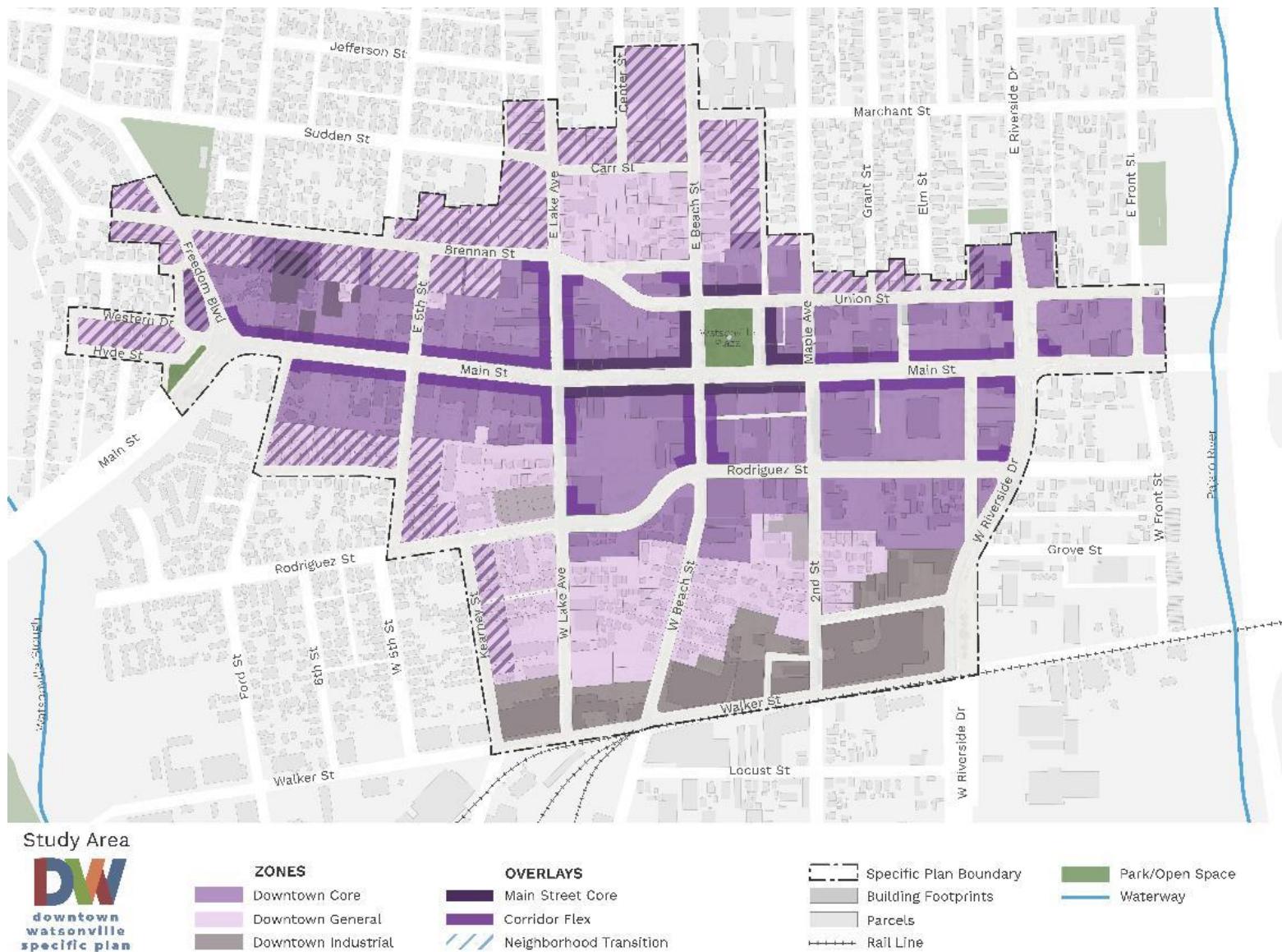
OVERLAYS

Main Street Core

Corridor Flex

Neighborhood Transition

This is a **flexible tool** we will calibrate throughout the planning process.



Community Survey #2 Results

Community Survey #2

Responses

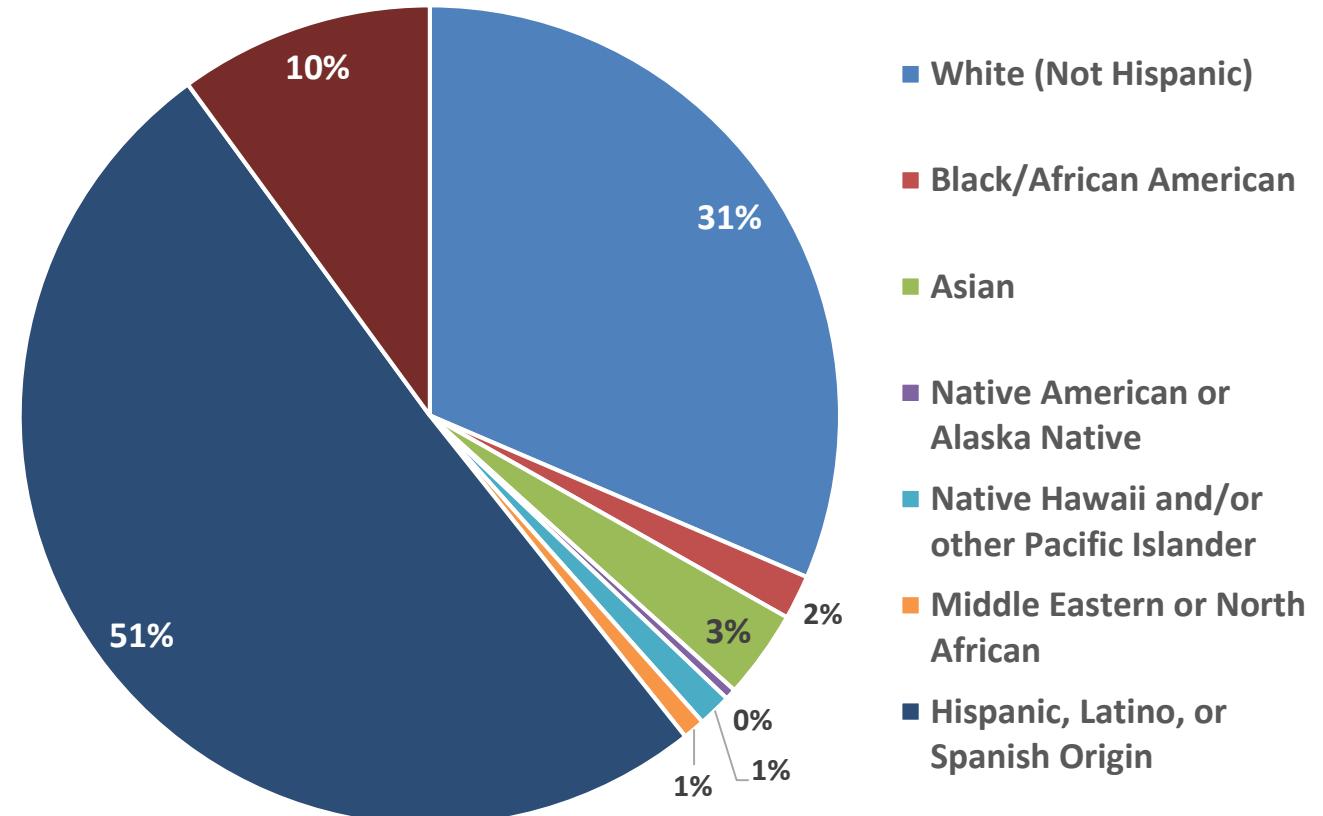
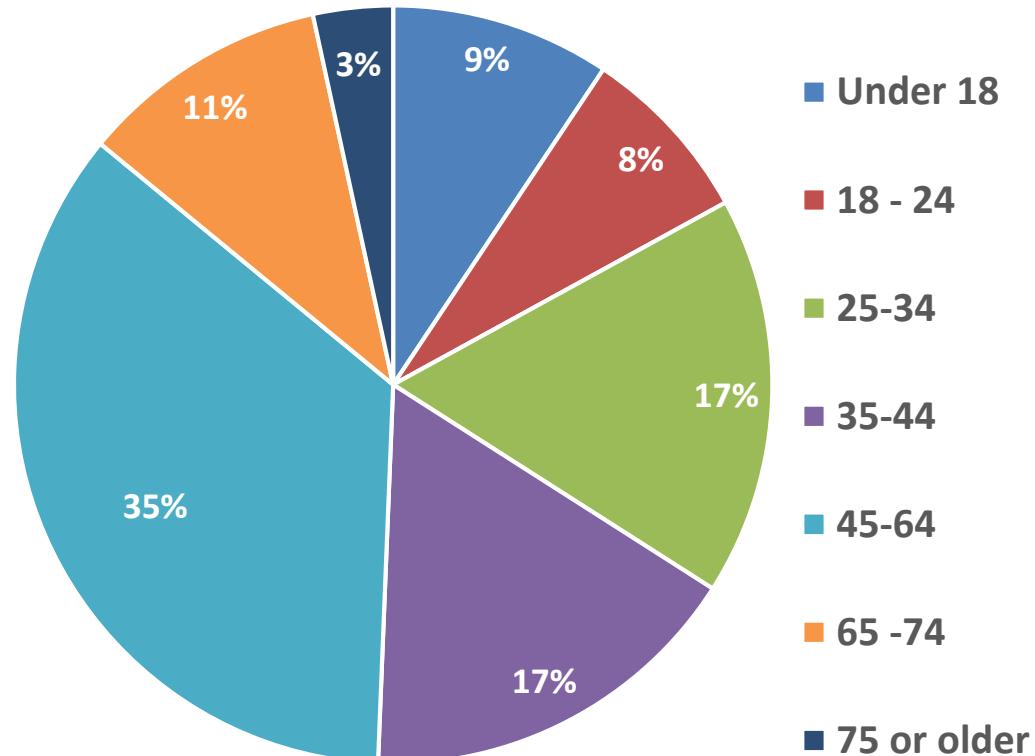
- Open May 6 – June 17, 2021
- 257 responses*, 23 in Spanish

Survey Outreach

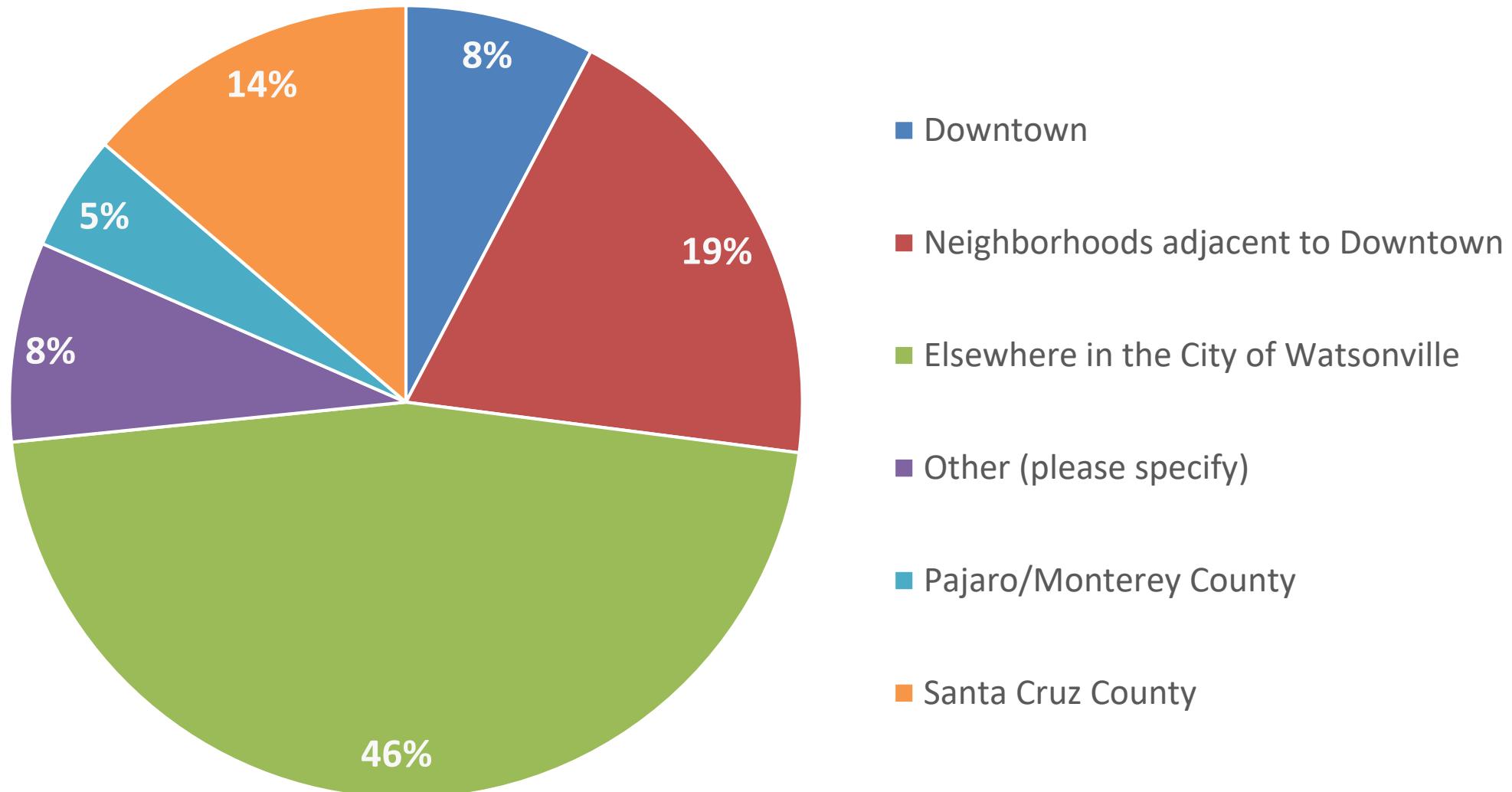
- Facebook
- City website
- Email database
- High School Students Zoom Meeting (Empower Watsonville/PVPSA)
- Chamber of Commerce email blast
- Farmers' Market Pop Ups (5)

**not all respondents answered every question in the survey*

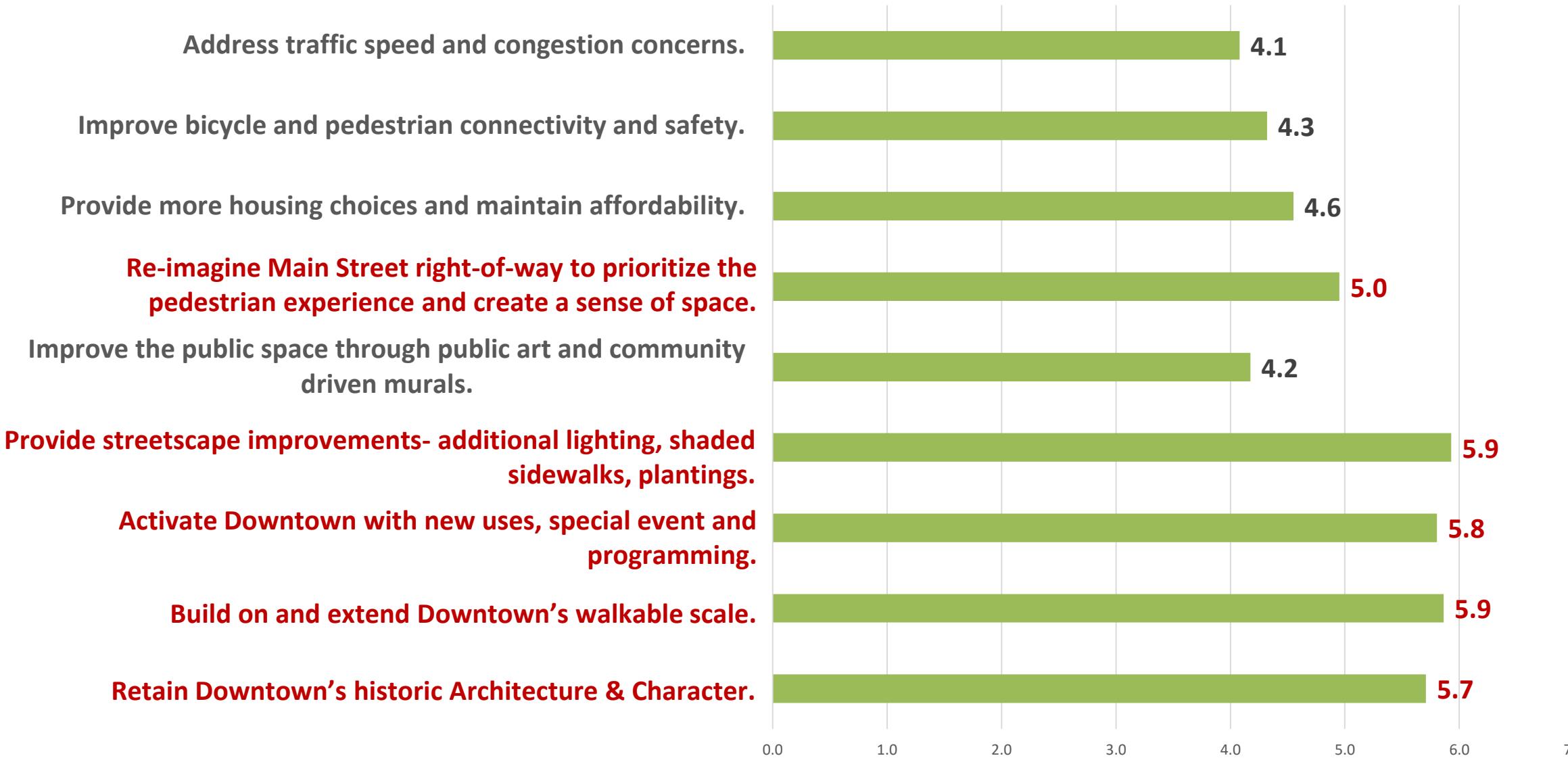
Respondent Age & Race Breakdown



Respondent Location of Residence



Big Ideas For The Future of Downtown – Top 5 Priorities



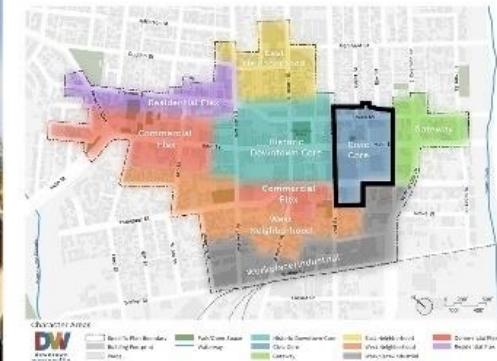
Top Priorities By Character Area

Historic Downtown Core (top 3) –

- Develop more active ground floor uses (retail and restaurants), with housing and office above
- Allow and engage outdoor dining
- Improve walkability with streetscape and public improvements such as wider sidewalks, parklets, and street furnishings

Civic Core (top 2) –

- Redevelop the majority city-owned block bound by Main Street, Maple Street, Union Street, and First Street with active, mixed-use infill including retail, housing, entertainment, and civic uses. Design of the site would allow higher densities and height
- Provide streetscape and public improvements such as wider sidewalks, and street furnishings to improve walkability along Main Street and Rodriguez Street



Top Priorities By Character Area (cont'd)

Commercial “Flex”

- Encourage mixed-use development with active ground floor commercial uses on Main Street or Rodriguez Street
- Revitalize and adaptively reuse historic buildings
- Enhance connectivity and safety with new pathways/paseos within large blocks that create pedestrian-only cut throughs



East Neighborhood

- Adaptively reuse Martinelli's with uses such as residential, commercial/office, civic, educational, makerspaces
- Incentivize adaptive reuse of historic homes with uses that value architectural landmarks such as bed-and-breakfasts, restaurants, coffee shops, and art galleries

West Neighborhood

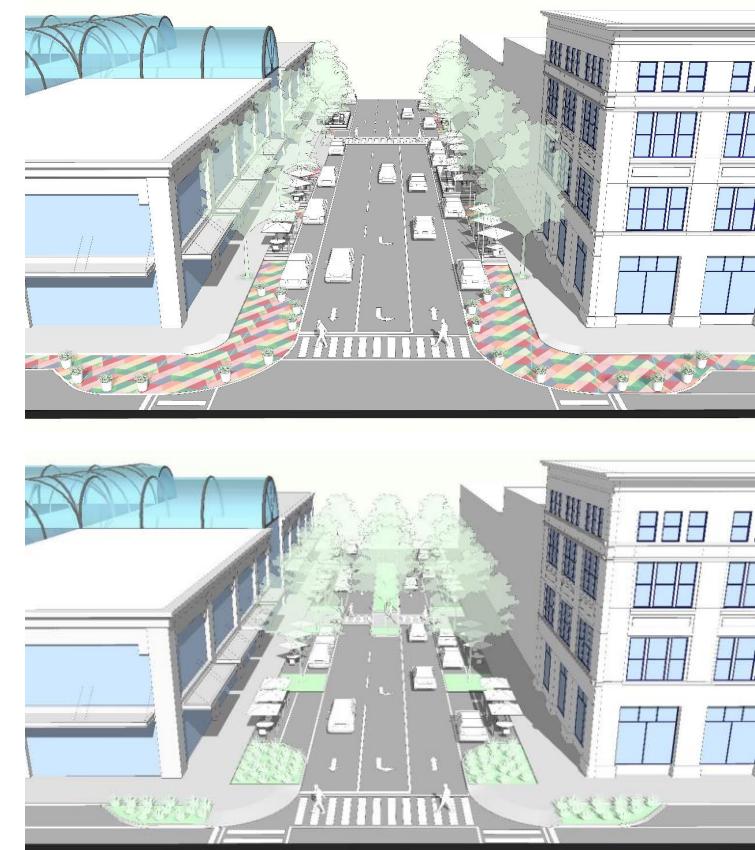
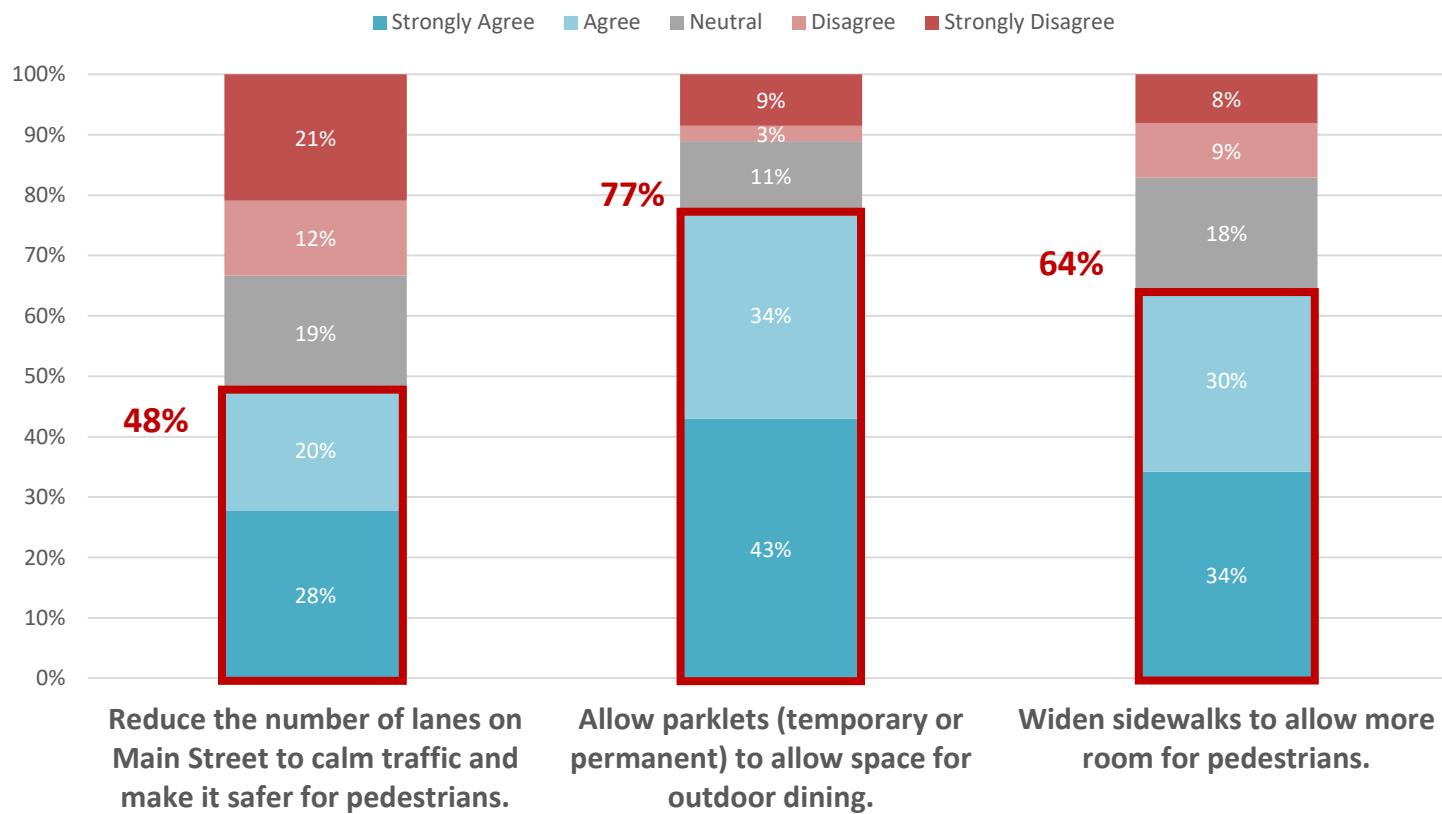
- Allow neighborhood-scale mixed use and multifamily residential and Encourage live-work spaces

Workplace Industrial District

- Allow neighborhood-scale mixed-use and multifamily residential development

Main Street (SR 152 between Lake & Beach)

What is your level of agreement or disagreement with the following strategies suggested to support enhancing the pedestrian environment and safety on Main Street?

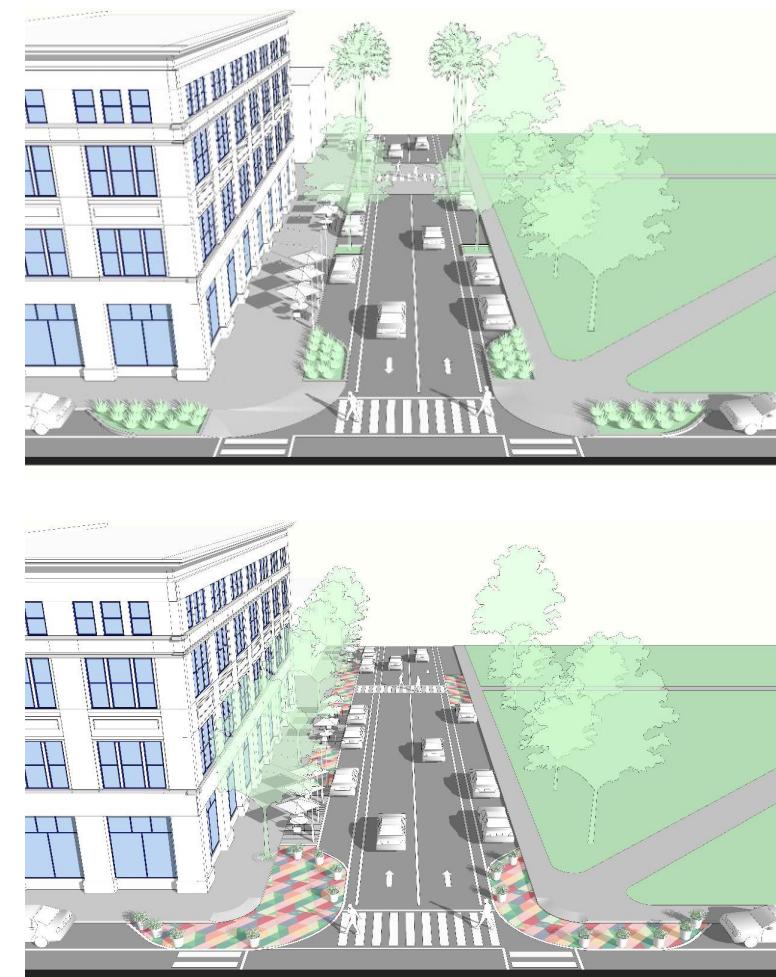
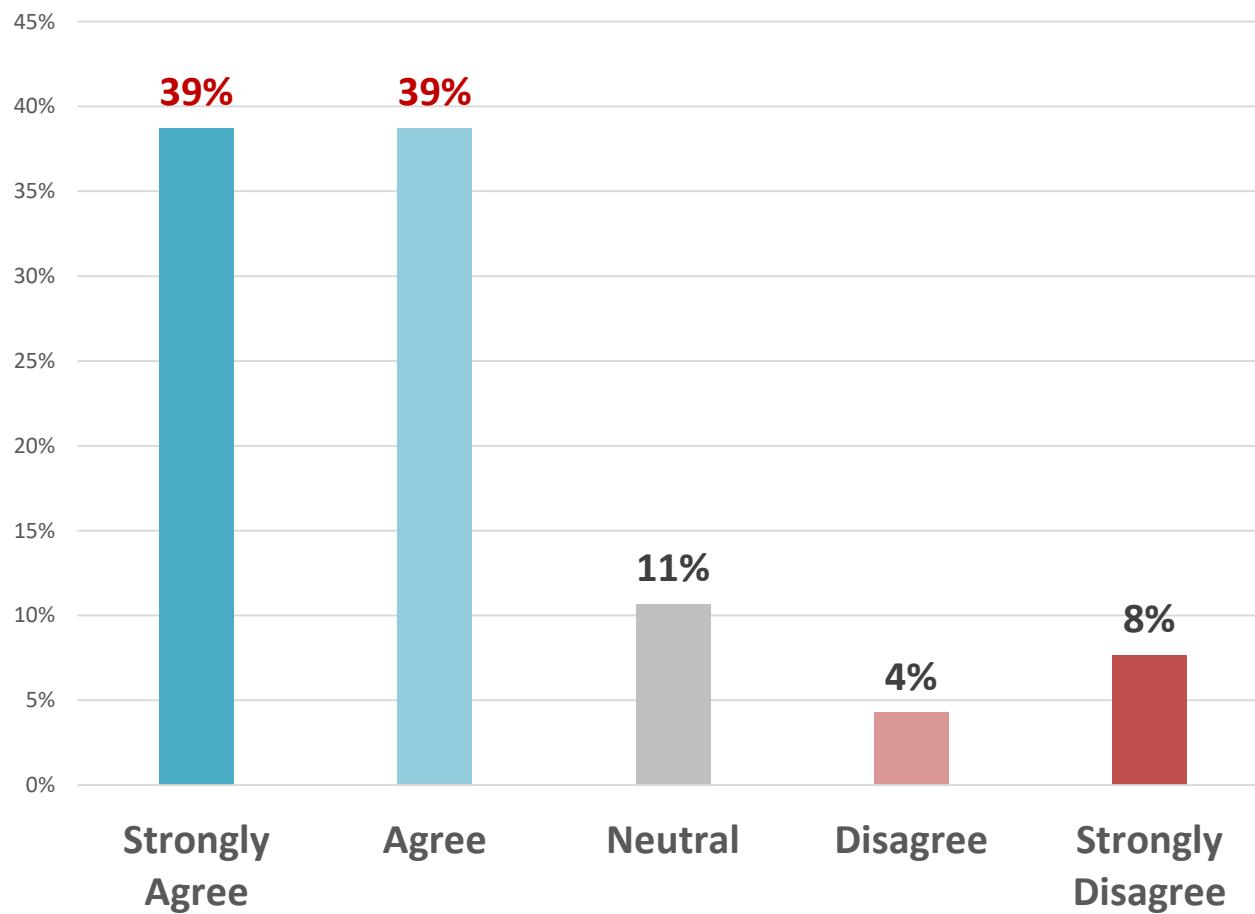


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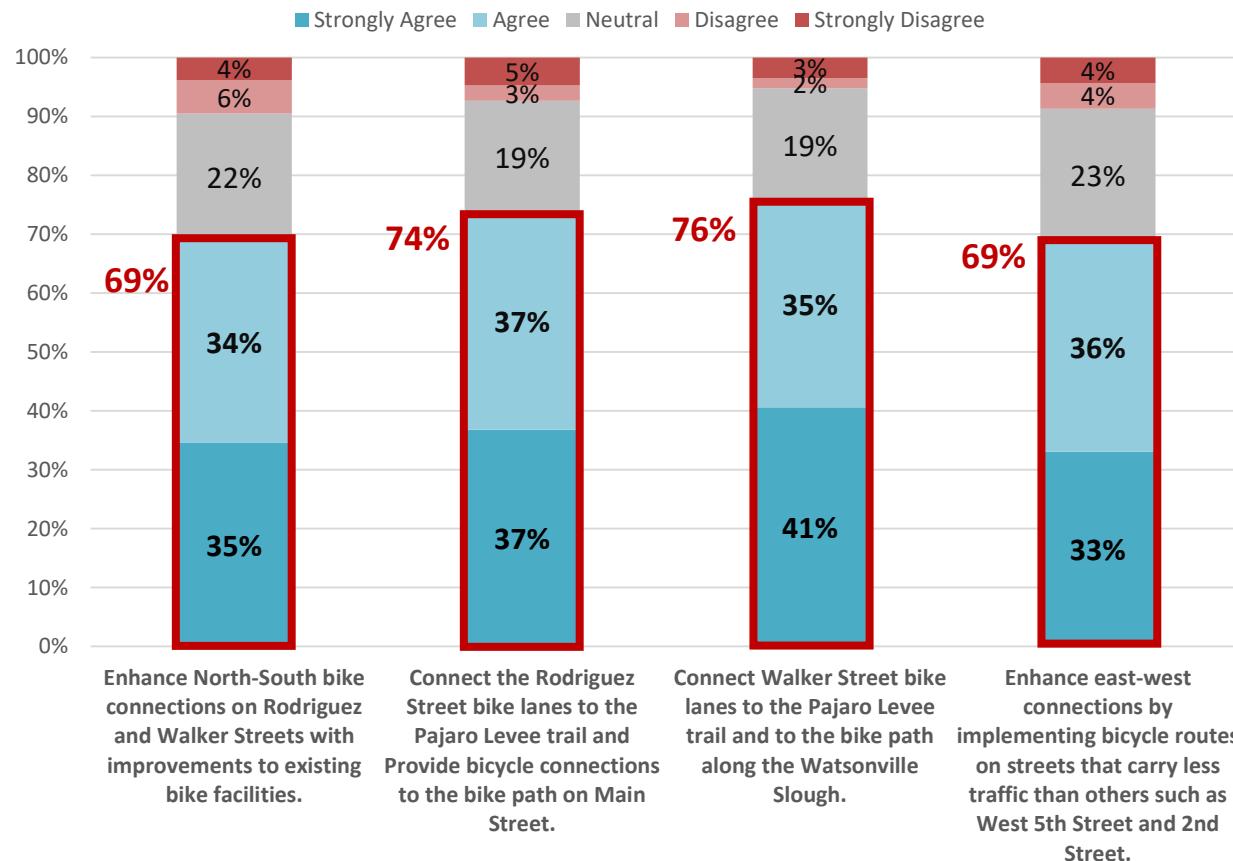
E Beach Street (SR 152)

What is your level of agreement or disagreement with potentially converting East Beach Street & East Lake Avenue into two-way streets?



Regional Bike Connections

What is your level of agreement or disagreement with the strategies proposed to support the enhancement of local and regional bike connections?



Open-Ended Responses

- Overwhelming desire to **incorporate parklets and widened sidewalks** into the downtown yet there is less agreement with reductions in parking and travel lanes. Continue discussions re. **trade-offs** of related to wider sidewalks and/or parklets. There will undoubtedly be the need to take space from travel lanes or parking to accommodate these enhancements.
- Desire for a **pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment** in Watsonville. Create an environment that is more friendly for active mode travelers.
- Traffic concerns are linked to **reduced bicycle and pedestrian safety**.
- Concerned about the need to reduce traffic and fear that traffic could become worse on streets such as Riverside Drive and Lake Street.

Questions and Feedback

Topics for Feedback and Direction

- Workplace Industrial characteristics
- Flex Neighborhoods – height and intensity/density
- Hwy 152 – Main Street priorities, Beach/Lake approach
- Key community benefits, besides affordable housing (already incentivized by State law)

City of Watsonville

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City Council Study Session #2 | November 9, 2021