

City of Vacaville Downtown Specific Plan Summary

December 7, 2021

The final draft of the Downtown Specific Plan (“DTSP”) is now available on the City’s website: <https://bit.ly/FinalDTSP>. Hardcopies may also be viewed at the Town Square and Ulatis Cultural Center Libraries, and at the City of Vacaville Community Development Department. Please send any comments and/or questions to Tyra Hays, Senior Planner and DTSP Project Manager, at Tyra.Hays@cityofvacaville.com or by calling (707) 449-5366.

Introduction

Where do you like to go on the weekends or during your vacation? What is it about that place that draws you in and has you coming back time and time again? Have you ever identified the specific reasons you like to visit these places? Perhaps they’re quaint and charming. Maybe they’re bustling and full of energy. It’s likely the places you like to visit have a combination of great restaurants and bars, entertainment venues, service-oriented businesses, and/or cute retail shops. Maybe these places are naturally beautiful or contain great art and music scenes. Whatever it may be, a mixture of factors, such as great restaurants, cute shops, natural and created beauty, is likely the reason you like visiting the places you do.

One of the many purposes of the DTSP is to capture, and build upon, all the great features Downtown already possesses, and to make it a “destination location” – a place people *choose* to visit during their leisure time. Downtown is also beginning to experience a positive change as it relates to the creation of new restaurants and cafes. This report summarizes some of the many ways the DTSP recommends making Downtown Vacaville a desirable destination location for residents and visitors alike.

Downtown Specific Plan

The DTSP planning process was driven by the community. Beginning in early 2019, City staff and DTSP’s consultant team held several meetings, webinars, and street interviews to gather input from the public regarding what they would like to see in Downtown. The input received generally fell into the following themes:

- Create a cohesive vision for the Downtown.
- Create a safer and more family-friendly Downtown.
- Provide more lighting in streets and alleys.
- Maintain cleanliness within Downtown locations, parks, and creek areas.
- Increase art opportunities (e.g., art walk or trail, art installations).
- Encourage ground-floor businesses to engage with passing pedestrians by having well-lit display windows, sidewalk displays, and outdoor seating areas.
- Provide additional, protected bicycle facilities that connect to other parts of the city.
- Provide multiuse trails for increased mobility options.
- Make Andrews Park a focal point and enhanced destination for users.
- Make gateway improvements to improve Downtown visibility.
- Respond to the need for fewer offices and more restaurants and retail boutiques.

The DTSP addresses all of these themes and more. The first part of the DTSP, consisting of Chapters 1 thru 5, provides:

- A policy topic summary table for the readers' convenience;
- An introduction that discusses community input and identifies all the public input events and activities;
- Background information;
- The vision, goals, and policies of the DTSP;
- The setting and context of the DTSP;
- The development framework of the DTSP, which identifies and discusses the recommended projects the City should consider to address the needs and wants of the community; and
- A summary table of all the recommended projects and/or policies the City should consider to implement the vision, goals, and policies of the DTSP.

The second part of the DTSP, referred to as the Downtown Design Standards and Guidelines (“DDSG”) section and consisting of Chapters 7 thru 14, will function as the development regulatory document for Downtown. Highlights of the DDSG are discussed in subsequent sections of the report. To summarize, the DDSG includes:

- A user guide, as shown in Figure 1;
- Zoning districts and map (i.e., Downtown Core, Downtown Neighborhood Medium);
- Residential Prototypes;
- Land Use Regulations (i.e., permitted uses, conditionally permitted uses);
- Development Regulations (i.e., building heights, residential density, lot coverage, parking requirements);
- Design Regulations (i.e., landscaping, building design, building colors, and signage).

Figure 1. DTSP User Guide



Starting Underground and Heading Up

This report summarizes existing approved infrastructure projects and DTSP recommended infrastructure projects for Downtown starting with underground water and sewer pipes and working its way up to address directional signage to guide visitors to Downtown. The approved and recommended projects support the City’s vision for the DTSP to create a healthy, vibrant, and thriving downtown that serves as a destination location. It should be noted that many of these improvements are integrated with one another, and if approved, would in some cases be constructed simultaneously. All approved and recommended projects can be found in [Chapter 5](#), Implementation, of the DTSP.

Infrastructure

Much of the sewer and water infrastructure located in the core of downtown is in need of replacing due to age and/or insufficient size to support the uses the community would like to see in Downtown, such as additional restaurants, the potential expansion of existing restaurants, entertainment venues, and residential units within Downtown. This section addresses sewer and water infrastructure improvements identified in the DTSP.

Sewer – The City Council has approved the replacement of several aging sewer pipes located within alleyways and other places in and around Downtown. Some sewer pipes will be upsized, such as the sewer pipes located north of Peach Tree Avenue, in West Street, and in the alley west of Mason Street. Other sewer pipes will be replaced with same sized pipes and or fitted with a cured-in-place liner to prevent liquid from entering or exiting the walls of the pipeline.

Alleyways containing sewer pipelines in need of replacement will be resurfaced, thus improving their appearance and usability. Sewer improvements will be constructed in phases. Sewer projects anticipated to be constructed in 2022 are identified as “near term” projects in the plan. The remaining sewer projects will begin construction as funding becomes available.

Water – Several water infrastructure projects are identified in the DTSP including replacing aging water lines within alleyways and elsewhere, upsizing water pipes to meet fire flow requirements for future intensified development within Downtown, and constructing other improvements related to water supply, pumping, storage, and distribution within Downtown. Sewer and water pipes located within the same alleyways will be replaced at the same time in order to minimize inconvenience to residents, businesses, and visitors, and to allow for quicker alleyway resurfacing.

Street Improvements

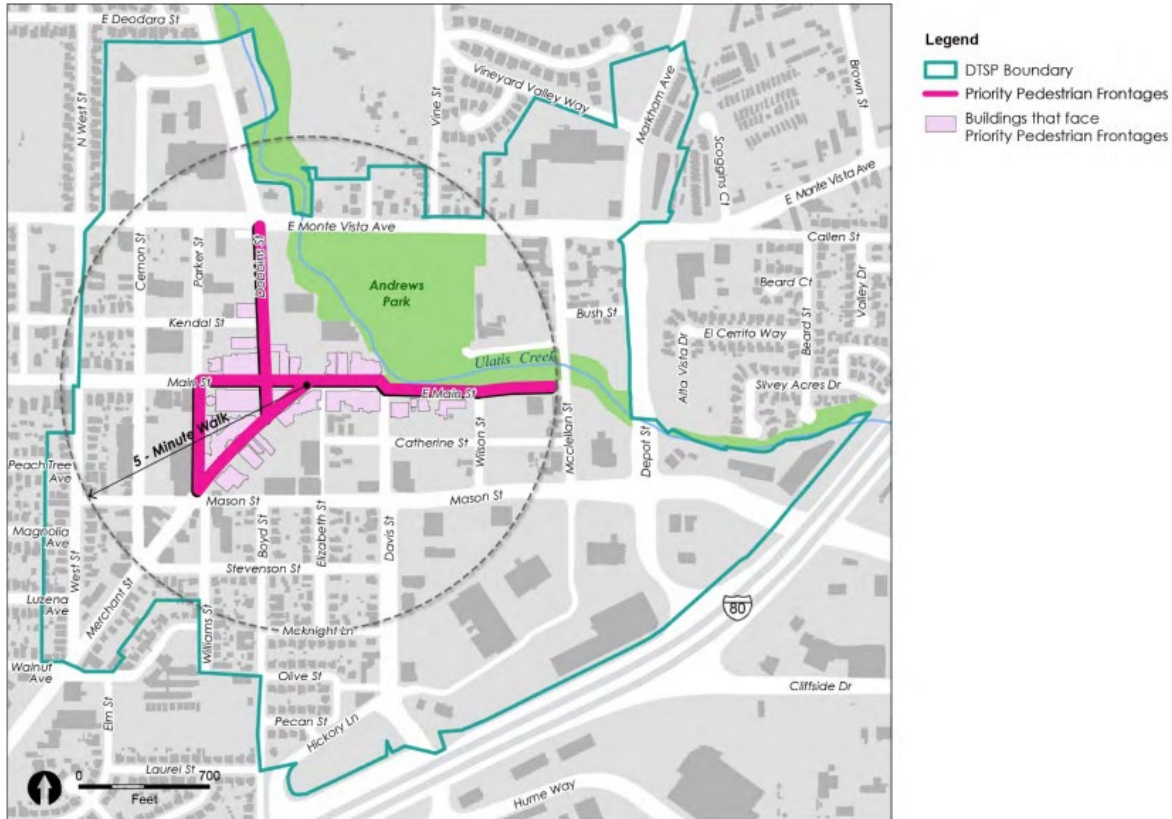
This section identifies and discusses recommended roadway improvements to meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. Roadways that are designed to meet the needs of cars and trucks, pedestrians, and cyclists simultaneously are called “complete streets.”

Bike Lanes – Several streets are being recommended to be redesigned to accommodate on-street bike lanes. These streets include sections of Catherine Street, Davis Street, Dobbins Street, McClellan, and Markham Avenue. An off-street bike lane that runs through Andrews Park is recommended along East Monte Vista Avenue. It is also recommended that the City continue to evaluate ways to extend the existing Ulatis Creek shared use path (i.e. bikes and pedestrians), currently located behind the Travis Credit Union Headquarters building, to Downtown.

Pedestrian Corridors – The DTSP recommends the creation of “pedestrian corridors” along portions of Main Street, Merchant Street, and Dobbins Street, as shown in Figure 2. Pedestrian corridors are a way to increase foot traffic and to help support economic development. One major way to increase foot traffic along these pedestrian corridors is to improve the pedestrians’ interaction with ground uses such as restaurants and specialty retail stores through the use of large windows, outdoor displays, and outdoor seating. This allows pedestrians to easily see what is being sold or consumed. It also allows pedestrians to sample the atmosphere through sight, smell and sound, which will hopefully encourage them to visit the business. The DTSP includes recommendations to prohibit *new* office uses on the ground floor along the priority pedestrian frontage areas. Existing offices would be permitted to remain in place, and new offices would be permitted on second floors and elsewhere within Downtown. In the event an existing ground floor office user moves or closes, that space may not be reoccupied as an office.

It is also recommended that the City, in partnership with the Downtown Vacaville Business Improvement District, pursue programs that provide incentives, such as low- or no-cost loans, grants, fee deferrals, and supplemental marketing support, to businesses that make changes to activate and/or reactivate their street frontage and/or conduct façade improvements. Additional incentives, such as relocation assistance, may be provided in an effort to encourage nonretail businesses that do not rely on walk-in clients to relocate to upper-floor space.

Figure 2. Priority Pedestrian Corridors



Permitted Uses

Once approved, the DTSP will function as the Zoning Code for Downtown. A comprehensive list of permitted and conditionally permitted uses can be found in [Chapter 10](#). The DTSP is intended to streamline the development review and permitting process for uses desired within Downtown.

According to the economists who helped develop the DTSP, it is imperative that the DTSP permit and encourage additional residential development to support existing businesses and encouraging new businesses by expanding the customer base. If Vacaville desires to have additional restaurants, specialty retail stores, and other entertainment uses within Downtown, it must have the built-in customer base and foot traffic to support these uses.

The DTSP prioritizes new housing projects through the use of “residential prototypes.” Residential prototypes are desired types of multifamily housing that the City would like to see constructed within Downtown. There are four prototypes consisting of a residential use, or a combination of residential with ground-floor retail in a mixed-use configuration. The four prototypes include:

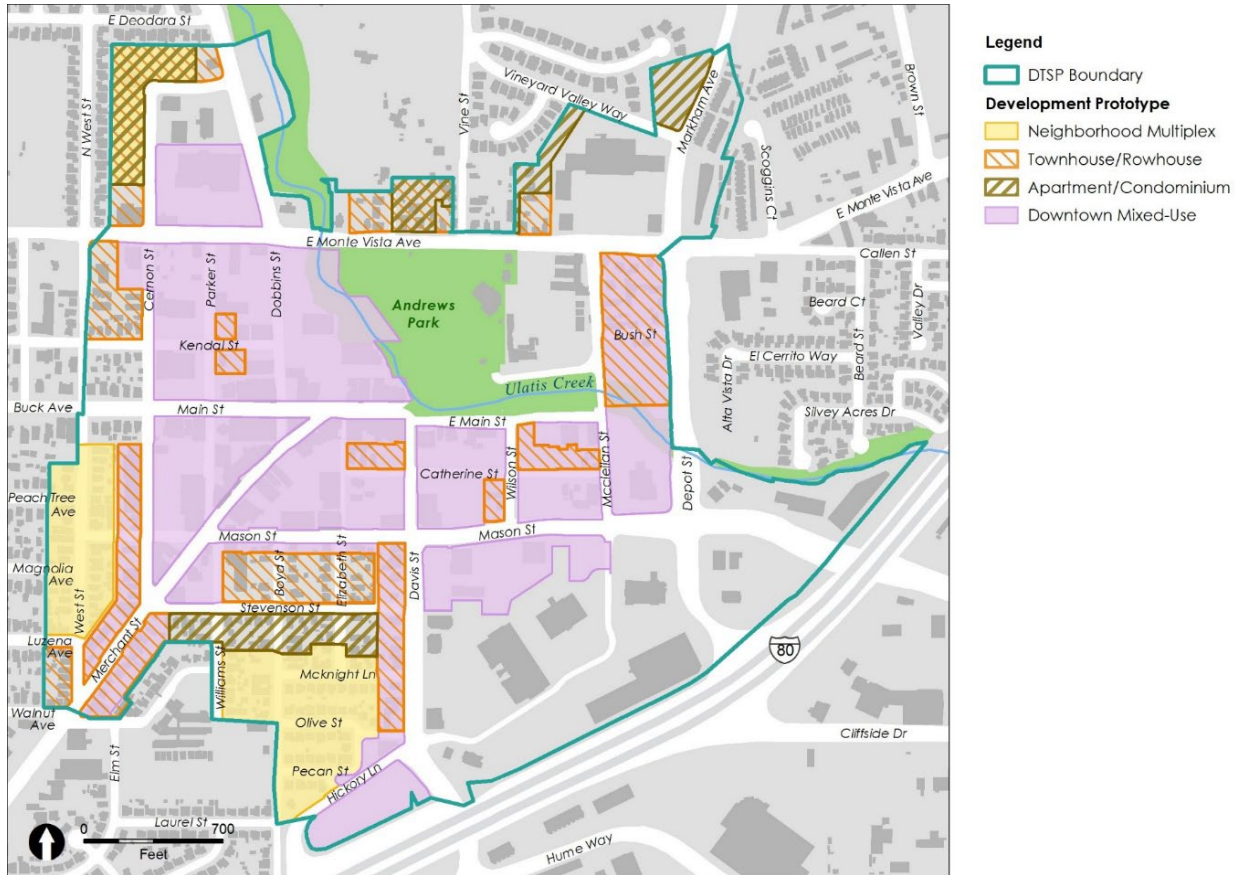
- *Neighborhood Multiplex* – This is typically a single residential building containing three to six attached dwelling units. The units may be side-by-side or stacked. These buildings are scaled to fit within low- to medium-density residential neighborhoods and the edge of mixed-use areas, and typically consist of 2 to 3 stories. They may have a shared entry

or individual entries along frontages. These buildings are usually separated from adjacent buildings, and set back from the street and sidewalk.

- *Townhouse/Rowhouse* – This type of housing consists of a series of attached or detached dwelling units placed side by side. This type of development typically has a medium sized footprint, and is scaled to fit within medium- to high-density residential neighborhoods and mixed-use areas, and consists of 2 to 3 stories. They are often used as a transitional form of housing between lower and higher density neighborhoods. This type of development most commonly includes attached units, resembling a series of small homes with individual entries along street frontages.
- *Apartment/Condominium* – This type of housing consists of a building or group of buildings containing multiple attached dwellings in a stacked configuration. This type of development usually has a medium to large-footprint, and often has a continuous or semi-continuous façade along the frontage of the building, and ranges from 2 to 5 stories. Apartment complexes may include multiple buildings and common open space.
- *Downtown Mixed Use* – This type of development typically consists of a single building providing a vertical mix of uses with ground-floor commercial storefronts accommodating active retail uses, and upper floors providing for complementary residential uses. Residential use typically constitutes a minimum of fifty-percent of the total gross building square footage. This use often has a medium to large footprint that resembles a main street environment with a continuous façade along the block. This type of development usually has a minimal to no setback from the sidewalk, and consists of 2 to 5 stories. This type of development is a key component of the Downtown Core because it fosters street-level engagement and contributes to a vibrant and walkable destination. The City hopes to see the former CVS site, located on East Monte Vista Avenue, between Cernon and Dobbins Street, be re-developed with a large mixed use development.

The prototypes are not site specific, but rather can be applied to a number of locations in Downtown as shown in Figure 3. In each case, the particular prototype will need to be designed to reflect site-specific conditions and considerations, while exhibiting the intended use, building type, building form, and other characteristics as defined in this chapter.

Figure 3. Consolidated Prototype Locations



Proposed projects that are consistent with a prototype are eligible for streamlined development review and other incentives. The intent is to expedite desired development and to provide project proponents and the community with some assurance as to the City’s expectations, regulations, and processes.

Parking

The DTSP focuses on improving the management of the existing on-street and off-street parking lots. The recommended parking strategies are broken up into three categories:

- *Capital strategies* include revised and updated signage, striping, circulation, and amenities for existing parking lots and roadways, and consolidation of parking in low-occupancy areas to provide room for other uses such as bicycle facilities (i.e., bike lanes). The strategies focus on improving safety, circulation, and appearance.
- *Operational strategies* address the management of parking through time limits, curbside use, enforcement, and shared parking agreements. These strategies focus on utilizing parking more efficiently and effectively.

- *Policy strategies* address the City’s approach to parking at a policy and regulation level. The DTSP has a stated goal of managing parking resources in Downtown to promote a “park-once-and-walk” environment.

A comprehensive list of parking strategies can be found in [Chapter 4](#) of the DTSP on page 4-76. These strategies focus on evaluating the performance of existing and future parking and determining what parking requirements will apply to future land use. Additional information about parking may be found in Appendix H, Parking Analysis and Policy Strategy.

Landscaping and Public Spaces

Landscaping – The DTSP recommends enhanced landscaping to help further beautify Downtown, and to provide shade for pedestrian and parking areas. In addition, the DTSP calls for clearing out sections of Ulatis Creek to help re-establish its natural beauty.

Town Square Expansion – Town Square is currently the most popular and recognizable public place in Downtown, used for outdoor dining, music concerts, festivals, and other uses. The DTSP recommends expanding Town Square into a “Town Center.” Not only would this make the area more functional for large gatherings and special events, it would also create an opportunity to unify other civic assets adjacent to it including the Town Square Library, the McBride Senior Center, Andrews Park, and Main Street.

If approved by the City Council, Town Center expansion would be constructed in phases. The DTSP includes a short term (10 years) and long term (25 years) conceptual plan, as shown in Figure 4 and 5. The main goals of the proposed Town Center Expansion are to increase use of this area, increase pedestrian traffic, and to encourage more group gatherings and community events. There may be an opportunity to permanently locate a farmer’s market pavilion in this area, and to create small start-up or incubator spaces for small restaurants and/or small retail shops in this area during the later construction phase of this recommended project.

In general, the short term plan focuses on improving the existing environment through the use of decorative concrete, the construction of a direct pedestrian pathway to a new trail along the southwest side of the creek, and the installation of decorative lighting and art pieces. Originally, this conceptual plan considered closing the northern portion of Merchant Street to vehicular traffic as shown in Figure 5. After receiving comments from the public, the City is no longer considering this option, and Main Street was never being considered for closure. Both Merchant Street and Main Street will only be subject to temporary closures for special events. This is reflective of the City’s current practice through the use of bollards.

The long term conceptual plan for the Town Center Expansion would build off of the short term plan. Therefore, any changes in design to the short term plan will be reflected in the long term plan. The long term plan envisions the Town Square Library surface parking lot being replaced with new residential and/or commercial buildings that would be required to incorporate structured parking into their design. Given the long term nature of this conceptual plan, it is likely to change significantly from what is shown. Final design, permitted uses, and the timing of construction will be subject to future public input, public hearings, and City Council approval.

Figure 4. Town Center Expansion – Short Term (10 Years) Conceptual Plan



Figure 5. Town Center Expansion Long Term (25 Years) Conceptual Plan



Art and Lighting

The DTSP recommends that the City create an Art Master Plan and a Lighting Master Plan. The Art Master Plan will focus on identifying a process to allow art installations in the public right-of-way and murals on existing and proposed building façades that inspire, activate, and energize Downtown. Public Art is a great way to attract visitors to Downtown. Figure 6 is an example of mural art.

Figure 6. Public Art Mural



The DTSP recommends that the City conduct a Downtown Lighting Study to ensure that high traffic areas are adequately lit. In addition, the DTSP identifies the importance of different types of lighting, such as; art installations as a form of functional lighting, accent lighting, pole lights, and bollard lights. Lighting to and within parking lots is especially important.

Directional Signage for Wayfinding

Directional signage for wayfinding might be one of most important factors addressed by the DTSP. The DTSP contains several wayfinding signage recommendations including:

- *Wayfinding Master Plan (Phase 1)*. This phase is currently being implemented. It involves installing automobile oriented directional signs throughout the Downtown to improve accessibility and visibility to the Downtown. Specifically, this includes installing two types of trailblazer signs, mainly affixed to existing streetlights or placed on separate posts throughout the city. The purpose of the trailblazer signs is to help direct motorists to Downtown and to available parking within the Plan Area.
- *Wayfinding Master Plan (Phase 2)*. Install new gateway signs, pedestrian and bicycle signage, and freeway oriented signage at different access points into Downtown catering to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Figure 7 is an example of signage that is geared towards pedestrians. The City will be working with the DV BID to create a program that would allow business owners to purchase signs for inclusion on a “pedestrian signage tree.” Not only would this help pedestrians locate businesses, it would also provide businesses with another way to advertise, and any cost associated with purchasing these signage placards would be a reinvestment into Downtown.

Part two of the Wayfinding Master Plan also includes replacing and/or enhancing the existing freeway marquee signs. Marquee signs should be freeway-scale monument signs visible from I-80 to elevate Downtown as a recognized area for drivers traveling both eastbound and westbound along I-80.

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Signage – Phase 2 of the Wayfinding Master Plan will also include signage geared towards pedestrians, such as the sign show in Figure 7, and towards bicyclists. This signage will complement the enhanced pedestrian and bicycle paths and amenities planned for Downtown.

Figure 7. Example of Business/Pedestrian Signage



Conclusion

This report provides a high level summary review of the DTSP. An additional summary table is provided at the beginning of the DTSP that helps direct the reader to pages that address their specific interests. The summary table is organized by policy topic, such as Local “Tenant Mix” or “Parking Management.”

Next Steps

January 25, 2022 – City Council Public Hearing and Presentation

February 8, 2022 – City Council Final Action