

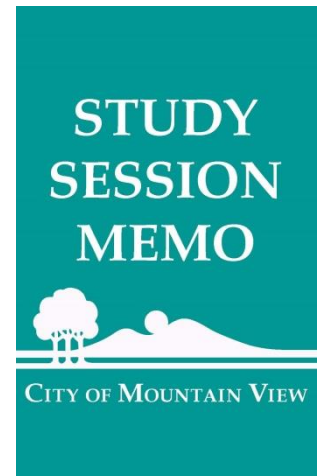
DATE: March 5, 2019

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Stephanie Williams, Planning Manager/Zoning
Administrator
Aarti Shrivastava, Assistant City
Manager/Community Development
Director

VIA: Daniel H. Rich, City Manager

TITLE: **Downtown Precise Plan**



PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is to receive Council feedback and direction on potential amendments to the Downtown Precise Plan.

BACKGROUND

Through the review of numerous development proposals and downtown parking initiatives, Council has expressed that they would like to consider amendments to the Downtown Precise Plan to address current development trends and assess whether components of the Plan should be updated. Topics that have been articulated by Council as potential areas for study include: parking; appropriate mix of use (office, restaurant, retail, and residential); heights and intensities; historic preservation; and architectural design.

This Study Session report is not meant to be a detailed analysis of each topic area, but rather the initial conversation to gauge Council's desire for whether the Downtown Precise Plan should be amended and, if so, which topic areas staff should focus on. Study topics would be brought back to Council for further discussion and approval of a work plan, and would include public outreach and engagement as well as review by the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) before final Council consideration.

Downtown Precise Plan

The Downtown Precise Plan was originally adopted in 1988 and amended in parts in 2000, 2001, 2004, 2015, and 2018. These amendments include updating the use and development standards (2000); incorporating sign requirements and design (2001);

updating the use and development standards in Areas H, I, J; parking, density, historic preservation, and administrative standards (2004); ground-floor office uses in Area J (2015); and designating retail cannabis as a land use (2018).

Downtown Mountain View is largely perceived as the four blocks on both sides of Castro Street between Evelyn Avenue and Mercy Street, comprising the historic retail district of the City. There is also a mix of uses in the areas on either side of the historic Castro Street commercial district. The Downtown Precise Plan boundary stretches from Evelyn Avenue to El Camino Real and is surrounded by predominantly single-family neighborhoods. Mountain View's Parking Assessment District is another boundary within the Downtown Precise Plan area and allows for the assessment of fees for maintenance of public parking facilities.

The Plan's stated vision for the downtown area is "the historic center and civic focus of the community, and the 'heartbeat' of the City. The downtown is characterized by a concentration of activities, including civic functions and cultural events, as well as a vital residential and commercial district, all of which provide a strong focal point for the City." The Plan's vision also articulates that downtown is "an active and attractive pedestrian environment," that "The various elements of downtown will strengthen and reinforce each other," and that "As downtown becomes increasingly self-sufficient, sustaining a full range of businesses, housing, and basic services, the downtown will become an even more attractive place to live and work." The full vision for the downtown can be found in the attached Precise Plan document (see Attachment 1—Downtown Precise Plan). The intent of the Plan is to manage growth by guiding it toward the realization of specific urban design

Map 1: Downtown Precise Plan and Subareas

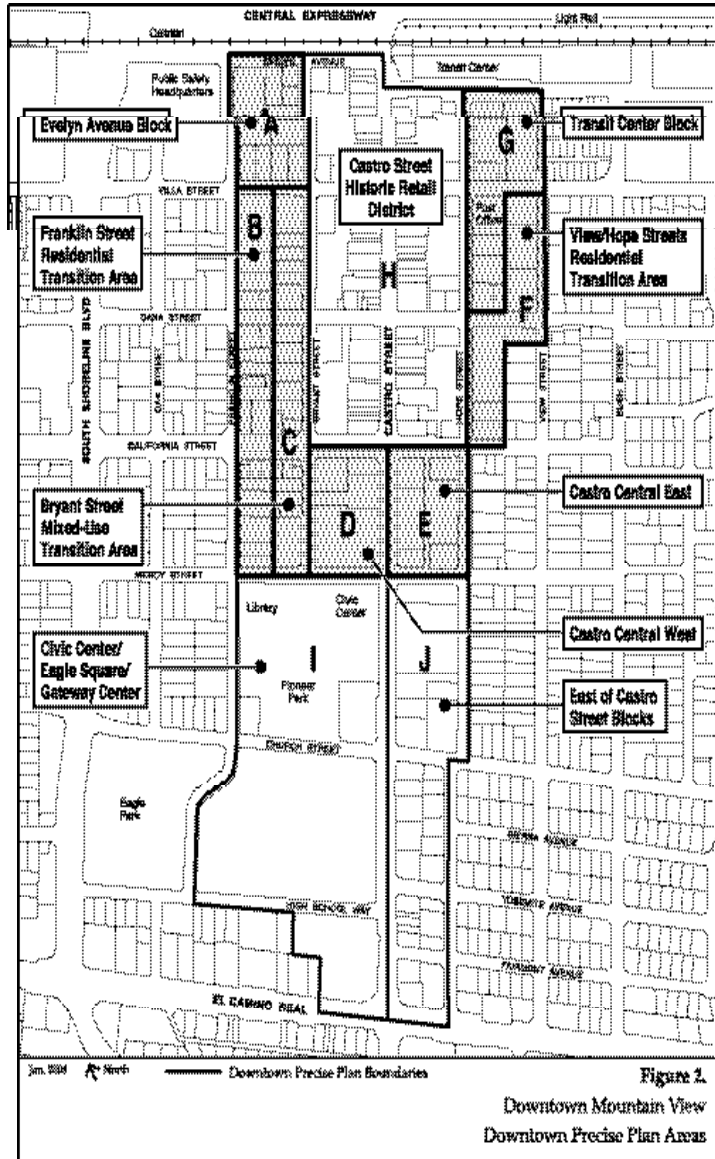


Figure 2
 Downtown Mountain View
 Downtown Precise Plan Areas

objectives and implements these objectives in terms of land use policies, development standards, and design guidelines for 10 specific subareas within the Plan area (Areas A through J).

DISCUSSION

The following specific topic areas have been mentioned as potential areas for study: parking; appropriate use mixes (office, restaurant, retail); heights and intensities; historic preservation; and architectural design. Below is a brief summary of these topic areas, feedback staff has received from Council on each of the topics, and options for Plan amendments based on estimated time, cost, and staff resources. Council could direct staff to undertake a total overhaul of the Precise Plan or could focus on certain topics or subareas of downtown.

Parking

The parking standards listed in the Plan apply to new development and changes in use in the downtown and are different from the parking standards in other parts of the City. There are three distinct parking areas within the downtown, each with different parking requirements. Map 2 below shows the boundaries of the different parking areas.

The Plan has special parking requirements for Areas E and H, which are in the Parking District. This special set of parking requirements is aimed at preserving the historic pedestrian-scale, storefront character of Castro Street and encourages certain uses. Parking exemptions also recognize that most of the lots are too small to provide parking on-site. Furthermore, parking exemptions recognize existing investment in development and act as an incentive for new development, particularly retail uses, and directs that required parking be placed in public parking lots and structures.

In the rest of the Parking District outside of Areas E and H, lots are generally larger and there is more of a possibility of providing parking on-site. In these areas, development incentives are provided through Parking In-Lieu Fee allowances and credits for existing building area. In-Lieu fees collected are used for the development of new public parking facilities. However, in 2018, Council indicated an interest in alternatives to new parking structures. New development in Plan areas outside the Parking District are considered not in close proximity to public parking and, therefore, all parking in these areas must be provided on-site.

Recent studies of downtown parking have revealed that parking is impacted at certain times. This demand may be due in part to increased daytime and nighttime population and a thriving composition of restaurants, retail spaces, and personal service operations, which draws patrons from Mountain View and the region. Due in part to the success of downtown, the current demands on public parking exceed the “parking standard practical capacity” of 85 percent at certain times of the day and on certain days. This means when 85 percent or more of the spaces are occupied, it becomes difficult for a driver to find a parking space without

Map 2: Downtown Precise Plan Parking Areas

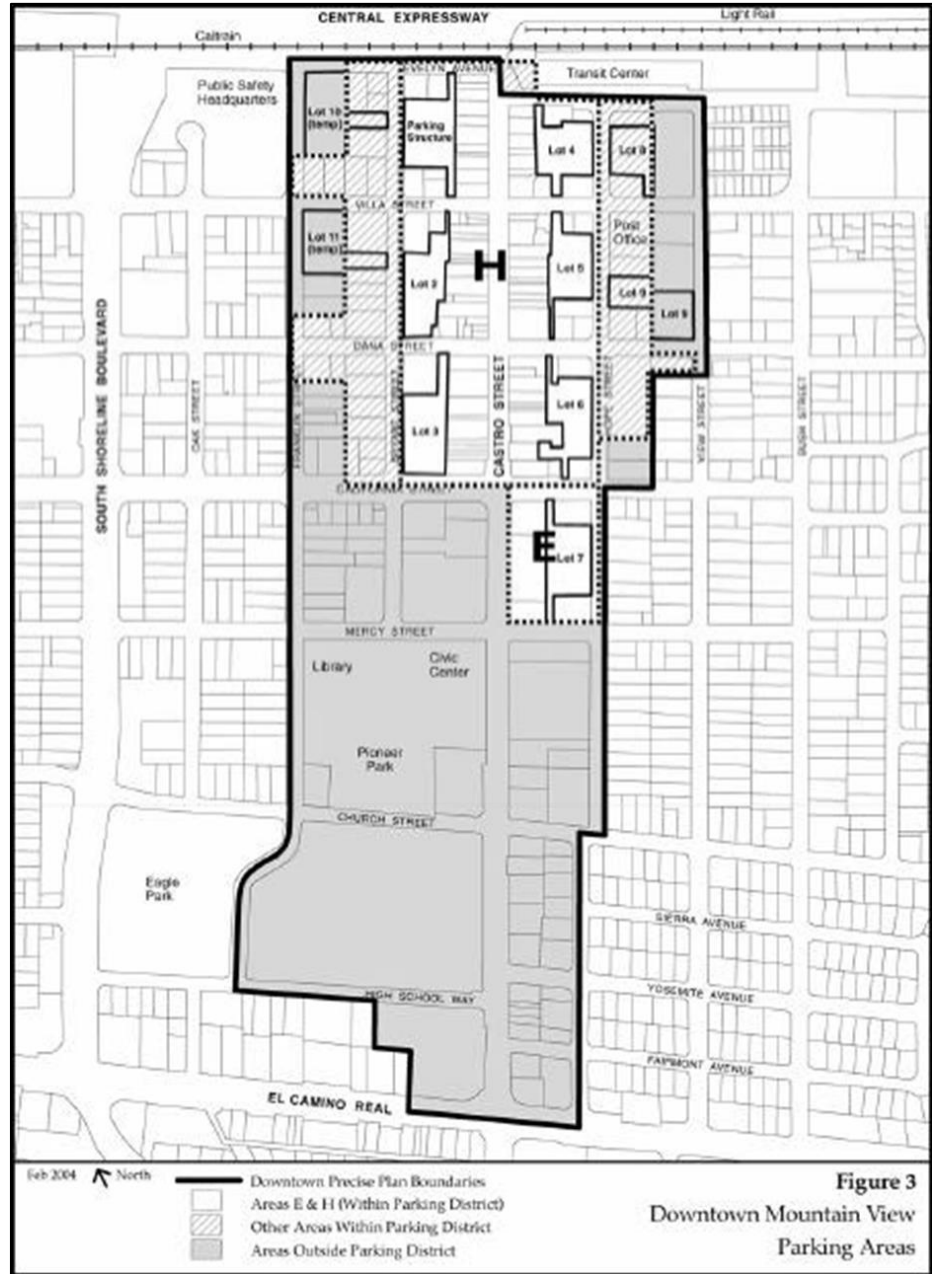


Figure 3
 Downtown Mountain View
 Parking Areas

having to “cruise” for parking. The April 2018 parking study showed that Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays during the noon lunch hour had the highest parking demand on average with the demand for public parking over the 85 percent desirable parking capacity. The demand drops during the afternoon, and then increases in the evening after 6:00 p.m. On Saturday, the demand was below the 85 percent desirable parking capacity throughout the day until the dinner hour. For most hours of the day, parking demand is below the 85 percent threshold.

Recent Council feedback as part of development review proposals has indicated there may be a desire to study all or some of the following components of parking within downtown:

- Parking requirements for different uses (office, housing, retail, restaurant, hotel, etc.);
- Expansion of the Parking District;
- In-Lieu Fee payment options in the Parking District;
- Elimination of the reduced parking fee in the Parking District; and
- Paid parking.

In October 2016, the City Council held a Study Session to discuss downtown parking demands and provided input on options to accommodate parking demands in downtown Mountain View. The City Council directed staff to explore two short-term pilot programs: ride-sharing credit and valet parking, and two long-term options: shared parking agreements and a paid parking study. In February 2017, the short-term programs were approved. The ride-sharing credit pilot program was not launched due to the inability to reach agreements with the major ride-sharing companies. Meanwhile, the valet parking pilot program was launched in March 2018. At the January 22, 2019 Council meeting, the Council extended the program through June 2020. Additionally, the Council is scheduled to hold a Study Session on the paid parking study March 19, 2019.

Land Uses

Each of the 10 subareas of the Plan have distinct allowed land uses and are generally further refined by permitted or provisionally permitted uses on the ground floor and upper floors and by certain areas of the street (e.g., midblock, corner properties, cross-streets, etc.)

The entire Plan area is comprised of approximately 25 percent residential land uses and 75 percent commercial land uses. There are approximately 320 businesses, of which approximately 27 percent are restaurants, 10 percent are retail, and 40 percent are office uses. The remaining 23 percent of uses are personal services, medical, or vacant.

New office developments have been a growing trend within the Plan area and the City has reviewed many recent requests for new office developments. Council has raised the question as to what is the appropriate mix of uses in the Plan area and whether the Plan should limit the amount and location of additional office and restaurant uses in an effort to draw other uses to the downtown area. An economic analysis could be incorporated into a plan amendment scope of work to help inform development and use changes to the Plan.

Possible areas of study related to land uses within the downtown are:

- Study the amount and/or location of office and restaurant uses;
- Increase retail and residential uses; and
- Modernize and expand use in the various subdistricts.

Historic Preservation

The Plan states that the vision for downtown is to preserve the mix of buildings, the pedestrian-scaled environment, and the carefully designed public spaces that contribute to its special community character. Downtown's late-19th and early-20th century buildings contribute historic character and distinctiveness to this desirable pattern and mix of buildings. Some of the buildings are listed on the City's Register of Historical Resources (Register) because of their architectural distinction or their association with prominent early citizens. Changes to these buildings are governed by the City's Ordinance for the Preservation of Historical Resources as well as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Under CEQA, the removal of or substantial alteration to a historic structure which results in a degradation of its historic status is considered a significant impact to the environment and requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Through the City's development and CEQA processes, Council has the sole discretion to either approve or deny projects that create a significant impact to a historic resource and whether an impact is outweighed by City goals/objectives achieved by a proposed project.

In July 2012, Council approved an office development at 902 Villa Street which required the approval of an EIR and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the removal of the historic structure on-site. At more recent Study Sessions, Council has reviewed another office development next door at 938-954 Villa Street which requested to remove two historic structures and build an approximately 42,000 square foot office building with ground-floor restaurant space. The two historic structures were recently nominated for inclusion into the National Register and, in February 2019, the State

Historic Resources Commission recommended the National nomination. This does not alter the CEQA review process.

Council feedback through the review of this proposed office project indicated there may be a desire to study modifications to the Plan which further clarify or amend the Council and community vision for the preservation of historic resources within the downtown area. This also could be done with a broader look at the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance which pertains to the City as a whole, including the downtown.

Design

Each of the 10 subareas of the Plan has design guidelines which provide recommendations for architectural treatment and organization of open space. Each area has different design guidelines which are targeted to that specific area, with the most specific guidelines being for Area H—Historic Retail District, which are meant to support and blend new development or building modifications with the historic structures and character of this area.

The Plan does not dictate an architectural style(s) but does provide guidance on areas of design such as massing, appropriate building materials, ground-level and upper-level treatments, service areas, etc., depending on which part of the downtown the property is located.

Height and intensity of a development are also crucial metrics in shaping what a building will look like and relate to surrounding properties. Height and intensity limitations are also provided in each of the 10 subareas and generally range from three to six stories.

Council feedback through the review of recent downtown development proposals indicate there may be a desire to study modifications to the Plan which further clarify or amend the Council and community vision for design, including height and intensity limitations in all or a targeted number of the 10 plan subareas.

Scope Options

Depending on Council's desire to amend the Plan, there are four general scope options as follows with estimated cost, staff resources, and completion times:

1. Amend targeted subareas/topics of the Plan and possible consultant engagement or supporting technical reports—Estimated \$500,000 to \$750,000, depending on scope, 12 months, and 1 existing FTE.

2. Holistically review the Plan with modifications expected to a majority of the Plan and engagement with a consultant and preparation of supporting technical reports – Estimated \$1.75 million, 24 months, and 1 existing FTE.
3. Do not amend the Plan – No fiscal or staffing impacts.
4. Alternative Council-defined scope or priorities related to studying the Downtown Precise Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Provide staff with direction on the following:

Question No. 1: Does Council want to amend the Downtown Precise Plan?

Question No. 2: If so, which level of study should be completed from the different scope options, and which subareas or topic areas (i.e., parking, land uses, design, etc.) should be targeted?

NEXT STEPS

If Council elects to amend the Precise Plan, staff will return to Council with a scope and work plan, including budget implications, for consideration and approval. Council will also be considering future work plan items as part of the goal-setting process over the next few months, so direction on this will impact capacity for other projects.

PUBLIC NOTICING

The meeting agenda and Study Session memo were posted on the City's website and announced on cable television Channel 26. All property owners and tenants within a 1,000' radius of the Downtown Precise Plan area were sent notices as well as the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, the Old Mountain View Neighborhood Association, and Shoreline West Association of Neighbors.

SW-AS/3/CAM
818-03-05-19SS

Attachment: 1. Downtown Precise Plan