

3. VISION



3 Vision

3.1 Vision for the Opportunity Hill Downtown Area

The collective work and vision of the City of Vacaville, business owners, residents, and active citizens have made downtown Vacaville what it is today and will continue to shape its future development. The vision for the Opportunity Hill area builds on the plans, traditions, and energy that have boosted the vitality of the downtown area. The vision statement adopted by the Redevelopment Agency in its Downtown Area Economic Development Strategy (1991) states:

Downtown Vacaville is to serve the residents of the Vacaville community, the surrounding areas and visitors as an economically viable commercial, institutional, retail and entertainment district in a physical setting that captures and portrays the early heritage of Vacaville along with the atmosphere of a commercially successful "Hometown USA."

During the public visioning workshop for the Opportunity Hill area conducted by the Redevelopment Agency and EDAW on September 10, 2007, residents, local business owners, and civic officials shared their hopes for the future of this community. The following vision statements summarize what was heard during the workshop. The Opportunity Hill area is envisioned as a place that:

- *Continues the success of the downtown area as the historical, commercial, and cultural heart of the City. Downtown Vacaville is active in the day and evening with a wealth of cultural and entertainment activities including live performances, movies, street fairs, restaurants, and cafes.*
- *Has a mix of uses (residential, retail, and office uses) that contribute to the activity and vitality of Downtown Vacaville as a place to live, work, and play. New mixed-use housing in the downtown area attract a diverse community of professionals, families, and active adults. Housing is affordable and allows residents of all backgrounds and income levels opportunities to live in the downtown area.*
- *Features a variety of transportation opportunities that encourage residents to leave their cars at home. Attractive tree-lined streets, well-defined sidewalks, angled parking, and traffic calming design encourages the community to walk, bike, and spend time outdoors. Trail linkages to Andrews Park and the Ulatis Creekwalk promote access to nearby open space for residents of all ages.*
- *Includes a comprehensive and unique signage and wayfinding system that identifies Downtown Vacaville and makes the downtown area easy to navigate.*
- *Encourages the development of public art to promote the civic presence of Downtown Vacaville.*
- *Supports civic participation in the community's planning process. People living and working in Downtown Vacaville take pride in their community and invest in its continued success.*



A mix of uses along the street promotes an active pedestrian realm



Tree-lined streets with well-defined sidewalks support pedestrian activity



A variety of transportation options allow access to the downtown area without relying on an automobile



Local paths and the Creekwalk trail promote a healthy connection to the outdoors

The following objectives support the vision expressed by the Vacaville community. These objectives provide the guiding framework and are associated with a number of strategies and implementation actions, as described in Chapter 4, "Strategy for Downtown Development," and Chapter 5, "Implementation."

Objective 1: Provide Design Guidelines and Standards for Opportunity Hill

Support development in the Opportunity Hill area while maintaining downtown Vacaville's historic character.

Objective 2: Improve Parking

Ensure adequate and convenient parking for new uses that is easily accessible, highly visible, and that supports a sense of personal security and safety.

Objective 3: Investigate Additional Resources to Provide Mixed-Use Development Incentives

Investigate resources to facilitate attracting new mixed-use development that promotes the economic viability of the downtown with new jobs and office, entertainment, and retail businesses by providing economic incentives for reinvestment.

Objective 4: Initiate Changes to the Legal Framework (City General Plan and Zoning Amendments)

Allow an increased density of up to 65 du/ac in the Opportunity Hill area, compared with the up to 36 du/ac currently allowed by the City in the downtown area.

Objective 5: Improve Linkages and Connections

Promote linkages for efficient automobile, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation in the downtown area.

Objective 6: Complete Infrastructure Improvements

Complete studies and improvements to the Opportunity Hill area infrastructure systems to adequately serve the full buildout of the Opportunity Hill area, consistent with the zoning change recommendations of this Master Plan.

Objective 7: Improve Signage and Wayfinding

Improve signage and wayfinding into and around the downtown area.

Objective 8: Provide Affordable Housing

Provide opportunities for new high-density affordable housing within the downtown area.



View of the Opportunity Hill Area



Downtown Vacaville with Andrews Park and Ulatis Creek

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4. STRATEGY FOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT



4 Strategy for Downtown Development

4.1 Strategic Framework

This section describes the strategic framework guiding the redevelopment of the Opportunity Hill area. The revitalization of the Opportunity Hill area will require a series of progressive, concentrated, and well-defined strategies that build on one another to support change in the downtown area. The strategic framework is the “big picture” vision to support a comprehensive strategy of programs, policies, and improvements for downtown development that is intended to be versatile to respond to changes in market conditions, retail demand, and community needs.

To create this strategic framework, the Opportunity Hill area’s economic, social, and physical development opportunities and constraints were assessed in the context of the overall function of downtown Vacaville. The strategic framework defines these actions in three different components that together help structure and prioritize the actions required to ensure the implementation of the Master Plan.

- Primary land uses—the land uses most important to achieving the vision and goals for the Opportunity Hill and downtown area (see Section 4.3, “Primary Land Uses”). The function of primary land uses is to define the strategic role of downtown Vacaville in the community and the region. The primary land uses are those uses that work together to drive the economic, social, and cultural activities that help make downtown Vacaville a mixed-use, small-town urban destination for shopping, living, and working. The strategies identified by this Master Plan are potential actions the City may take to achieve the combination of unique land uses that support downtown Vacaville.
- Opportunity projects—sites that can accommodate additional development in the immediate future within the primary land use categories (see Section 4.4). During the initial site analysis, a number of opportunity projects in the Opportunity Hill area were identified as appropriate for redevelopment efforts. Two Agency-owned sites—the Opportunity Hill site and the Depot Street site—were identified as primary opportunity projects. In addition, three secondary opportunity projects were identified—the School Street site, the Main and Wilson Streets site, and the Mason and Wilson Streets site. Opportunity projects are identified in Figure 4-2, “Strategic Framework Concept Diagram,” and further described and analyzed in Section 4.4, “Opportunity Projects.”
- Supporting strategies—actions that support the primary land uses and opportunity projects (see Section 4.5). The function of supporting strategies is to identify the additional programs and action steps to carry out the overall vision for downtown Vacaville. These supporting strategies and actions help ensure the success of the opportunity projects. Supporting strategies are composed of a range of policy considerations and design guidelines that support both the implementation of the immediate redevelopment project and the ongoing downtown revitalization efforts.



Figure 4-1: Strategic Framework Outline

4.2 Strategic Framework Concept Diagram

The strategic framework concept diagram (Figure 4-2) graphically represents the strategic vision for Opportunity Hill. This framework diagram provides a conceptual depiction of future land uses in downtown Vacaville, building relationships to the street, major pedestrian connections, and desired streetscape relationships and character. The strategic framework concept diagram also emphasizes opportunities for principal transportation, pedestrian circulation, parking, signage, and open space networks that link the Opportunity Hill development sites to the surrounding downtown context.

The strategic framework concept diagram serves as a visual blueprint or “road map” for improving Opportunity Hill and is not considered a legally binding entitlement to land use and development of sites in the project area. The strategic framework concept diagram illustrates the relationship of the Opportunity Hill project to the overall context of downtown Vacaville and suggests several strategic concepts, briefly described in this section.

Districts

The downtown area can be described as one overall, interconnected **district**. The Opportunity Hill area is envisioned as an extension of the Historic District that extends east-west from Parker Street to Depot Street.

The downtown area is also related to and supported by the surrounding areas and districts:

- thriving residential neighborhoods located west of Cernon Street;
- neighborhood centers including a Lucky supermarket northeast of the project area on Monte Vista Avenue;
- a small residential district south of Mason Street between Davis Street and Parker Street that is gradually transitioning into a mixed-use area, with small single-family homes being converted into professional offices, small specialty stores, and live/work homes for artists and crafts persons;
- the Brenden theater entertainment and retail district located immediately south of the downtown area on Davis Street; and
- several larger office buildings as well as the Hampton Inn Hotel located just south of the downtown area on Mason Street.

Circulation

The **circulation** system consists of a street hierarchy that includes major arterial streets, collector streets, and local interior streets. The arterial and collector streets—Depot Street, Mason Street, Monte Vista Avenue, and Cernon Street—carry through traffic to the periphery of the historic downtown area. Local interior streets are organized in a historic grid pattern; these slower, pedestrian-oriented streets provide access to the storefront shops while directing major through traffic to arterial streets on the periphery. Convenient parking access is provided from the arterial streets to avoid burdening the main street with heavy traffic.

Mixed-Use Opportunities

A major concept for development in downtown Vacaville is to encourage **higher intensity mixed-use infill** development on opportunity project sites with housing, office, and retail projects that support the role and function of the downtown area as a specialty shopping destination.



Mixed-use development with office uses on the upper floors and cafes and restaurants on the ground floor frame the Town Square Plaza

Ground Floor Commercial Opportunities

Not all streets in downtown Vacaville need to include **ground floor commercial** uses. Such uses should be concentrated within the easily walkable retail core along Main Street, School Street, Merchant Street, Dobbins Avenue, and Parker Street. Shoppers typically will walk for only three or four blocks. The Main Street retail core should extend from Cernon Street and terminate at McClellan Street. Catherine Street, Bush Street, and portions of Kendal Street, Parker Street, and Cernon Street can support offices or residential frontages with front stoop and porch entries.



Ground floor commercial uses with storefront facades and wide sidewalks contribute to the pedestrian ambiance of the downtown area

Pedestrian Connections

Pedestrian connections throughout the downtown area are intended to support and enhance the lifestyle of residents and downtown users. Streets and sidewalks, plazas, parks, and small gathering places are intended to be comfortable, green places that support the pedestrian experience. Wide sidewalks allow outdoor dining and direct access to shop entries and storefronts along the central retail spine of Main Street and include streetscape amenities—street trees, seating, and lighting.

Improvements to School Street are envisioned with the extension of the pedestrian plaza being east to McClellan Street. The Ulatis Creekwalk is also planned to extend east to McClellan Street and is envisioned to eventually extend and connect to the Citywide trail system across I-80.



Future downtown parking structures should be designed with retail uses on the ground floor

Parking Opportunities

The strategic framework concept diagram also provides recommendations on some, potential **opportunity** locations for **parking** structures in the downtown area that provide access from arterial and collector streets. Future parking structures should be designed with ground-floor retail uses, where appropriate, and provide districtwide parking in order to encourage higher intensity development in the downtown area. Parking locations should be easily accessible and include highly visible and well-defined signage from the major arterial streets.

Gateway Features and Landmarks

The primary entries into the downtown area are opportunities to provide attractive downtown signage, wayfinding information, or public art as **gateway features or landmarks** to enhance the visibility and identity of downtown Vacaville.

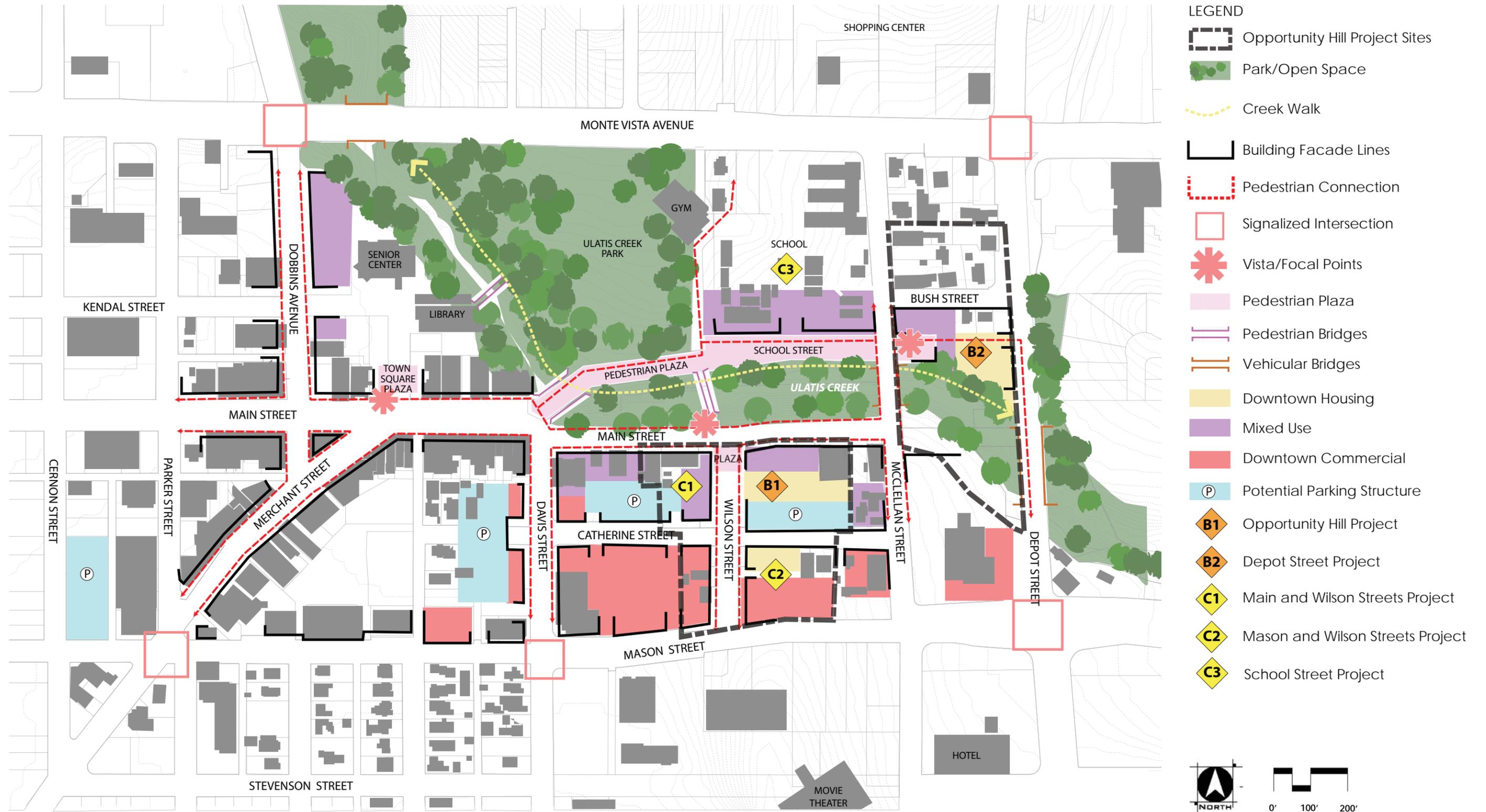


Figure 4-2: Strategic Framework Concept Diagram

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4.3 Primary Land Uses

Primary land uses are those uses that are most important for achieving the overall vision and goals for improving the Opportunity Hill area. These land uses are based on City and regionwide trends and the unique conditions in downtown Vacaville. These primary land uses are expected to have the greatest impact in redefining the role of downtown Vacaville in the City and the region. The following six primary land uses have been identified.

1. **Downtown housing** is increasingly in demand and supports a thriving City center environment. Housing in the downtown area helps to extend activity into the evenings and supports other retail uses, restaurants, and specialty stores with a local customer base. Downtown housing markets include active-adult baby boomers, young and older professionals without children, retirees, affordable housing, and artisans seeking live/work type housing in an active urban setting that is close to shopping, entertainment, and cultural events.
2. **Restaurant and entertainment** uses are a key component of downtown Vacaville. Adding new restaurant and entertainment uses promises to draw additional visitors and vitality to the area. Restaurants, live theater, music, and arts venues will have a positive impact on the area, reinforcing downtown as a destination.
3. **Civic, cultural and recreational** activities attract a high number of visitors and provide possibilities for “trip-chaining” and multiple purchases in the downtown area. Downtown Vacaville serves a major role as the civic and cultural heart of the community. Existing public plazas, the central park, the Ulatis Creekwalk, and sidewalk environment provide the setting for formal and informal gatherings, events, and ceremonies.
4. **Specialty retail** uses in the downtown area are distinct from “big-box” retail chain stores in large commercial centers along the freeways or neighborhood grocery shopping in suburban centers. Specialty retail activities support downtown Vacaville’s role as a shopping destination. The downtown area should continue to strengthen its position in the region as a destination for specialty shopping.
5. **Office** uses, especially professional uses, employ a significant number of people throughout the region and draw people to downtown Vacaville. Office workers support local restaurants and retail stores at lunchtime and after work. In addition, office visitors can easily fulfill their shopping needs downtown during business trips. These office uses help create a vibrant mixed-use center.
6. **Heritage tourism** in downtown Vacaville is one of the best-kept secrets in the San Francisco Bay Area. Vacaville’s rich historical past and small-town, historic character contribute to its continued success in creating a specialty retail destination. Downtown Vacaville should continue to showcase its history through museums, historic walking tours, community events, and preservation of its architectural heritage. Downtown signage, marketing information, and promotional events should reflect this rich heritage and encourage new visitors to explore the area’s unique assets. All new buildings in the downtown area should be designed to fit with the historic character and contribute to the historic, pedestrian-scaled environment in the downtown.

4.4 Opportunity Projects

This section describes the primary and secondary opportunity projects for the Opportunity Hill area. Two primary opportunity projects are studied in detail in this Master Plan: the Opportunity Hill project and the Depot Street project. These project sites were chosen for their strategic locations within the Opportunity Hill area and their potential role to serve as catalysts for additional new development and investment in downtown Vacaville.

Three secondary opportunity projects have also been identified in this Master Plan: the School Street project and two private development projects, the Mason and Wilson Streets site and the Main and Wilson Streets site (see Figure 4-2). The two private development sites are currently being considered by the City. The School Street site will issue development plans of its own. These secondary opportunity projects provide opportunities for redevelopment in the near term and should continue moving ahead through the development review process. These project designs must be consistent with the overall vision for the downtown and this Master Plan.

Project Recommendations

A number of development scenarios were studied for the Agency-owned Opportunity Hill and Depot Street projects (see Section 4.4-2, "Opportunity Hill Project" and Section 4.4-3, "Depot Street Project"). Although the current residential market conditions in Vacaville favor the less dense townhome project scenarios, the goals and objectives of this Master Plan are best supported by the higher density project scenarios for the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street sites.

The City may take several actions to help encourage higher density residential development in the Opportunity Hill area. Recommended strategic actions are described in Section 4.4-4, "Summary of Findings" and Section 4.5, "Supporting Strategies." In addition, the Agency will utilize various methods available to solicit development proposals for the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street projects and/or portions of the projects that will support the goals and objectives of this Master Plan. The developer(s) and/or project(s) that provide the best quality development and fit for the Opportunity Hill area, consistent with this Master Plan and any other City requirements and conditions will be analyzed.

4.4-1 FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS

A project feasibility analysis for the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street projects analyzed the three development scenarios created for each site. These land use scenarios represent a range of residential densities, commercial, and parking assumptions. The parking ratio assumptions utilized for the analysis are lower than the City's parking standards for residential uses of two spaces per unit for one and two bedroom units and two parking spaces for three or more bedroom units. The City's parking standards were assumed for the commercial component of the analysis by using a combination of on-site and on-street parking spaces to meet this demand. The lower parking ratios utilized are strategies found in urban infill environments to achieve higher residential densities and encourage mixed-uses consistent with the vision of the Opportunity Hill Master Plan. A static pro forma evaluation of the scenarios on their returns at the first year of full occupancy was analyzed. This methodology allows planners to test the ways that adjusting the sites' zoning and development standards would affect underlying land values, assuming a reasonable developer profit of 10% (The feasibility analysis assumes a developer profit of 10% based on conversations with local developers. This is a relatively conservative estimate. A higher profit threshold was used in

this analysis because higher density for-sale development in downtown Vacaville is untested).

The development feasibility analysis makes assumptions about anticipated construction, legal, financing, architecture and engineering costs; property taxes; government fees; and other overhead costs for developers. The assumptions about development costs are based on the experiences of developers actively building in Solano, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties. The cost data are also based on the 2007 R.S. Mean Square Foot Construction Costs Manual, which estimates construction costs by type and region. Beyond construction costs, prevailing financing rates, property taxes, and estimated government fees were also determined by contacting local lenders, planners, and brokers.

The feasibility analysis also makes assumptions about development revenues. In general, it assumes above-average pricing for any residential and commercial project because of its proximity to downtown, Ulatis Creek, and available amenities. Leasing rates for such potential projects are relatively high compared to rates for other, more antiquated retail in downtown Vacaville. At the same time, assumptions about capitalization and vacancy rates are relatively conservative at 8% and 10%, respectively. Each of the scenarios assumes that the commercial component would operate under separate ownership as a commercial condominium with a homeowners' association. The commercial condominium could either be sold by the developer or held as revenue property.

Revenues from townhome and condominium sales for the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street projects are assumed to be well in excess of prevailing home prices for existing townhomes and condominiums. Existing townhomes and condominiums are older units and are not comparable in quality to new products expected in downtown Vacaville. The analysis assumes that new townhomes and condominiums would command a price premium because of their ideal downtown location with immediate access to entertainment, recreation, shopping, and services.

The analysis also assumes that 20% of new housing units would be sold to low- and moderate-income households. Half of these units, or 10% of the total units, would be sold to low-income households and the remainder would be sold to moderate-income households. Although assumptions were made for the purposes of the analysis, further Agency review will be needed on a project specific basis to determine if the number of affordable housing units is adequate to meet the requirements of State Redevelopment Law (the funding source utilized to acquire much of the land in the Opportunity Hill area). In many of the higher density scenarios, the calculated price of moderate-income affordable housing is only slightly lower than the market price. Reducing unit sizes only slightly would make many of the market-rate two-bedroom units affordable to moderate-income households. This would allow some units to be sold without resale restrictions or agency oversight.

4.4-2 OPPORTUNITY HILL PROJECT

Overview

The Opportunity Hill project site, located at the northeast corner of Wilson Street and East Main Street, is owned by the Redevelopment Agency and is approximately 1.4 acres in size (see Figure 4-2). Three land use alternatives were prepared for the Opportunity Hill site, proposing different mixes of residential densities and including varied assumptions about commercial space. The Opportunity Hill site was evaluated using a mixed-use townhome scenario, a mixed-use condominium scenario, and a hybrid (mixed-use condominium and townhome) scenario. The development program for each scenario is shown on the following pages (refer also to Figures 4-3, 4-4, and 4-5).



**Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 1:
Mixed-Use Townhomes**

Project Overview

- Mixed-use housing and commercial development
- Parking for housing provided in individual garages, with some shared visitor parking on-site and additional parking available on the street
- A small amount of commercial space located along Main Street beneath the residential units

Development Program

Housing

31 two-story townhome units
(1,400 - 1,750 square feet)

Commercial

7,000 square feet of ground floor retail

Parking

- 62 on-site tuck under parking spaces
- 7 visitor parking spaces
- 30 on-street parking spaces

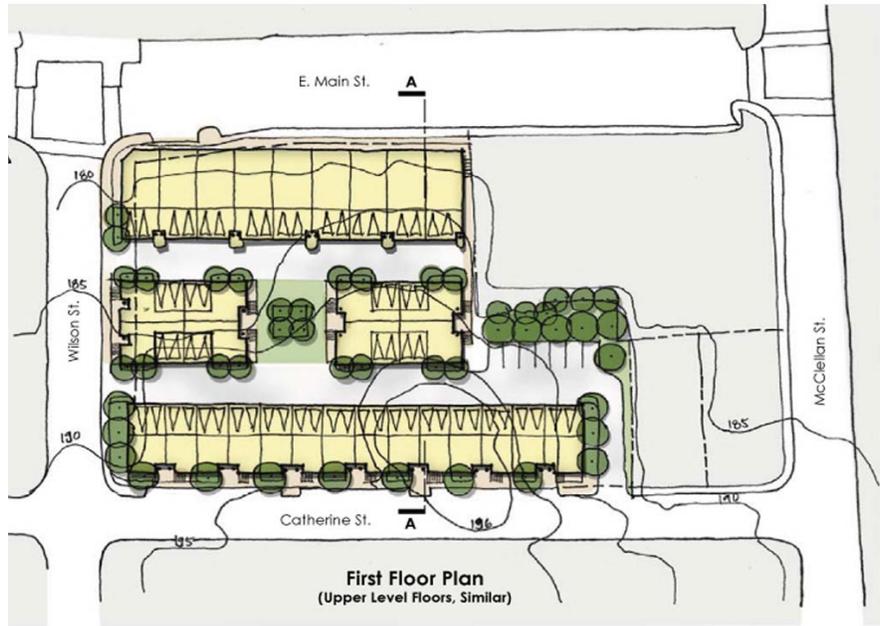


Figure 4-3: Plans and Renderings, Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 1





Townhome Community Examples for the Opportunity Hill Site



**Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 2:
Mixed-Use Condominiums/
Apartments**

Project Overview

- Mixed-use housing and commercial development
- Parking for housing provided in a podium structure under the residential units
- Commercial space provided along Main Street beneath the residential units

Development Program

Housing

91 apartment/condominium units
(1,000 - 1,200 square feet)

Commercial

10,500 square feet of ground floor retail

Parking

150 on-site podium parking spaces
7 visitor parking spaces
30 on-street parking spaces

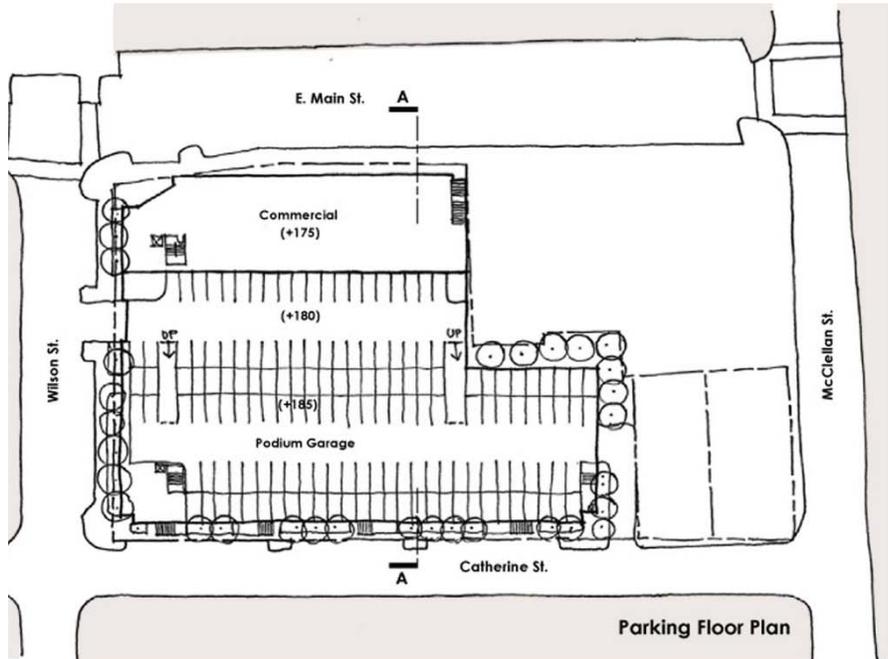
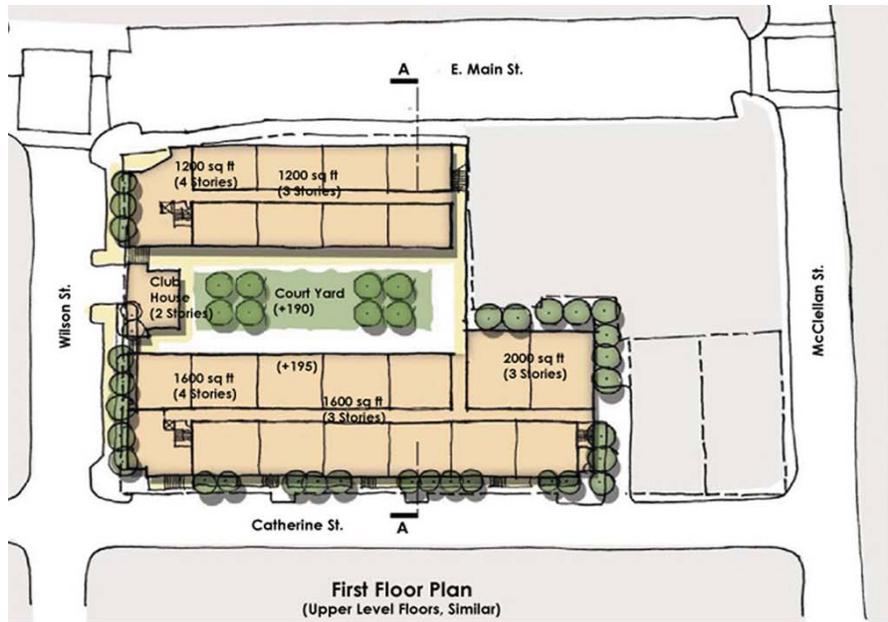


Figure 4-4: Plans and Renderings, Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 2



*Examples of Apartments/
Condominiums with Podium Parking
for the Opportunity Hill Site*



**Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 3:
Mixed-Use Condominiums/
Apartments/Townhomes**

Project Overview

- Mixed-use housing and commercial development
- Parking for housing provided in a podium structure under the residential units, with tuck-under parking for the townhomes
- Commercial space provided along Main Street beneath the residential units

Development Program

Housing

- 9 studio units (800 square feet)
- 54 apartment/condominium units (800 - 1,200 square feet)
- 12 two-story townhome units (1,200 square feet)

Commercial

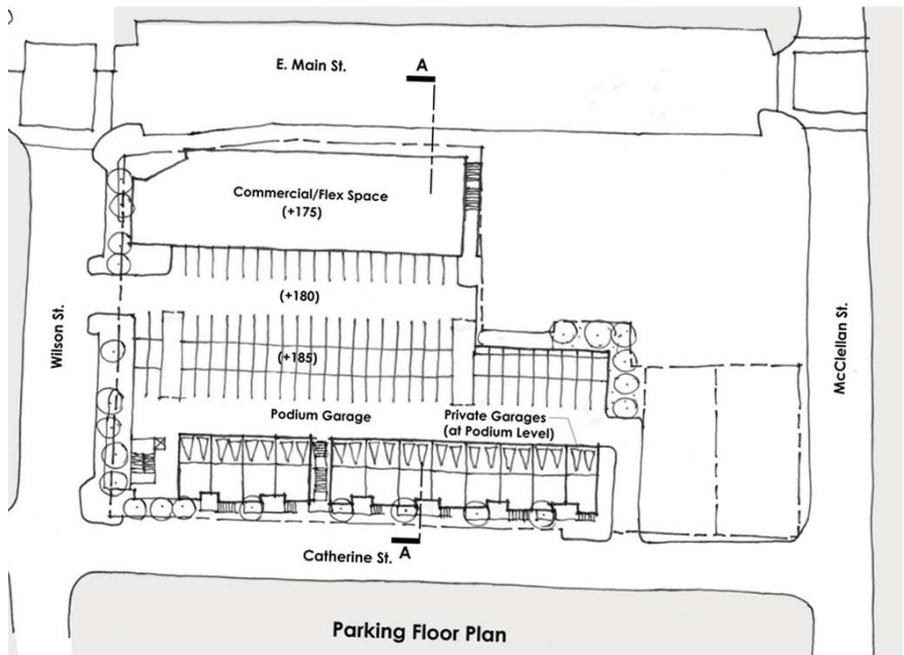
10,500 square feet of ground floor retail

Parking

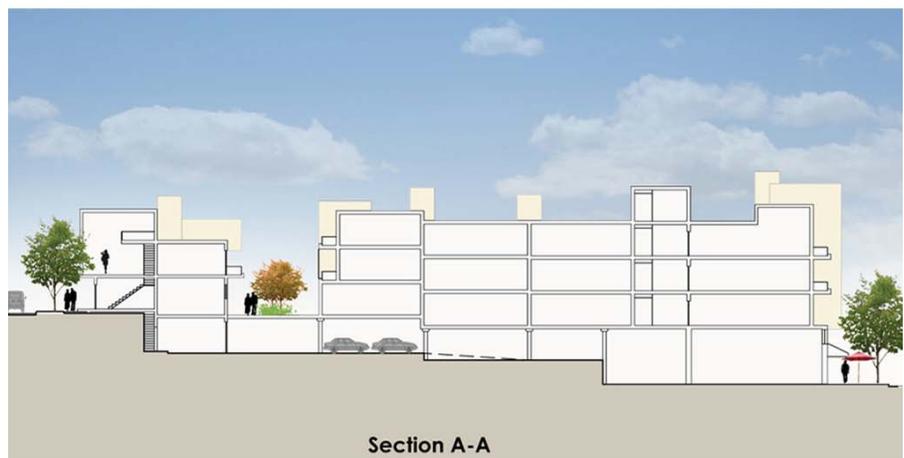
- 120 on-site podium parking spaces
- 6 visitor parking spaces
- 30 on street parking spaces



**First Floor Plan +
(Upper Level Floors, Similar)**



Parking Floor Plan



Section A-A

Figure 4-5: Plans and Renderings, Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 3



*Conceptual Perspective Renderings
of Opportunity Hill Site Scenario 3*

Development Feasibility

The mixed-use townhome scenario (Site Scenario 1; see Figure 4-3) would generate the highest return of the land use alternatives. Site Scenario 1 would have an estimated development cost of approximately \$12.8 million and revenues of \$14.9 million. The project would benefit from lower construction costs and less expensive parking (i.e., tuck-under parking versus podium parking).

The mixed-use condominium scenario (Site Scenario 2; see Figure 4-4) would be burdened by high podium parking costs, more expensive construction, and internal building circulation. This prototype shows projected development returns of only 2% of cost with no residual land values.

The mixed-use townhome and condominium scenario (Site Scenario 3; see Figure 4-5) would generate slightly higher returns than Site Scenario 2, estimated at 7% of total costs. If home prices increased by 5% above development costs, this scenario would be feasible.

4.4-3 DEPOT STREET PROJECT

Overview

The Depot Street site, located on McClellan Street between Bush Street and the terminus of East Main Street, is mostly owned by the Redevelopment Agency and is approximately 2.2 acres in size (see Figure 4-2). Three land use scenarios were evaluated for the Depot Street site, proposing different mixes of residential densities and varied assumptions about commercial space. The Depot Street site was evaluated using a mixed-use townhome scenario, a mixed-use condominium scenario, and a mixed-use mansion home scenario. The program for each site scenario is shown on the following pages (refer also to Figures 4-6, 4-7, and 4-8).



**Depot Street Site Scenario 4:
Townhomes and Live/Work**

Project Overview

- Mixed-use housing and commercial development
- Attached townhomes, live/work units
- Parking for housing tucked under the residential units
- Some commercial space located near the intersection of McClellan and School Streets

Development Program

Housing

- 46 townhome units
(1,200 - 1,600 square feet)
- 4 live/work units (1,375 square feet)

Commercial

- 7,300 square feet ground-floor retail
- 3,500 square feet live/work commercial

Parking

- 100 on-site tuck-under parking spaces
- 2 visitor parking spaces
- 17 on-street parking spaces



Figure 4-6: Plans and Renderings for Depot Street Site Scenario 4





Townhome Community Examples for Depot Street Site



**Depot Street Site Scenario 5:
Mixed-Use Condominiums/
Apartments**

Project Overview

- Mixed-use housing and commercial development
- Parking for housing provided in a podium structure under the residential units
- Some commercial space located along McClellan Street

Development Program

Housing

90 units apartments/condominiums
(1,050 - 1,200 square feet)

COMMERCIAL

8,600 square feet of ground-floor
retail

PARKING

163 on-site podium parking spaces
10 visitor parking spaces
17 on-street parking spaces

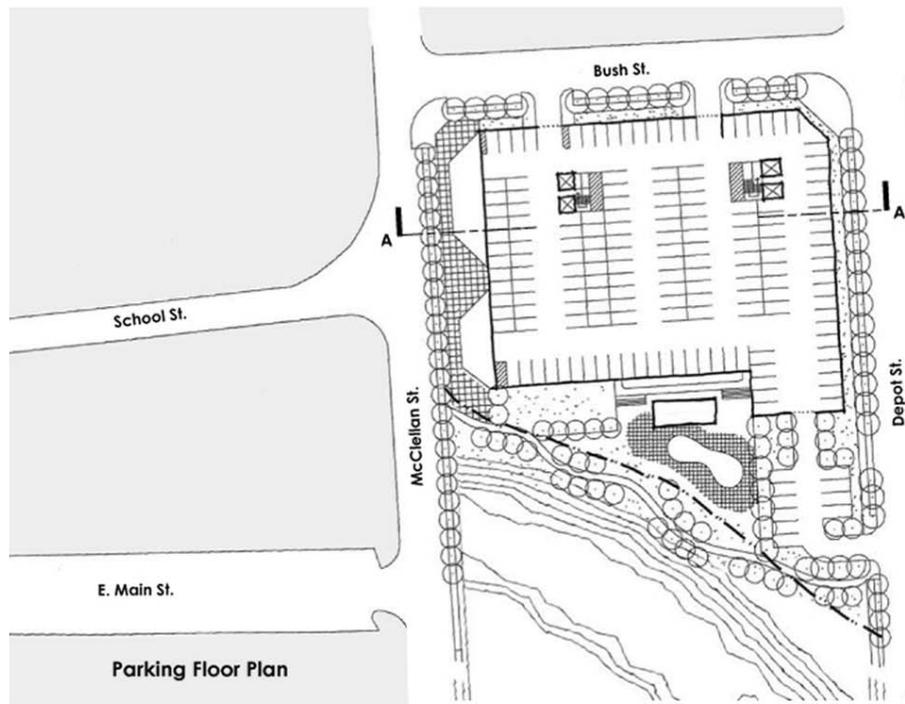


Figure 4-7: Plans and Renderings for Depot Street Site Scenario 5



*Podium Apartment/Condominium
Examples for the Depot Street Site*



**Depot Street Site Scenario 6:
Mansion Homes**

Project Overview

- Mixed-use housing and commercial development
- Parking for housing tucked under the residential units
- A small amount of commercial space located along McClellan Street

Development Program

Housing

28 units apartments/condominiums
(900 - 1,400 square feet)

Commercial

8,500 square feet of ground-floor retail

Parking

- 56 tuck under parking spaces
- 14 visitor parking spaces
- 17 on street parking spaces



Figure 4-8: Plans and Renderings for Depot Street Site Scenario 6



*Conceptual Perspective Renderings
of Mansion Homes for the Depot
Street Site*



*Example of a Mansion Home for the
Depot Street Site*

Development Feasibility

The Depot Street site scenarios (Site Scenarios 4-6; see Figures 4-6, 4-7, and 4-8) generated results similar to those of the Opportunity Hill project. The lower density alternatives (see Site Scenarios 4 and 6) are viable under current market conditions. The two scenarios would have lower construction costs and parking scenarios, with projected returns on costs of 16% for Site Scenario 4 and 28% for Site Scenario 6.

4.4-4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Although the current housing prices and construction costs in Vacaville favor medium-density townhomes in the downtown area, the City supports the development of higher density scenarios that inject more pedestrian and retail activity into the area. A higher density housing development component is also supported due to the use of Low Income Set Aside Funds for acquisition of many properties in the Opportunity Hill area. The higher density will help ensure that the affordability requirements of these Set Aside Funds are met and/or the Fund is reimbursed. Under current market conditions, higher density mixed-use construction is not economically feasible because the higher construction costs cannot be offset by sale (or rental) prices. The high construction costs of podium parking can also contribute to the challenge of building a financially feasible project.

The higher density alternatives are preferred despite the underlying economics. Although the lower density alternatives are economically viable at this time, the Agency may choose to hold on to the properties until residential market conditions improve and home prices justify higher density construction. As an incentive for a developer to initiate a higher density alternative despite current market conditions, the City should consider changing the zoning for the project area to heights and densities beyond those suitable to current market conditions. Because redevelopment at the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street projects would be infill projects, the City may also consider allowing lower parking standards for smaller two-bedroom units, as recommended below.

Smaller Units and Lower Parking Standards

The City may consider lower parking standards that limit the number of podium parking spaces if a project with small unit sizes is proposed. Although the three development scenarios used for the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street projects used a lower parking ratio assumption than the current City standard and used small unit sizes ranging between 800-1,200 square feet for one, two and three-bedroom condominium units, the mixed-use, high-density residential projects were challenged by the high construction costs of podium parking under the current market conditions. The high costs of podium parking can adversely affect the economic viability of a project. Smaller units often generate higher values on a per-square-foot basis and fulfill a need among empty-nester households and entry-level homebuyers. Smaller units would also be affordable to moderate-income households without requiring an additional housing subsidy. One-bedroom and two-bedroom units ranging from 650 to 1,050 square feet would be marketable with a single designated parking space. Two and three bedroom units ranging from 1,050 to 1,200 square feet could be marketed with 1.5 parking spaces per unit.

This lower parking ratio is generally acceptable because downtown-area residents may be singles or couples without children. The active-adult baby boomers are continuing to grow as a housing market throughout the United States. Smaller units in downtown Vacaville may also be suitable to buyers, both young and old, desiring a more urban and green lifestyle choice not offered in other housing locations in the community. Downtown housing

is close to services such as grocery shopping, restaurants, entertainment facilities, and transit, reducing the need for an additional car.

4.4-5 SECONDARY OPPORTUNITY PROJECTS

In addition to the two sites owned and initially targeted for development by the Redevelopment Agency, three additional opportunity sites are under preliminary discussions with the City of Vacaville: the Main and Wilson Streets site, the Mason and Wilson Streets site, and the School Street site. The secondary opportunity sites are not analyzed as part of this Master Plan; rather, they will have their own separate planning processes. However, all new projects occurring in the Opportunity Hill area, including the secondary opportunity sites, shall be subject to the standards and design guidelines of this Master Plan.

The Main and Wilson Streets Project

The Main and Wilson Streets site is privately owned. It is an approximately 0.70-acre site proposed for a mixed-use high-density project at 56 du/ac. The proposal and design are in keeping with the overall vision for downtown Vacaville and this Master Plan. The proposed mixed-use project would create a retail face along Main Street and would add attractive residential units in support of the overall land use strategy outlined above.

The Mason and Wilson Streets Project

The major portions of this site are owned by the Redevelopment Agency. Several small homes on Catherine Street are not currently owned by the Agency, making it less efficient to redevelop this site to its fullest intensity and highest and best use.

This site is currently being discussed for potential redevelopment as a two-story office use with surface parking on the remainder of the block. Although a higher intensity, mixed-use development pattern may be considered more in keeping with the vision identified in this Master Plan, an office use that meets the Design Guidelines outlined in Section 6 will promote visual appeal and provide a connection to the development on the south side of Mason Street. An office use is also in keeping with the overall land use strategy of downtown Vacaville by providing employment opportunities in the area.

The School Street Project

The School Street site includes approximately five acres of land owned by the Vacaville School District and another 0.8 acre of land currently owned by the City. Although the School Street site is not analyzed in detail in this Master Plan, it has been recognized and identified by the community as a potential opportunity site. It is also envisioned as a mixed-use development site, with ground-floor commercial spaces fronting School Street and a higher density residential housing community occupying the remainder of the site.

The Vacaville School District and the City should discuss the best solutions for developing the site that ensure its successful contribution to the downtown landscape. When the School District conducts its own studies for potential development of the site, additional ways that the City and the School District may work together to develop the site to its fullest potential may be identified.

4.5 Supporting Strategies

Several strategies, programs, and actions would provide support for the primary land uses and successful development of the opportunity sites in the Opportunity Hill area. The supporting strategies comprise a range of development actions, policy changes, and improvements. The supporting strategies are linked with the implementation of the opportunity sites in the Opportunity Hill area and would help ensure that new development can be implemented successfully. This coordinated approach ensures the long-term success of each new development opportunity and the success of the downtown revitalization as a whole.

The suggested supporting strategies that the City, Agency, and/or developer may take are as follows:

- D1. Design Guidelines and Standards
- D2. Parking Improvements
- D3. Investigate Incentives for Mixed-Use Development
- D4. Changes to the Legal Framework (City General Plan and Zoning Amendments)
- D5. Improvement of Linkages and Connections
- D6. Infrastructure Updates
- D7. Signage and Wayfinding Improvements
- D8. Affordable Housing

Each of these supporting strategies, including objectives and proposed actions, is described below.

D1. Provide Design Guidelines and Standards for Opportunity Hill

Objective: *Support development in the Opportunity Hill area while maintaining downtown Vacaville's historic character.*

The historic urban form, tree-lined streets, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, and mix of uses contribute to downtown Vacaville's unique character and charm. These historic design elements must be preserved to ensure that the downtown area maintains this distinctiveness. Chapter 6 outlines and provides specific design guidelines for improvements to the Opportunity Hill area. Additional incentives to promote mixed-use development and residential infill development are discussed under Strategy D3. The guidelines outlined for the Opportunity Hill area are consistent with the design guidelines for downtown Vacaville and cover building design and site layout, landscaping, signage, and streetscape elements.

Action: *a. Adopt the Opportunity Hill Master Plan and Design Guidelines for use by City staff in reviewing development projects.*

D2. Improve Parking

Objective: *Ensure adequate and convenient parking for new uses that is easily accessible, highly visible, and supports a sense of personal security and safety of users.*

Parking is arguably one of the most important requirements for successful downtown redevelopment because today's retail shoppers and residents are conditioned by their suburban experiences. However, streets and parking lots that replicate the form and abundance of suburban parking can destroy the historic character of the downtown setting. Parking needs to be provided in a clear, evenly distributed supply and includes on-street parking with off-street options, both publicly and privately owned. The City identified a downtown parking feasibility analysis as part of their 2007-2009 Strategic Plan. The study has been initiated and will analyze the parking needs for future development in the Opportunity Hill area.

Employees should be encouraged to park away from store entrances. On-street parking is critical because it is the most convenient type of parking and provides the steady turnover of shoppers for coffee shops, specialty food stores, and the like. Off-street parking entries need to be highly visible from the street, but should not dominate the streetscape. Parking should be user friendly, with clear signage directing customers to the lots; should be well lit for personal safety; and should provide a more sophisticated comfortable setting.

Downtown residential parking in higher density, mixed-use projects in small towns is also problematic. The expense of structured residential parking can greatly affect housing development costs and ultimately, project feasibility. Strategies and design solutions for residential, mixed-use projects should consider reducing parking requirements because of downtown's central location, access to transit, and the typical family size and lifestyle of urban users (singles, couples, retirees, and active adults).

Downtown Vacaville is on the threshold of development intensity and parking demand that should be resolved with development of districtwide parking structures. However, the costs of parking structures is still financially infeasible. The strategic framework concept diagram (Figure 4-2) provides recommendations for parking structure locations when financing becomes more realistic in the future.

To alleviate potential parking issues, the Master Plan recommends expanding the downtown parking district to include the opportunity projects and the eastern boundary of downtown Vacaville. Within the parking district, targeted strategies can be implemented that allow for more flexible requirements and ways to meet parking requirements. By increasing the area of the parking district, the City would allow new development projects to take advantage of its downtown parking strategies.

The following goals for parking improvement may be considered by the City for the Opportunity Hill area and are consistent with ongoing downtown revitalization efforts:

- Complete a parking study for the development of a potential public parking structure(s) serving the downtown area that may include parking spaces designated for business employees and residents.
- Expand the existing parking district(s) to cover the full downtown area, including Opportunity Hill.

- Revise the parking standards to allow the following:
 - one parking space per efficiency or studio unit versus the current standards of 1.5 per unit,
 - 1.5 parking spaces for one- and two- bedroom units versus the current standard of two per unit, and
 - consider allowing the following reduction to the number of podium parking spaces required in residential podium developments with small unit sizes (defined to be one- and two-bedroom units ranging between 650-1,050 sf and three bedroom units that are 1,200 sf or less):
 - one parking space for one and two bedroom units, and
 - 1.5 parking spaces for three bedroom units.
- Allow on-street parking to count toward parking for commercial and visitor parking in residential projects.
- Allow the use of tandem parking arrangements to meet parking requirements in residential projects
- Allow for a discount in parking requirements in shared parking arrangements for projects participating in improvement costs within the parking district.

- Actions:**
- a. Complete the parking analysis that considers the future parking demand of the Opportunity Hill area.*
 - b. Expand the downtown parking district to include the Opportunity Hill area.*
 - c. Amend the provisions for downtown parking in the zoning ordinance to allow more flexibility in meeting parking requirements.*

D3. Investigate Resources to Provide Mixed-Use Development Incentives

Objective: *Attract new mixed-use development that promotes the economic viability of the downtown area with new jobs, offices, entertainment, and retail businesses by providing economic incentives for redevelopment.*

The major goal of this Master Plan is to allow for increased intensity of mixed-use development projects in downtown Vacaville, specifically in the Opportunity Hill area. Development incentives can help to promote new infill development by reducing project costs and making higher intensity mixed-use projects more feasible.

Development incentives may include:

- reducing governmental constraints—simplifying the permit approval processes, using allowable CEQA exemptions for urban infill housing, reducing development fees, and changing land use controls;
- financial assistance for development costs—land write-downs, reductions in infrastructure and street improvement costs reductions, and parking district programs; and
- technical assistance—streamlining the application process and grant writing.

- Action:**
- a. *Identify alternative resources in order to facilitate mixed-use development incentives.*
 - b. *Initiate a financial analysis to adopt mixed-use development incentive strategies for the Opportunity Hill area.*

D4. Initiate Changes to the Legal Framework (City General Plan and Zoning Amendments)

Objective: *Allow an increased density of up to 65 du/ac in Opportunity Hill, compared with the up to 36 du/ac currently allowed by the City in the downtown area.*

Zoning at heights and densities beyond those suitable to current market conditions can provide developer flexibility. As a result, a developer may become willing to initiate a higher density alternative despite current market conditions. The City should initiate changes to the Vacaville General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance (along with the necessary environmental documents) as an incentive to development.

- Action:**
- a. *Initiate General Plan amendments and zoning changes to implement the Master Plan-recommended land use and design guidelines to allow future private development to proceed in the Opportunity Hill project area.*

D5. Improve Linkages and Connections

Objective: *Promote efficient linkages for automobile, bus, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation in the downtown area.*

Attractive and efficient pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and auto connections are crucial to the success of projects in downtown Vacaville. Creating clear, visible connections to the downtown area from surrounding neighborhoods and the region enables visitors, residents, and workers to access all the retail shops, public events, and places that the downtown area has to offer. The City is already engaged in achieving this objective, especially with the notable achievement of developing the Ulatis Creekwalk. The City has already incorporated the action to extend the Creekwalk to Depot Street in its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Pedestrian Amenities: Pedestrian amenities should be extended through the downtown area and Opportunity Hill, first along Main Street and School Street, which have the greatest potential for additional retail uses.

Improved Bike Trail Systems: The City of Vacaville may study the potential to improve the bike trail linkages from the downtown to other neighborhood areas, in connection with planned improvements to the Ulatis Creekwalk.

School Street Improvements: School Street has the opportunity to become an extension of the pedestrian plaza space from Andrews Park to Depot Street. School Street can be designed as a mixed-use slow street, with wide decorative paving for pedestrians, while still allowing auto access to future storefronts and parking along the street. The street can be closed off with bollards during civic events, allowing activities such as outdoor dining and gatherings to spill out into the street or to extend down along the Creekwalk. School Street can also be easily accessed from Main Street across existing pedestrian bridges.

Plazas and Gathering Places: In addition to the opportunity to extend the Andrews Park pedestrian plaza and Ulatis Creekwalk, new developments in the Opportunity Hill area can also include opportunities for additional small plazas and gathering places. Gathering spaces can be accommodated at project entries and on the wider sections of sidewalks along retail street frontages. However, new gathering places should not be too large and compete with the Town Square or Andrews Park. Additional small plaza spaces can be created at the terminus of School Street, at corner entries, or by widening sidewalks to allow for outdoor dining along Main Street.

Action: *a. Adopt a streetscape design plan or transportation plan to be implemented through the CIP.*

D6. Complete Infrastructure Improvements

Objective: *Complete improvements to infrastructure systems to adequately serve the full buildout of the Opportunity Hill area, consistent with the zoning change recommendations of this Master Plan.*

The City's engineering consultants for the Opportunity Hill area have already prepared studies assessing the capacity of the existing water and wastewater infrastructure systems in the downtown area to serve General Plan buildout of the Opportunity Hill area at an increased density of 65 du/acre (recommended by this Master Plan) for the Opportunity Hill and Depot Street opportunity projects. The results of these studies are summarized here.

The Phase 2 water service analysis, performed by Nolte Associates, Inc. (December 2007), recommends replacing the existing 4-inch and 8-inch water mains on Wilson Street, Catherine Street, McClellan Street, and Bush Street with 12-inch water mains to supply adequate fire flow to the Opportunity Hill project sites. The construction costs (in 2007 dollars) for the above improvements to the project are estimated at \$615,000.

The Phase 2 wastewater service analysis for the Opportunity Hill area, performed by West Yost Associates (December 2007), determined and recommended that two sewer segments (identified in Figure 2-8, "Sewer Study Map," in Chapter 2) be replaced because they have substandard diameters and are in poor physical condition. The construction costs (in 2007 dollars) for these improvements are estimated to range between \$210,000 and \$240,000, depending on the construction method used, field conditions, and various other economic factors.

To serve the potential new projects in Opportunity Hill, the City should move ahead with plans for infrastructure improvements and develop financing mechanisms that help pay for needed repairs.

Actions: *a. Update the CIP to allow planning and construction of needed infrastructure improvements.*
 b. Implement the financial mechanisms required for a developer to be reimbursed for the improvements.

D7. Improve Signage and Wayfinding

Objective: *Improve signage and wayfinding into and around the downtown area.*

For downtown Vacaville to be successful, people must be able to easily find the downtown area and comfortably access and move around its many streets and sidewalks to find the parking areas and stores they seek. The current sign programs should be finalized and should address how to help identify the downtown area, including the Opportunity Hill area. Signs should help direct visitors from the highway to the main arterial streets, to the downtown area, to parking lots, and to the main commercial streets and public facilities. A well-designed signage program would be consistent with the historic character of the downtown area and contribute to the overall branding of “Old Town” Vacaville as a unique destination.

The signage program should be coordinated with the streetscape elements along Main Street and the entry gateway features on Davis Street. Wayfinding within and around downtown Vacaville would be enhanced by coordinating and extending the downtown streetscape design into the Opportunity Hill area. A system of street trees, sidewalks, lighting, streetscape furniture, crosswalks, and paving patterns would help highlight the City’s unique downtown setting and contribute to its overall visibility and special character.

Freeway Signage: Currently it is difficult to find downtown Vacaville unless one is familiar with the City and the local street pattern. Signs along I-80 identifying the historic downtown main street are small and few and can easily be missed. The City’s current Gateway Plan signage program (approved by the City Council in 1999) should consider improvements to the wayfinding and directional signage from I-80 and through the local street systems leading into the downtown area.

Downtown Signage: Signage at most primary entries to the downtown area should be attractive. While the downtown arch on Davis Street is particularly effective as a landmark, most approaches to downtown are obscure. A coordinated wayfinding and signage program should be created that helps to more visibly mark the downtown area from all other approaches (Mason Street, Depot Street, Monte Vista Avenue, Cernon Street, and Parker Street). Wayfinding elements may include special landscape planting, street paving at crosswalks, additional landmarks and monuments, and signs, coordinated with the overall historic theme of downtown Vacaville. The City is working on the Downtown Sign Plan Design. The Downtown Sign Plan (adopted by the Planning Commission in resolution number 04-012) provides a unified, clear pedestrian- and vehicle-oriented signage system throughout the City through a common theme and color scheme. The plan applies to all public directional signs in the downtown area as well as to other areas of Vacaville.

- Actions:**
- a. *Finalize and adopt a sign program or plan addressing wayfinding and identification signage for downtown Vacaville.*
 - b. *Initiate any recommended amendments to the Sign Ordinance regulating development by private tenants.*

D8. Provide Affordable Housing

Objective: *Provide opportunities for new high-density affordable housing within the downtown area.*

A major goal of the City is to encourage the development of housing to meet the needs of residents at all income levels and abilities, including public employees, retail workers, active adults, and persons with disabilities. Redevelopment law requires that 20% of redevelopment tax increment revenues be set aside to increase, improve, and/or preserve the supply of affordable, low-income, and moderate-income housing within the redevelopment project area. Portions of the Opportunity Hill project area were purchased with 20% set-aside funds and are appropriate locations to meet the City's Housing Element and redevelopment goals.

- Actions:**
- a. Pursue public-private partnerships with housing providers and developers to construct affordable housing in the downtown area.*
 - b. Continue to pursue grants and other affordable-housing program opportunities to meet these goals.*