



3. URBAN FORM AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the existing urban form of the planning area and highlights opportunities for urban design improvements. It describes the structure of the planning area as well as the existing characteristics of physical form, including scale and height; block size and lot pattern; streetscapes; connectivity; and focal points. Historic character is discussed in Chapter 4 of this report. Figure 3.1 illustrates the downtown structure and Figure 3.2 shows the building footprints and blocks for the planning area.

Downtown Structure

The urban structure of the planning area is defined largely by the transportation infrastructure and the creeks that run through it (see Figure 3.1). US 101 bisects the area in a north-south direction, separating the two principal downtown commercial districts, the central business district around Courthouse Square to the east and the historic commercial core around Railroad Square to the west. The railway tracks further divide the planning area in a north-south direction, generally flanked by industrial development that separates residential areas on either side from one another. Highway 12 generally forms the southern boundary of the planning area, although an elevated segment of this roadway separates development on Sebastopol Road from the rest the planning area, with connections via underpasses at Dutton, Olive Street, and the railway tracks.

Topography and Views Overview

The topography of the area is generally flat and slopes gently toward the southwest. Ground elevations range from approximately 140 feet above sea level at the western boundary of the planning area, to 175 feet at the eastern boundary, to its highest point along Highway 12 in the south, 185 feet above sea level.

The General Plan identifies and protects views of the Sonoma Mountains as an important scenic resource. Given the location the planning area on relatively flat terrain in the Sonoma Valley and the extent of existing development, views of the Sonoma Mountains from the planning area are limited; however, views of the Mountains are available looking south along E Street in the downtown area. The General Plan also identifies two scenic roads which offer direct views to areas of exceptional beauty, natural resources, or landmarks of historic and cultural interest within the planning area: the full length of US 101 and the segment of Highway 12 west of US 101 to Fulton Road. Within the planning area, the 2007 Downtown Station Area Specific Plan identifies the historic water tower in Railroad Square as an important scenic resource and includes policies to protect views of it from Fourth Street. Located on the SMART site west of the tracks, the water tower has been dismantled to preserve its structural integrity, though it is still located on site.



View of the Sonoma Mountain hillside looking down Second and E Street.

Figure 3.1 Downtown Structure

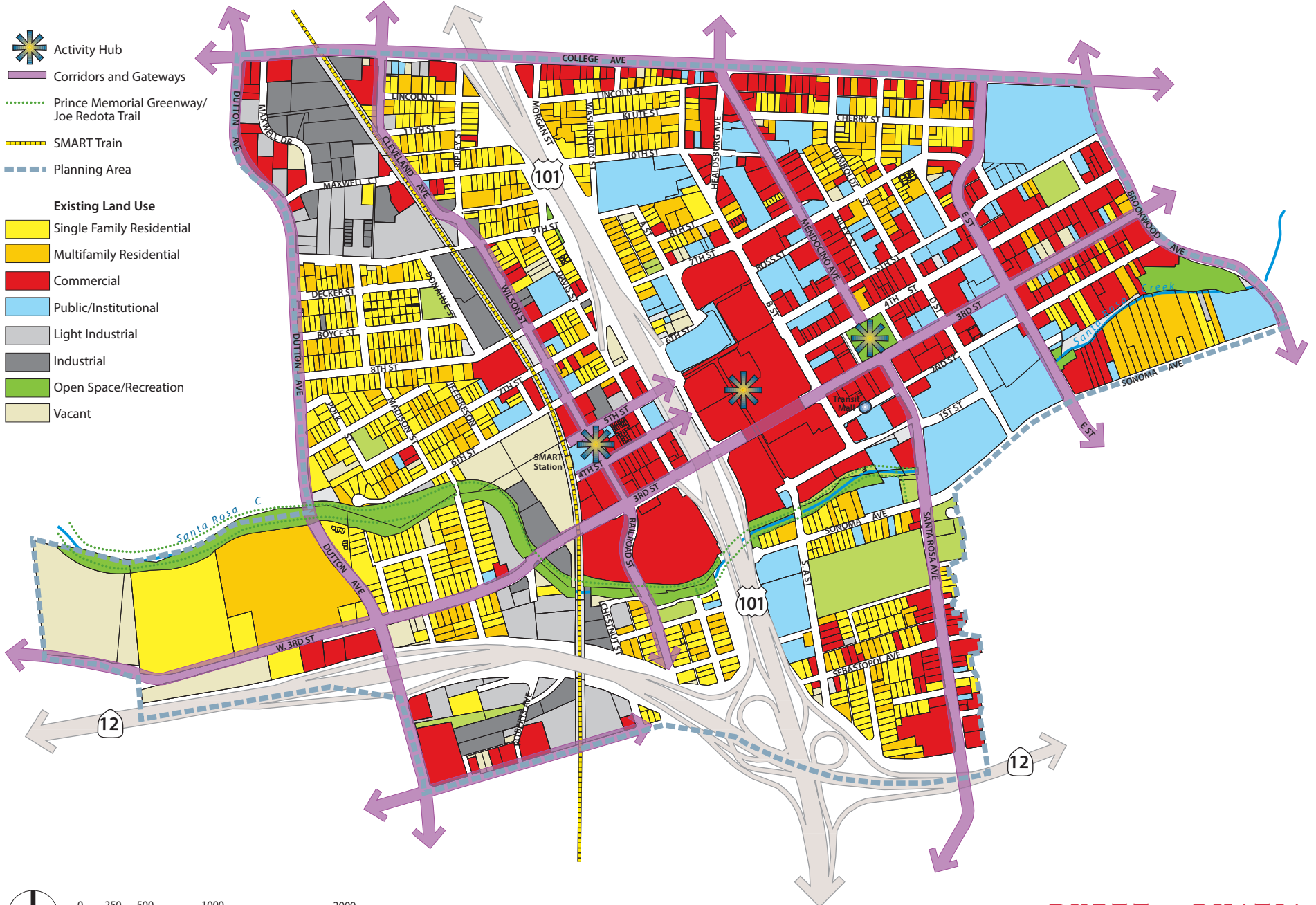


Figure 3.2 Building Footprints

- Building Footprint
- Park/Open Space
- School
- SMART Train
- Planning Area



3.2 Urban Form and Design by Subarea

Downtown Santa Rosa is made up of commercial, industrial and residential areas. For each, a description of the scale and height, block size and lot pattern, streetscape, connections and barriers, and any parks and plazas are described in this section.

Commercial Areas

Commercial districts in the planning area include Courthouse Square, Railroad Square, Santa Rosa Plaza Mall, East of E Street, Santa Rosa Avenue, and College Avenue. Key elements of urban form in each are described below.

Courthouse Square

Widely recognized as the City's central business district, the Courthouse Square subarea is generally bounded by Seventh Street, B Street, E Street (including parcels that face on both sides of the street), and Santa Rosa Creek, with parts of Mendocino Avenue that share similar characteristics with the rest of Courthouse Square as shown in Figure 3.3 Courthouse Square. The street grid in this area is generally compact and rectilinear with blocks typically sized 200 feet by 500. Parcels size vary depending on when buildings were built, older buildings have narrower and small lots, ranging from 5,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet in area, where more modern buildings built from the seventies to today have bigger parcel sizes that average 60,000 square feet in area. Larger lots generally contain civic or government buildings.

Courthouse Square is a major regional employment, commercial, and transportation center with a mix of commercial, office, and a few residential buildings. Lot coverage can be up to 100 percent for some of the older buildings, such as those along Fourth Street, whereas newer



Figure 3.3. Courthouse Square block pattern and building footprints.

Courthouse Square: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: The architecture styles vary depending on the year of construction. Pictured is the historic Empire Building and La Rosa restaurant adjacent to Old Courthouse Square Plaza.



Streetscape: Parking lots, blank building sides, and graffiti negatively affect the pedestrian experience. Looking down Ross Street from Mendocino Avenue.



Public Places: View of a café looking down Mendocino near Fifth Street. Outdoor seating such as this café provides an opportunity for activity along the street.



Urban Form and Architecture: View of a government building at D and Second streets. The bulky massing of the concrete building and angled-down glass creates an imposing streetscape.



Public Places: Newly reunited Old Courthouse Square provides an important civic gathering area, public space, and is at the heart of Courthouse Square.



Vegetation and Landscape: Large pine trees enhance the character of the square and provide shade during hot days. Small planters filled with bushes or flowers provide additional landscaping.



Streetscape: View of the compact, historic commercial buildings along Fourth Street. Streetscape improvements include bulb-outs and pedestrian crosswalk, outside dining, planters and street trees, continuous street frontage, and pedestrian-scaled buildings with store frontage.



Streetscape: View looking down Third Street shows a well-landscaped streetscape with on-street parking and painted bike lanes.

buildings typically include surface parking lots and setbacks which can lower lot coverage down to 50 percent. Building heights vary, with some of the tallest buildings up to five or six stories and 100 feet tall, however buildings in this area are typically under three stories. Typical architecture features largely depend on when the building was built; many pre-war buildings along Fourth Street are made from brick or stone with fine façade detailing and windows and doors facing the street frontage. By contrast, the more modern buildings - especially the government-owned buildings on D and E Streets - tend to be taller with fewer doors and less variation in color and materials, which together with blank walls creates a bulkier look and a less intimate feel.

Streets in Courthouse Square generally have an east-west and north-south direction with intersections at every corner. The rectangular grid and high connectivity of the streets make it easy for pedestrians to navigate through the planning area, although the Santa Rosa Plaza Mall and US 101 present barriers for people traveling to and from Railroad Square. North of Fourth Street, the blocks are longer than in other parts of this area, which affects pedestrian movement. However, existing surface parking lots provide connections for pedestrians between B Street and Mendocino Avenue and between Ripley and Humboldt.

Streetscapes in the downtown core generally conform with the City's Main Street or Avenue classification, providing 10-foot travel lane in each direction with an 8-foot parking lane on either side although there are a few narrower Alley streets as well. Major streets, such as B Street, E Street, and Santa Rosa Avenue, are four lanes wide although the rest of the downtown streets are two lanes wide. Fourth Street is unique in that it has older buildings with angled parking and the outdoor dining, landscaping, street trees, planters, bike lockers, wide sidewalks, and wayfinding create a pleasant pedestrian realm. Sidewalk width is typically at 5-foot minimum, although areas with more storefronts and outdoor seating can be up to 14 feet or more. Curbside plantings are usually present throughout and active street frontages help contribute to a walkable pedestrian environment.

The primary park and plaza within the downtown core is Courthouse Square. Since the 1960s, this public space had been bisected by Santa Rosa and Mendocino Avenues, however, it was reunited into a large outdoor plaza in 2017 designed to hold large events as well as a place for guests and local workers to enjoy. Some of the subarea's tallest buildings surround the plaza and it is home to several large redwood trees, which contribute to a sense of place and support the identity of Santa Rosa as the capital of the Redwood Empire. The plaza gets sunlight throughout the year, however in the southern portion of the plaza, there is little shade to cool people in the summer. Other public spaces in the Courthouse Square area include Comstock Mall, which is a pedestrian-only paseo which connects Second Street to the Transit Mall, and the Prince Memorial Greenway Trail along the Santa Rosa Creek. While the creek and greenway are only about 300 yards to the south of Courthouse Square, there is little in the way of visual cues or signage that promotes a connection between these spaces.

Railroad Square

The Railroad Square subarea, shown on Figure 3.4, includes Historic Railroad Square, a strip of small-scale commercial buildings along Wilson Street between Sixth and Eighth streets, and two commercial properties between Third Street and Santa Rosa Creek that contain hotels. Designated a preservation district, Historic Railroad Square is generally bounded by US 101, Sixth Street, Santa Rosa Creek, and Third Street and includes buildings that date from the early 1900s. The street grid in this area is generally rectilinear with shorter blocks typically sized 360 feet by 260 feet. Individual lots within Historic Railroad Square and up Wilson Street are typically small and rectangular in shape, ranging from 5,000 square feet to 21,000 square feet in area. The grid is disrupted at the SMART tracks, where Fourth Street terminates, creating the large property west of the tracks known as the SMART site. South of Third Street, the grid is again disrupted as Wilson Avenue becomes Railroad Street as it curves toward the creek and connects to Olive Street. The largest lot along Railroad Street is 350,600 square feet in area, while the SMART site around 440,000 square feet. The eastern perimeter of the

area is defined by US 101 and the Santa Rosa Plaza mall. Key east-west streets formerly connected to Courthouse Square, but now pass under an elevated portion of US 101 and terminate at the mall.

Railroad Square mostly contains a variety of shops, restaurants, offices, hotels, and other commercial uses although there are a few residential properties as well. Lot coverage varies depending on the age and use of the building, ranging from nearly 100 percent for some of the historic commercial buildings to 25 percent for the newer hotels. Building heights range from one story and 15 feet tall to four stories and 50 feet tall, but most buildings are typically under two stories. Typical architecture features found within this area include storefronts with large windows, detailed facades, and a variety of brick-and-stuccowork which provide a distinct, quaint, and intimate charm. Some of the newer buildings have large parking lots surrounding the buildings which disrupts the continuity of existing building facades.

Overall Historic Railroad Square features a compact, walkable street grid that makes it easy for pedestrians to navigate through this area. However, barriers such as US 101 and Santa Rosa Plaza Mall block connections to Courthouse Square and the rail tracks disconnect Historic Railroad Square from the SMART station area. The underpasses all contain sidewalks, and there are striped bicycle lanes in the underpasses at Fifth and Sixth streets. The Fourth Street underpass has lighting and paving treatments intended to enhance the pedestrian experience. The Sixth Street underpass also has lighting, but the Fifth Street underpass does not. Overall the colorless concrete of the freeway creates a stark environment in the underpasses.

Streetscapes within Railroad Square generally conform with the City's Main Street classification, providing one 10-foot travel lane in each direction, and on-street parking is a mixture of parallel and angled to the curb. Sidewalk width is typically at least 5-feet with an addition 3 to 4-feet for tree wells. The presence of curbside plantings and zero-setback active street frontages contribute to a walkable and lively pedestrian environment.

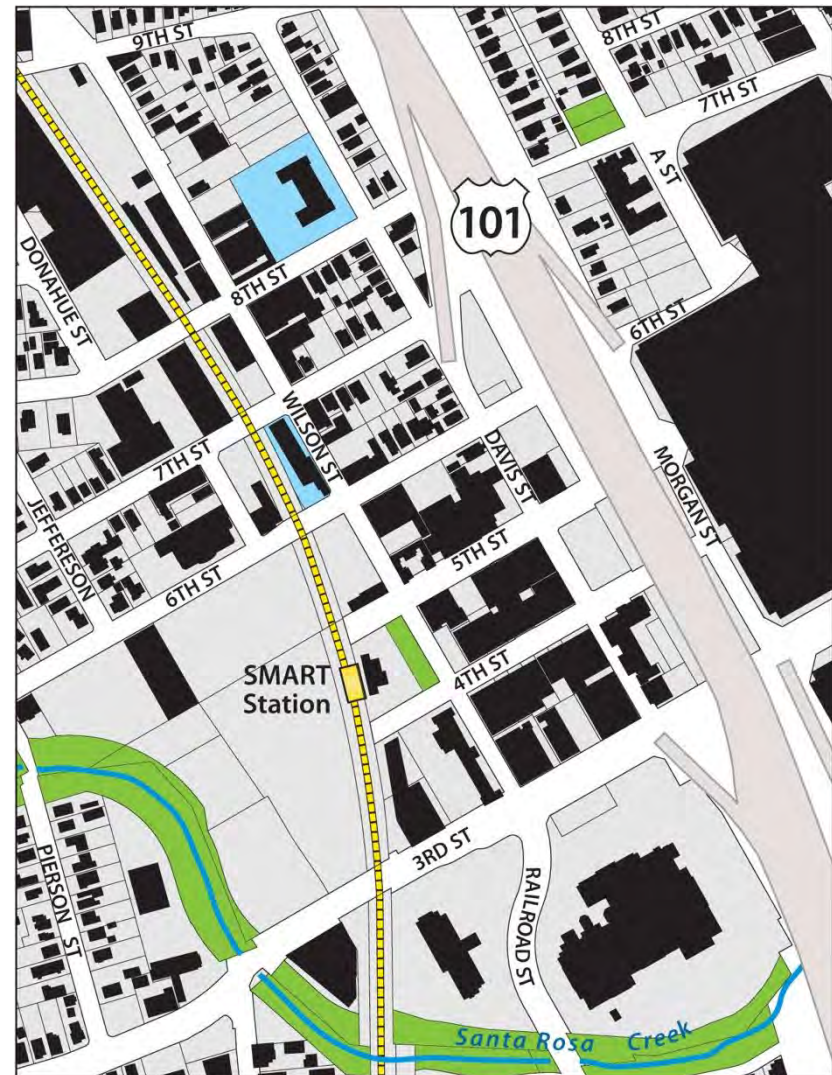


Figure 3.4. Railroad Square block pattern and building footprints.

Railroad Square: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: Looking down Davis Street from Fourth Street, a modern three-story office building shown left contrasts with the historic Whistlestop Antiques building on the right.



Streetscape: Stores typically have pedestrian-scaled and highly activated storefronts that encourage window shopping and walkability.



Streetscape: View of the US 101 underpass at Fourth Street, one of the primary connections between Railroad Square, Santa Rosa Plaza Mall, and Courthouse Square. The large "Railroad Square" letters provide a sense of arrival and has wide sidewalks and decorative streetlights.



Public Places: Tucked-back privately owned and publicly accessible spaces, like the one shown above, provide opportunities for people to sit outside.



Public Places: Other than Depot Park (shown right) Railroad Square area largely relies on private places that are publicly accessible in the form of cafes and outdoor seating areas for eating.



Vegetation and Landscape: Depot Park is the only designated park in Railroad Square and has a variety of tree types and vegetation.



Streetscape: View of the small-scale commercial buildings located along Wilson Street at Seventh. Although traditionally not a part of Historic Railroad Square, these buildings are still historic and act as a connection further up to Maxwell Court.



Streetscape: View looking down Fourth Street shows tall street trees, narrow roadway width, and active storefronts all help make the area feel more walkable.

The main public park within Railroad Square is Santa Rosa Depot Park which sits between the historic train station and Hotel La Rose. The park is 200 feet by 50 feet and features public art, grass areas, benches, and various species of trees. The coffee shops and outdoor dining venues that are found throughout the area offer privately owned but publicly accessible spaces. There are two main walking and biking trails located in this subarea: The Prince Memorial Greenway along the Santa Rosa Creek and the Joe Rodota Trail, which runs in the railroad right of way. There are no strong connections to the creek from the Railroad Square area, however, given the size of the properties adjacent to the creek and the fact that they are not traversed by streets or trails that provide linkage.

Santa Rosa Plaza Mall

The Santa Rosa Plaza Mall subarea is bounded by US 101, Santa Rosa Creek, B Street, and Sixth, A, and Seventh streets as shown on Figure 3.5. The mall, built in the early 1980s, takes up about five city blocks with the parking structures that surround it taking up another five blocks. The lot and building sizes are very large in comparison to those found in Historic Railroad Square and Courthouse Square, as the mall square footage alone is nearly 700,000 square feet in size. The buildings and parking garages take up most of the block and with limited street access creates a superblock which limits the number of streets and pedestrian walkways that connect through the site. The stand-alone buildings and lots along the Santa Rosa Creek are smaller in scale and have an average lot size of 32,000 square feet.

Lot coverage is 80 percent on average with much of the building built directly up to the property line. Building heights are typically two stories tall, except for the Macy's building which is three stories and 58 feet tall. Architectural features are typical of shopping malls from this era and have little façade articulation, flat roofs, few windows, blank walls, and limited entrance locations, all of which creates a boxier look.

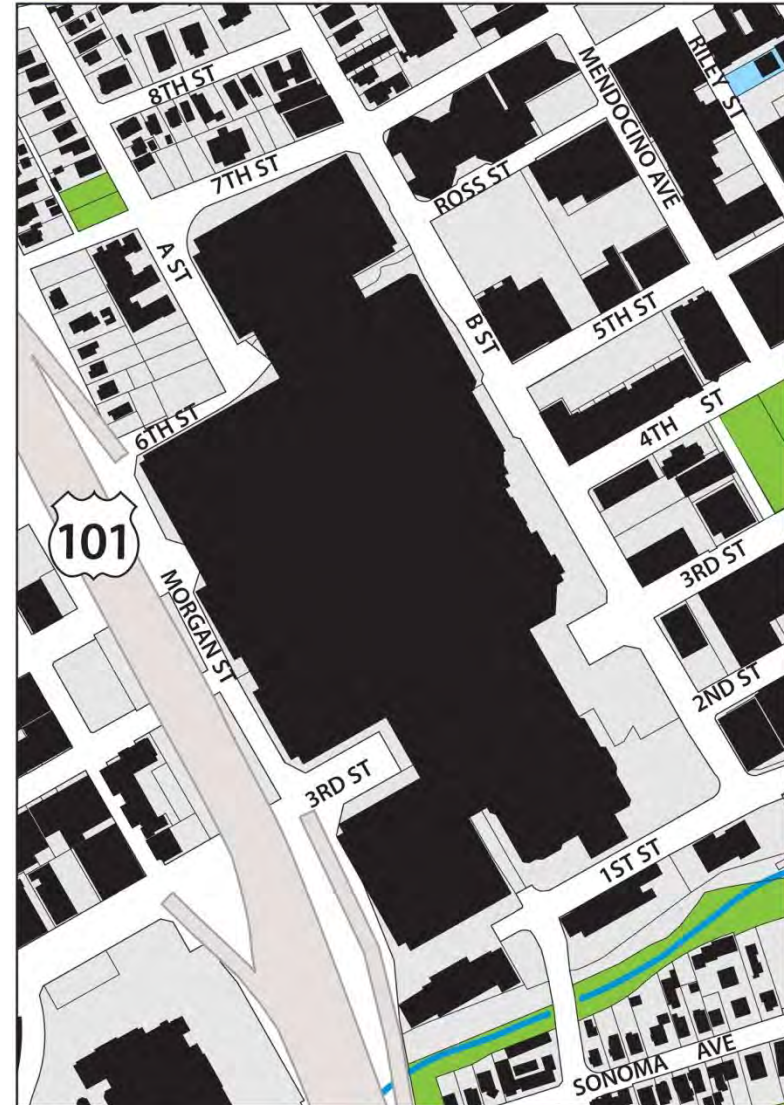


Figure 3.5. Santa Rosa Plaza Mall block pattern and building footprints.

Santa Rosa Plaza Mall: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: The architecture style matches other suburban mall typologies with big and boxy massing and little relation to the street.



Streetscape: The mall in general does not support an active streetscape, although it does contain an adequate sidewalk and street trees.



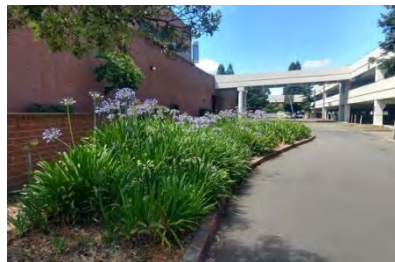
Streetscape: View of the underpass at Third Street. The building creates harsh shadows as the road dips to go underneath the mall.



Streetscape: Looking down Fourth Street from the mall plaza, Fourth Street offers an opportunity to create an easy connection between Courthouse Square and Railroad Square.



Public Places: The plaza at the end of Fourth Street offer few amenities.



Vegetation and Landscape: Looking down Santa Rosa Plaza street, some colorful flowers and landscaping aesthetically improve the area.



Vegetation and Landscape: While the parking lot structure at the corner of Sixth and Morgan Street prohibits an active streetscape, the tall trees help add greenery to the street.



Streetscape: View down Santa Rosa Plaza road. Lack of sidewalks, wayfinding, and empty parking garages make it difficult for pedestrians to navigate through the mall.

East-west access in this area is very limited and pedestrians are required to either go underneath the building via an underpass at Third Street; to

enter and cut through the mall at Fourth Street; or travel through the property at Sixth Street. The size of the mall, limited street access, parking structures, and lack of clear connections create a barrier for pedestrians navigating through the planning area. A, First, and Fifth streets, generally match with the City's Minor Street classification, although no on-street parking is available, and sidewalks are inconsistently present on both sides of the street. B and Third streets are larger in size and match with the Avenue classification with two lanes in each direction. While street trees and curbside plantings are present throughout, due to lack of consistent sidewalk connections and few street-facing storefronts, this subarea does not contribute to a walkable pedestrian environment.

While the interior of the mall is open to the public, it is privately owned and open only during business hours. The plaza near the main entrance of the mall at Fourth Street is the only public space that is not limited to the interior of the mall. It contains benches, public art, a mall directory, lighting, and landscaping, which is generally well maintained. In terms of open space and trails, the Prince Memorial Greenway and the Santa Rosa Creek run along the southern edge of the site although very few connections exist from this subarea.

East of E Street

This subarea is generally bounded by E Street, Fifth Street, Brookwood Avenue, and Santa Rosa Creek, as shown on Figure 3.6. The block pattern differs from other downtown areas, with long, skinny blocks that run east to west and are range between 200 to 280 by 1,000 or more feet. Individual lots run north to south and are typically long and skinny in shape, ranging from 4,000 square feet to 54,000 square feet in area, with many lots spanning the shorter width of the block. In addition, there is one large, oddly-shaped vacant site located along Brookwood Avenue and Santa Rosa Creek.

The area contains a mix of single-family detached homes and businesses. Lot coverage is around 30 percent on average with generally consistent front, rear and side setbacks although surface parking lots can take up a greater portion of some of the commercial lots. Building heights are typically one to two stories or 14 to 25 feet tall. Typical architectural features depend on the use and age of the building; older single-family homes typically have gabled roofs, front porches, and doorways located facing the street frontage while the newer commercial buildings along fourth street have flat roofs, bigger storefront windows, and prominent entrances. While some older homes have been converted to professional offices, they generally retain their residential design whereas newer commercial buildings tend to have less façade articulation which creates a boxier look.



Figure 3.6. East of E Street block pattern and building footprints.

Streets within the subarea generally have an east-west orientation providing a direct connection with the Courthouse Square area to the west and other Santa Rosa neighborhoods to the east. Streetscapes in the East of E Street subarea generally conform with the City's classifications, with Fourth Street following the Main Street characteristics and the rest of the streets following the Neighborhood. Fourth Street in Courthouse Square subarea is a main commercial street and this character is brought up through East of E Street as well, although the street is wider and less well-defined in this stretch as compared to the stretch in Courthouse Square. Fourth Street has one 13-foot travel lane in each direction with angled parking flanking the street while the other neighborhood streets have one 9-foot travel lane with 6-foot parking lane on either side. Sidewalks width is typically 5-feet at minimum with 3-to-4-feet for tree wells. Street trees and curbside planting within the front property setback are present throughout which contribute to a walkable pedestrian environment, although there are fewer north-south connections than in other downtown areas given the block pattern.

Green spaces within the areas include Fremont Park, located on Fourth and Hope Street, and Santa Rosa Creek. At 1.7 acres in size, Fremont Park has spacious grass lawns, public art, a fountain, and a variety of tree species. While the Santa Rosa Creek does run through the area, it is fenced off and there are no publicly-available connections. The Prince Memorial Greenway/Santa Rosa Creek Trail ends at Santa Rosa Avenue and does not extend into this subarea.

East of E Street: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: View along Second Street. Here, a single-family home (in white) is next to a clinic. The small-scale massing of the buildings make them compatible with each other, neither is standing out.



Streetscape: View down Second Street shows a typical Neighborhood classified street, with two unmarked travel lanes, street parking, and sidewalks. Also shows the utility poles and lines that cross the street.



Public Places: Fremont Park, shown above, is the primary park within this subarea and includes a fountain and benches. (Photo credit: saupaulo1 on waymarking.com)



Vegetation and Landscape: View of the restaurant Ca'Bianca. Beautiful gardens and trees in the front yard help enhance the vegetation and streetscape along Second Street.



Urban Form and Architecture: A few of the post-war commercial buildings stand out from the typical residential architecture form found within East of E Street and in addition, have parking lots in front of the building instead of having the building directly facing the street.



Streetscape: View looking north along Fourth Street. While many of the buildings reflect the commercial usage, the streetscape is wider and doesn't have the same streetscape improvements or character as the Fourth Street west of E Street.

Santa Rosa Avenue

A key gateway to downtown, the Santa Rosa Avenue subarea consists of parcels on both sides of Santa Rosa Avenue between Sonoma Avenue and Highway 12 as shown in Figure 3.7. Santa Rosa Avenue runs north-south with east-west streets, creating blocks that are typically 250 feet wide with some exceptions for commercial properties and blocks with parks and open space. Individual lots run perpendicular to the street, ranging from 4,500 square feet to 133,000 square feet in area, and average between 100 to 140 feet in depth. Larger lots are typically vacant or auto body shops while the smaller lots have restaurants and retail. Most buildings appear to have been developed since World War II.

The lots along Santa Rosa Avenue contain a mix of mostly commercial uses, with a few single-family residential properties and motels. Lot coverage is 50 percent on average and many properties have off-street parking lots. Building heights are typically one to two stories or 14 to 25 feet. Typical architecture features vary based on the historic context and use, with commercial buildings having a boxier look due to parapets and flat roofs and generally have consistent storefront windows and entrances. Residential properties have porches, gabled roofs, and garages setback from the street.

Santa Rosa Avenue generally conforms with the City's Avenue Street classification, providing two 11-foot lanes in each direction with a 6-foot parking lane on either side and sidewalk typically 6-to7-feet wide. Setbacks vary greatly along the corridor. Some commercial properties have zero lot lines, while others have large surface parking lots along the street frontage. Residences typically have moderate front setbacks, often landscaped. Overall, landscaping and street tree coverage is inconsistent along the corridor. Trees and landscaping along intersecting east-west streets are visible from Santa Rosa Avenue. There are three signaled intersections with crosswalks and two non-signalized crosswalks.



Figure 3.7. Santa Rosa Avenue block pattern and building footprints.

There are two main public parks along the Santa Rosa Avenue subarea: the Luther Burbank Home and Gardens and Julliard Park. Connections to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail, greenway, and Prince Gateway Park are just north of Sonoma Avenue outside of the subarea boundary. The Luther Burbank Home and Gardens includes decorative gardens, walking paths, and a historical home. The 9.1-acre Julliard Park is one of the oldest parks in Santa Rosa. Park amenities include large grassy areas, a community garden, and a playground as well as hosting musical and community events. Both parks are across from each other on the north-end of Santa Rosa Avenue, leaving a lack of other parks or public spaces further south.

College Avenue

The College Avenue subarea consists of properties that face the southern edge of College Avenue and is bounded by Brookwood Avenue to the east, Cleveland Avenue to the west, and bisected by Mendocino Avenue, as shown in Figure 3.8a and 3.8b. The blocks along College Avenue vary significantly based on the surrounding street context and range between 90 to 230 feet in width. Parcels generally align perpendicular to College Avenue and vary in size depending on use, with individual lots typically small and rectangular in shape, ranging from 3,000 square feet to 29,000 square feet in area except for the largest parcel, Santa Rosa Middle School, which is 436,830 square feet in size.

The buildings along College Avenue are a mixture of residential and commercial uses, with some older homes being converted into offices, similar to those found in the area east of E Street. Lot coverage is 25 percent on average with generally consistent front setbacks. Most structures are under two stories tall, except for the office building at 320 College Avenue which is three stories tall, and have ornamental architectural features like porches, windows, and overhangs which adds character the character of the street. In a few cases, parking lots directly front along the street breaking up the otherwise continuous street frontage.

Santa Rosa Avenue: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: View of the Astro Motel, a remodeled hotel from the 1960s, which offers a unique architecture style and adds character along Santa Rosa Avenue.



Streetscape: The car-centric design of the street and lack of buildings and crossings make it an unpleasant place for pedestrians or bicyclists.



Public Places: A few of Santa Rosa's most important public spaces are located along Santa Rosa Avenue, including Luther Burbank House and Gardens shown above.



Vegetation and Landscape: View of Julliard Park shows one of the areas that has street trees and vegetation along the streetscape.



Streetscape: View at the corner of Sebastopol and Santa Rosa avenues, this vacant and underutilized site presents an opportunity for future development.



Streetscape: View looking south from Sonoma Avenue, the wide width of the roadway and lack of continuous trees and building frontage give the street an unfinished appearance.

The College Avenue streetscape generally conforms with the City’s Avenue Street classification, providing two 11-foot travel lanes in each direction with a 7-foot parking lane on either side. Sidewalk width is typically 5-feet or less with no curbside planting which is not in conformance with the Avenue classification. Although College Avenue does have regular street intersections and crosswalks, there is a high-volume of traffic on the street and utility infrastructure impedes the pedestrian path of travel along sidewalks in places.

There are no publicly accessible parks or plazas along College Avenue. While there are fields at Santa Rosa Middle School, these are fenced off and generally for student use only.



Figure 3.8a. College Avenue, West of Mendocino Avenue block pattern and building footprints.

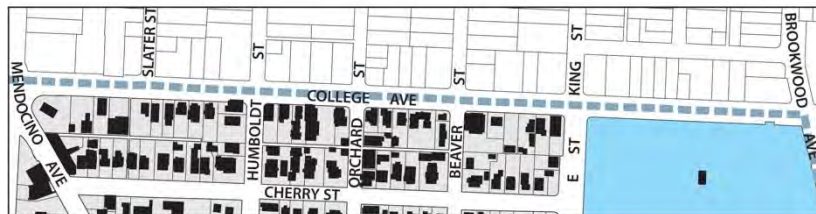


Figure 3.8b. College Avenue, East of Mendocino Avenue block pattern and building footprints.

College Avenue: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: Shown above is a business that looks like it was once a residential home. Key features include ornamentation, plantings, porch, and windows and entrances facing the street.



Streetscape: Looking west in between Mendocino Avenue and Glen Street, most of the streetscape is taken up with the travel lanes. The painted white line indications on-street parking.



Public Places: Other than the street itself, there are no public places along College Avenue. The street sign shown above is in the middle of the sidewalk which adds another barrier for pedestrian usage.



Vegetation and Landscape: Looking east towards Humboldt Street, the streetscape and street trees often vary depending on the property owner.



Streetscape: View of US 101 on-ramp towards San Francisco. The big turning radius, crosswalk location, and vehicles speeding up to get on the freeway make this a dangerous crosswalk for pedestrians.



Streetscape: The intersection at College, Mendocino, and Healdsburg avenues can be a gateway opportunity to downtown Courthouse Square.

Industrial Areas

Industrial areas typically flank the rail corridor as it runs through the planning area. Active industrial areas are principally concentrated in the Maxwell Court and Roberts-Sebastopol areas, and there is an historic industrial area between Wilson and Donahue streets in the northwestern part of the planning area. Key elements of urban form of each are described below.

Maxwell Court

The Maxwell Court subarea is bounded by Dutton Avenue, College Avenue, West Ninth Street, and Cleveland Avenue, as shown in Figure 3.9. The area does not have a fine-grained street grid as exists in many parts of Downtown Santa Rosa. Parcels are defined by three principal streets: Dutton Avenue, Maxwell Drive, and Maxwell Court. Individual lots tend to be larger than in commercial or residential areas and range from 8,000 to 123,000 square feet in area. The lots don't have a consistent size, but many of them are generally rectangular in shape.

Maxwell Court contains mostly industrial properties with light industrial service buildings and warehouses. Lot coverage depends on the type of industrial use present on the lot, with an average of 20 percent. Building heights are typically one story or 12 to 20 feet tall apart from the machinery at the BoDean Asphalt Plant which is much taller. Due to the industrial nature, the architectural features are designed for function and include materials like corrugated metal, domed or flat roofs, and low-rise concrete blocks.

The two main streets are Maxwell Drive, which runs north-south, and Maxwell Court, which run east-west. Maxwell Drive has a curve in it which breaks up any grid pattern. Streets in Maxwell Court generally reflect the functionality of the buildings and are mostly used for trucks and other industrial purposes. As such, the streets are generally not well connected to the rest of the area as to separate industrial from other land uses. The streetscapes in Maxwell Court generally conform with the

City's Industrial Street, providing one 13-foot travel lane in each direction with an 8-foot parking lane on either side, although neither the travel nor parking lanes are marked. Sidewalk width is typically 5-feet, with sporadic street trees and curbside landscaping. There is no public open space in the area.



Figure 3.9. Maxwell Court block pattern and building footprints.

Maxwell Court: Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: Shown above is an office building that reflects the utilitarian design of Maxwell Court.



Streetscape: Looking along the northern edge of Maxwell Court along College Avenue which includes narrow sidewalks, utilities poles, and vacant lots.



Public Places: The multiuse SMART Trail is the only designated public space in Maxwell Court. The now defunct cement factory can be seen in the background.



Vegetation and Landscape: Trees vary by site and are generally inconsistent along the street. (Photo credit: Google)

Roberts–Sebastopol

The Roberts-Sebastopol subarea is generally bounded by Highway 12, Dutton Avenue, Sebastopol Road, and Olive Street as shown in Figure 3.10. There are two industrial areas that are separated by Highway 12 from this main subarea along the rail corridor which are the industrial properties along Roberts Avenue and Chestnut Street/Buckingham Drive. The street grid is generally rectilinear, although the lack of through streets and the industrial nature of the area means that the blocks are not

as well-defined as other subareas and do not have a uniform size. Individual lots are typically larger than other subareas and rectangular in

shape, ranging from 9,000 square feet to 140,000 square feet in area. Due to the alignments of the SMART tracks and Highway 12, some of the lots are irregular in shape and have sharp angles.

The Roberts-Sebastopol area contains predominately industrial and commercial structures, although a few single-family residential houses can be found, and new multifamily units are being constructed on the south side of Sebastopol Road outside of the planning area. Lot coverage is 50 percent on average and is mostly due to parking or storage lots that support industrial uses. Building heights are typically one story and range between 10 to 20 feet tall. Due to the industrial nature of the buildings,



Figure 3.10. Roberts-Sebastopol Street Grid

the architectural features tend to have little façade articulation, boxier massing, and constructed of functional materials like corrugated metal, concrete, and PVC siding.

The two main streets in this area, Dutton Avenue and Sebastopol Road, intersect to form the bottom south-west corner of the subarea. Roberts Avenue, which turns into Holbrook Street, bisects Sebastopol Road and dead ends within one of the industrial properties. Because of Highway 12 and the SMART tracks, the area is generally not well connected to the rest of downtown, with the exception that Dutton Avenue and Sebastopol Road by way of Olive and Railroad Street connect to Third Street. The Joe Rodota Trail does provide some bicycle and pedestrian access north with a potential link to Railroad Square.

The Dutton Avenue streetscape generally conforms with the City’s Parkway Street classification, providing two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction, a shared turn lane in the middle, and no on-street parking. Sidewalk width is typically 5-feet and is buffered by a 6-foot tree and landscape planting zone. The Sebastopol streetscape generally conforms to the Boulevard Street classification, providing one 11-foot travel lane in each direction with a 7-foot parking on one side. Sidewalk width and quality depends on if the property has been developed or not and is generally around 5-feet, same with curbside plantings. Roberts Avenue streetscape generally conforms with the City’s Lane Street classification and does not have parking, lane, or sidewalk demarcations.

While there are not any designated parks or plazas within the area, the Joe Rodota Trail runs east-west throughout the site and connects to the Prince Memorial Greenway and Santa Rosas Creek Trail. Olive Street passes through the historic Olive Park neighborhood and crosses under Highway 12. There is a large mural in the underpass, however, there is no lighting or bicycle lanes and pedestrians on the sidewalks are not well-buffered from traffic.

Donahue – Wilson

The industrial properties in this area are bounded by Donahue Street, West Ninth Street, Wilson Street, and West Eighth Street. The Wilson-Donahue area is unique in that it contains historic industrial structures

Roberts Neighborhood Urban Form Typologies



Urban Form and Architecture: View of new multi-family housing along Sebastopol at Boyd Street.



Streetscape: The building shown above is built up to the edge of the sidewalk and the storefront engages pedestrians.



Public Places: View looking down along the Joe Rodota Trail which is the multi-use trail that provides a connection under Highway 12.



Vegetation and Landscape: Vegetation is sparse and largely uncoordinated. Equipment and metal fencing from the industrial properties are a common sight.

from when the area was used for freight rail and manufacturing. Individual lots are quite large, with three lots totaling over 211,000 square feet in area. A few of the buildings take up a significant portion of the lot they occupy, with maximum lot coverage at 94 percent. Architectural features reflect the time period which the buildings were built, with the older warehouses built in red brick and newer ones using concrete blocks and wood sheathing. There is a potential to extend Donahue Street north into Maxwell Court to increase connectivity from both areas.



View from West Eighth Street, the red brick façade reflects the historic character of the site and holds the potential for restoration.

Residential Neighborhoods

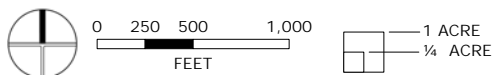
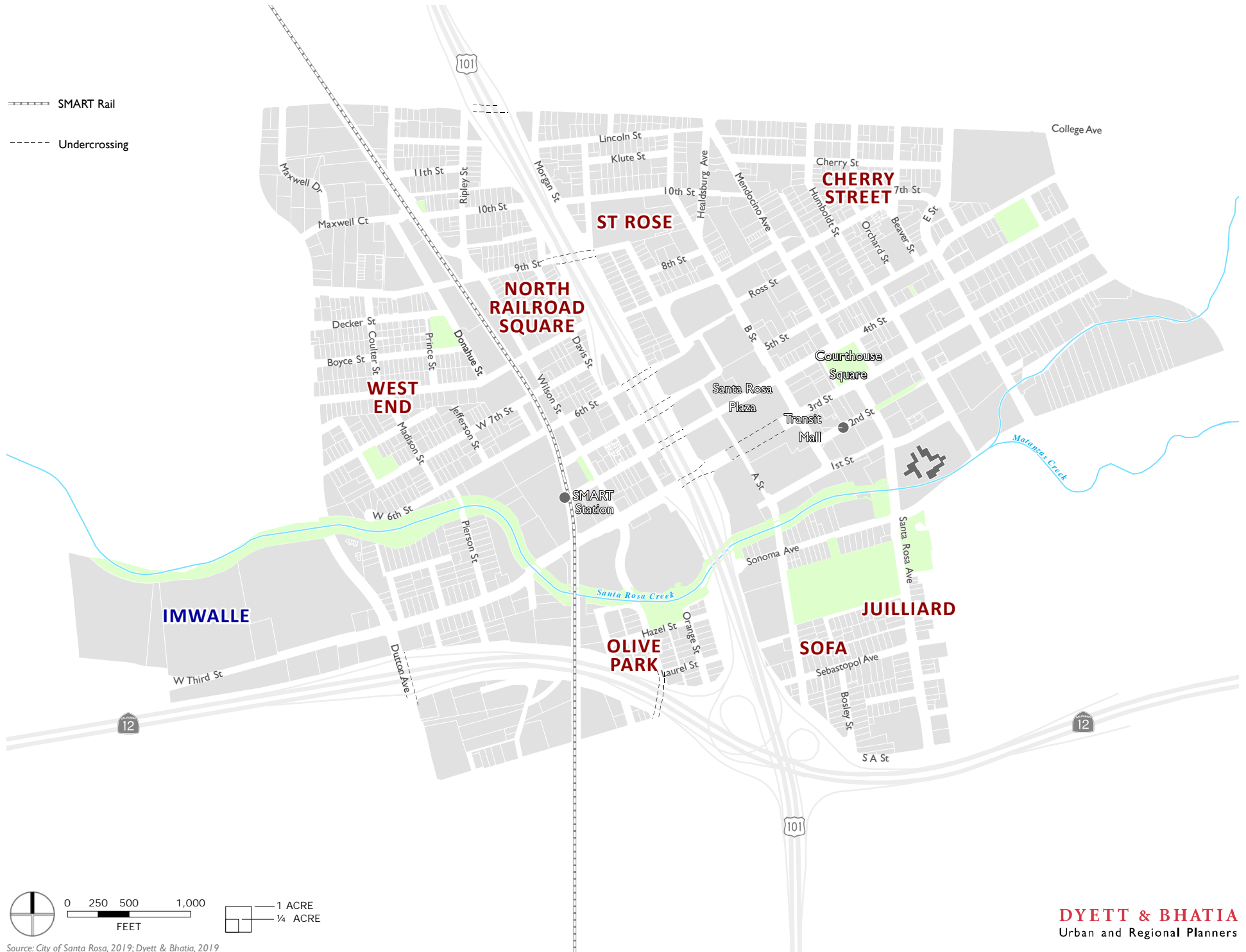
The remainder of the planning area is made up of established residential neighborhoods, some of which contain historic homes and have been designated as preservation districts in order to protect architectural heritage and character. Key elements of urban form in the planning area's residential neighborhoods are described below.

Pre-War Neighborhoods

Pre-war residential neighborhoods in the planning area include the St. Rose, Cherry Street, West End, North Railroad Square, Olive Park, and SOFA neighborhoods, as well as a portion of Burbank Gardens, as shown on Figure 3.11. These neighborhoods contain homes that date from the 1870s to 1940s as well as more modern construction, and several have been designated as preservation districts (see Chapter 4). The street grid in these neighborhoods is generally rectilinear with shorter blocks typically sized 250 by 250 feet and longer blocks sized 250 by 500 feet. Individual lots are typically small and rectangular in shape, ranging from 3,000 square feet to 10,000 square feet in area. Larger lots or those that are square, triangular, and L-shaped generally contain parks or schools.

The pre-war neighborhoods contain a mix of single-family detached homes and smaller-scale multifamily structures. Lot coverage is 30 percent on average with generally consistent front, rear and side setbacks. Building heights are typically one to two stories or 14 to 25 feet. Typical architectural features of single-family homes in these neighborhoods include gabled roofs, front porches, and doorways located facing the street. Some older homes have been converted to professional office or multifamily uses; however, in general multifamily structures in these neighborhoods tend to be newer construction. These buildings tend to have little facade articulation and smaller setbacks, which creates a boxier look.

Figure 3.11 Downtown Residential Neighborhoods



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

Streets in the pre-war residential neighborhoods generally have an east-west orientation, with intersecting streets running in a north-south direction. The grid is shifted about 45 degrees from the orientation of streets in the principal commercial districts. While grid shifts can be disorienting for pedestrians navigating through the planning area, connectivity to surrounding areas from the pre-war residential neighborhoods is generally good, given the size of blocks and frequency of intersections. One exception occurs in the West End neighborhood, where the grid shifts at Eighth Street and Hewitt Street terminates abruptly east of Madison, requiring pedestrians to take a circuitous route out of the neighborhood. However, overall the shifts in the grid contribute to the character of these neighborhoods, with the effect of making the historic neighborhoods feel like residential enclaves connected to but slightly apart from adjacent areas.

The freeways represent significant barriers between neighborhoods, with an elevated segment of US 101 separating the St. Rose and West End neighborhoods, while Olive Park is an enclave unto itself separated from SOFA by US 101 and from the Roseland area by Highway 12. Underpasses provide connections at Ninth Street, Olive Street and Dutton Avenue. All have sidewalks on both sides of the street, but little separation from traffic. The Ninth and Olive underpasses have limited public art, but none of the underpasses are lit, and anecdotally, area residents have expressed concern for safety and personal security.

Streetscapes in the pre-war residential neighborhoods generally conform with the City's Neighborhood Street classification, providing one 9-foot travel lane in each direction with a 6-foot parking lane on either side. Sidewalk width is typically 5-feet and street trees and curbside plantings are present throughout, with moderate front setbacks that contribute to a walkable pedestrian environment. Currently, South A Street in the SOFA neighborhood, Morgan in the North Railroad Square and St. Rose neighborhoods, and a portion of West Ninth Street in the West End

Pre-War Neighborhoods



Typical single-family homes in pre-War neighborhoods.



Examples of multi-family housing in pre-War neighborhoods.



Typical streetscape in pre-War neighborhoods

DeTurk Park in the West End neighborhood.

There are public parks in the West End, Olive Park and Burbank Gardens neighborhoods. Demeo Park and Olive Park feature grass lawns and children’s play structures. The DeTurk Round Barn site has a grassy lawn and a dog run. Luther Burbank Home and Gardens has paved pathways and setting. Both the Olive Park and West End neighborhoods abut Santa Rosa Creek, which is flanked by the Santa Rosa Creek Trail on both the north and south. However, the creek and trail are largely fenced off and public access is limited to a few points from these neighborhoods.

Imwalle Area

The Imwalle area is located at the western end of the planning area, bounded roughly by North Dutton Avenue on the east, Highway 12 to the south, Rusch Court on the west, and Santa Rosa Creek to the north. This area contains several large, undeveloped parcels as well as newer residential developments. Prominent focal points include Imwalle Gardens, a family-owned retail business selling plants and produce located mid-block along West Third Street, and the Westside Plaza mall, a single-story neighborhood-serving retail center at the southwest corner of North Dutton and West Third. Small lot single-family residential development abuts the area to the west.

The Imwalle area is characterized by large lots on both sides of West Third Street. Lot size is not consistent. The largest lots are approximately 800 by 880 feet and the smallest approximately 180 by 200 feet. Undeveloped lots have not been subdivided and there are no internal roadways. Developed lots feature a typically suburban street patterns, with curving private streets and cul-de-sacs at the interior. There are few connections to the principal arterial roadways in the area, North Dutton and West Third, and the developments are gated and fenced, making them largely self-contained.

The two new developments at the northwest corner of Dutton and West Third feature 2-story multi-family buildings oriented around common open space and surface parking. Typical architectural features include

Imwalle Area



Single-family homes on Rusch Court.



Multi-family development at West Third and Dutton.



West Third Street lacks sidewalks or striped bicycle lanes at its western end.



Imwalle Gardens, a neighborhood focal point.

slanted shed roofs, covered exterior stairwells, and a consistent color scheme for all buildings. Additionally, a new development is currently under construction immediately to the west of Imwalle Gardens which will provide 78 new detached single-family homes and attached single-family units.

North Dutton and West Third are both classified as regional arterials. North Dutton has five travel lanes, each 11 feet in width and no striped bicycle facilities. There are sidewalks on both sides of the street, generally with a narrow strip of landscaping, although the sidewalk along the

frontage of the new development on the west side has been improved with wide landscaping and trees flanking that portion of the sidewalk.

West Third is a gateway into the downtown area, as it leads to the Downtown SMART station and the central business district. While not currently designated as a Gateway combining district in the Zoning Code, gateway features could still be incorporated as Third Street enters the downtown area to create a sense of place and arrival.

Where it connects with Dutton, West Third has five 11-foot travel lanes, but narrows to two lanes as it moves to the west. There are currently striped Class II bicycle lanes on both sides of West Third, although the lanes are narrow and there is no buffering from traffic. Near the intersection with Dutton, there are sidewalks on both sides of West Third, although on the north side the sidewalk is very narrow and pedestrian travel is obstructed by electric poles and signage. Further to the west the sidewalk has been widened improved with landscaping in front of the new residential development but becomes an unpaved pathway and then terminates after Imwalle Gardens. On the south side the sidewalk stops after the Westside Plaza mall.

There are no neighborhood or community parks within the Imwalle area. The Santa Rosa Creek Trail runs along the northern edge of the area; however, there is currently no public access to it from this neighborhood.

3.3 Key Findings and Planning Considerations

- The planning area has a number of larger lots on sites such as the City Hall complex, the SMART site, the Sears site, and others in industrial areas that offer opportunities for greater architectural variety. Whereas the constraints of smaller infill lots generally lead developers to maximize the building envelope, development on larger lots offers opportunities for podium construction and point towers with more sunlight and better views, as well as opportunities for a greater variety, size, and type of residential units. Development standards and guidelines should recognize and address this.
- Blank building walls such as those on institutional buildings in the Courthouse Square area and Santa Rosa Plaza can be animated with public art, light installations, or vertical vegetation to add visual interest and build sense of place downtown.
- Publicly accessible private open spaces at ground level or on the roofs of buildings downtown can be encouraged to complement City-owned parks and plazas as development and redevelopment takes place. Locations and access can be showcased on maps and wayfinding signage downtown, as well as on the internet.
- While many underpasses in the planning area already have sidewalks and limited street art and lighting, further enhancements are needed to activate the public realm in these areas and increase sense of security for pedestrians and cyclists. Adding art, light and color can make these spaces more welcoming. Where space permits and foot traffic warrants, such as under US 101, space for pop up retail, street performances, or even a skate park can revitalize these spaces.
- Publicly accessible connections through and to the interior of larger sites should be encouraged as development occurs in order to enhance connectivity downtown and provide safe, convenient and visually interesting routes for cyclists and pedestrians. Multiple connections to surrounding neighborhoods and streets should be encouraged.
- Currently there are few points of access to the Joe Rodota and Santa Rosa Creek trails, which are largely fenced off as they run through the planning area. This valuable community asset can be optimized and enhanced with additional access points, improved wayfinding signage and standards that require adjacent development to address the creek.
- Vacant and underutilized properties along key corridors - Santa Rosa Avenue, West Third Street, Sebastopol Road, and E Street - present opportunities to strengthen gateways into Downtown Santa Rosa through design that creates a sense of transition, announces arrival and builds sense of place.