

Section 2 - Downtown Station Area

The Downtown Station Area covers a 720-acre area surrounding the Downtown Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) Station at the heart of the city. Since the earliest days of European settlement in the region, the area has been the focus of cultural, commercial, financial and administrative activity for Santa Rosa and Sonoma County. The area is generally bounded by College Avenue to the north, Brookwood Avenue to the east; Sonoma Avenue, State Route 12 and Sebastopol Avenue to the south; and Dutton Avenue and Imwalle Gardens to the west.

The Downtown Station Area features a rich mix of commercial, office, retail, residential, industrial, and entertainment uses. It encompasses Courthouse Square, the city's central business district and an important regional jobs center; Santa Rosa Plaza, Sonoma County's largest retail shopping destination; the historic Railroad Square commercial district; and several established residential neighborhoods, several of which are designated preservation districts. Santa Rosa Creek flows through the area, flanked by the Prince memorial Greenway and the Joe Rodota Trail. Building on these assets, the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan (DSASP) seeks to guide the evolution of the area and foster a lively, modern regional hub that is a prime destination for urban living, business, civic, and social life.

The DSASP envisions a vibrant urban core centered around Courthouse Square and a network of pedestrian-friendly mixed-use village centers, each with its own character. To make this vision a reality, the DSASP seeks to focus new development primarily in the Core, Station, Maker and Neighborhood Mixed Use areas shown on Map-1, while preserving and enhancing the existing character of other areas. The primary objectives of the DSASP are to increase the range of housing, employment, and entertainment options within walking distance of transit; to improve multimodal connectivity; to foster vibrant civic spaces; and to create safe, attractive, walkable environments. Standards included in the DSASP and Zoning Code will implement the vision for the Downtown Station Area. These design guidelines are intended to complement those standards and support the objectives of the DSASP.



Figure 1. The DSASP seeks to foster vibrant civic spaces and walkable environments.



Figure 2. Downtown Market



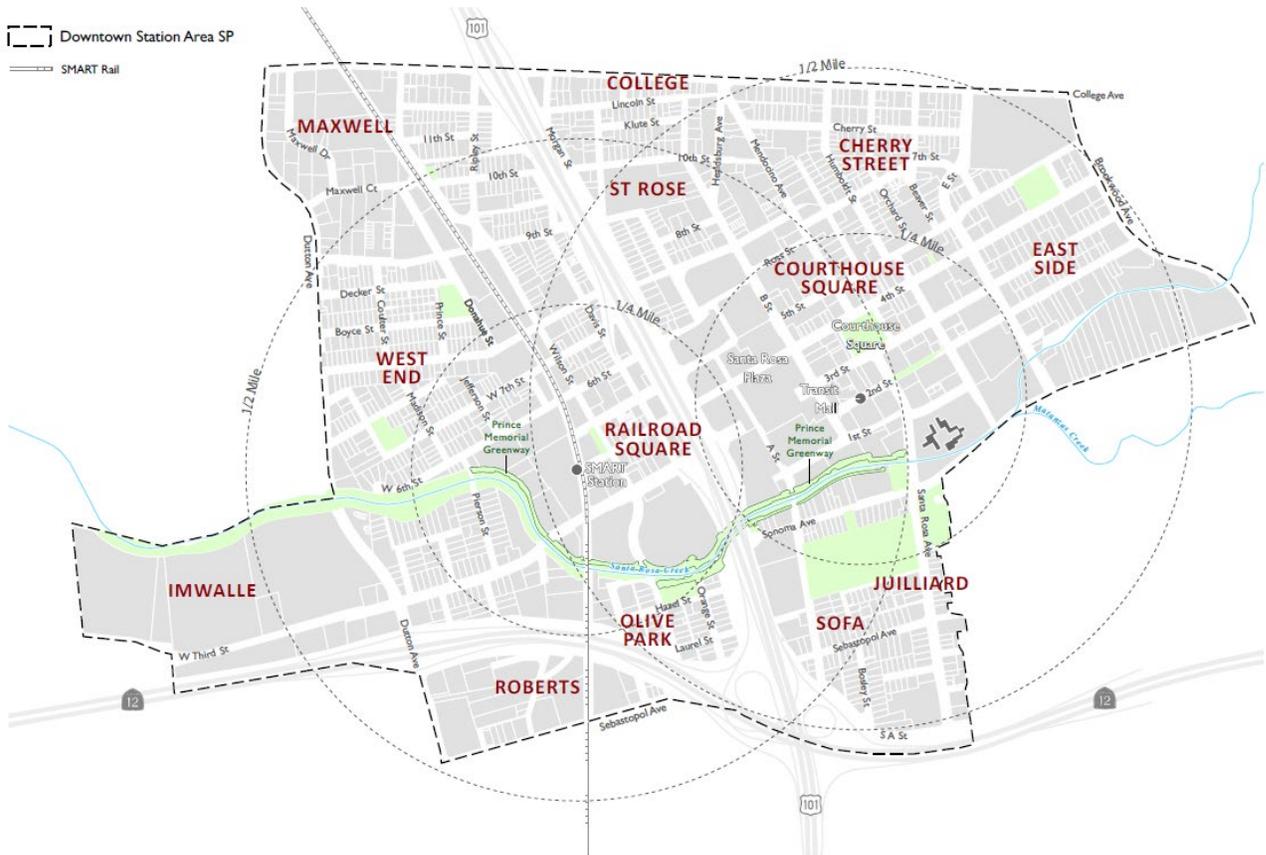
Figure 3. The DSASP envisions a vibrant urban core centered around Courthouse Square.

Additionally, the DSASP establishes an Active Ground Floor Overlay and applies this Overlay to specific street frontages. It is implemented through zoning district development standards and design guidelines. Design of new development and/or major renovations should reinforce and enhance the pedestrian-oriented character of streets in the Downtown Station Area, especially within the Active Ground Floor Overlay (Map-2).

Fulfillment of the DSASP's Urban Design Goals and implementation of the Active Ground Floor Overlay is accomplished largely through application of design guidelines in the following areas: Pedestrian Realm and Streetscapes, Wayfinding and Transit Access, Parks and Public Spaces, Site and Building Design, Historic Districts, Parking, and Environmental Sustainability. The design guidelines contained in this section reflect design best practices and are considered conventional and ideal; however, they may be used as targets and modified.

For a project to exhibit superior design and overall consistency with the Downtown Station Area design guidelines, the applicant must demonstrate how the proposed design incorporates specific guidelines with a primary focus on implementing Downtown Station Area Urban Design Goals. Deviations from, or alterations to, these design guidelines must be justified by the applicant. Projects are encouraged to creatively incorporate these design guidelines.

MAP-1 DOWNTOWN STATION AREA



2.0 Urban Design Goals

- A. Create a distinctive sense of place for the Downtown Station.
- B. Area that balances traditional character with a forward-looking identity, rooted in innovation, environmental sustainability, and quality of life.
- C. Develop walkable, interconnected, transit-oriented neighborhoods with pedestrian-scaled design features and a safe, engaging public realm.
- D. Take advantage of the natural amenities and scenic qualities of the Downtown Station Area with site design that incorporates natural features, protects sensitive habitats, promotes physical and visual connections to the creeks, preserves existing view corridors, and creates new vistas.
- E. Design accessible civic spaces and urban parks that function as focal points for the surrounding neighborhoods with public art, entertainment, and opportunities for passive and active recreation. Recognize that civic spaces that attract residents and visitors Downtown are essential for building vibrancy and sense of place.
- F. Require building designs to establish both variety and harmony across each single development and throughout the wider Downtown Station Area.
- G. Incorporate residential design principles that support the needs of families, people with low mobility, seniors, students, and first-time homebuyers.
- H. Ensure compatibility among existing uses, including resources with significant historic value, and new residential development with respect to design, scale, privacy, light, and noise.
- I. Design station and transit center facilities that convey a memorable entry into the community and blend with surrounding neighborhoods.
- J. Foster innovation and flexible design that can accommodate changing market forces and preferences over time.



Figure 4. An accessible, walkable urban space serves as a focal point for the surrounding neighborhoods.



Figure 5. Kinetic artwork by Ned Kahn.



Figure 6. New residential that respects the integrity of existing residential.