

SUMMARY OF THE DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN WHITE PAPER

The Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) was developed over a 6-year period with extensive public input, and adopted in 1998. The Plan has not been substantially updated in 17 years. As part of the General Plan Update, the DSP is being evaluated to determine policies and programs which are still relevant and which need to be updated.

Plan Vision: To retain and improve Downtown Novato “as the heart of the community by maintaining and enhancing the small town feel, historical character, charm and human scale that is pedestrian friendly while facilitating the development of the downtown as a thriving, multi-faceted hub of economic, social, and cultural activities and an active gathering place that reflects quality in its built environment and personal services provided. Promoting a pedestrian friendly environment that encourages browsing, social interaction and people watching will reinforce the historical "small town" qualities and provide more opportunities for vibrant street life.”

Major Plan Objectives and Accomplishments:

<i>Policy/Objective</i>	<i>Status</i>
Grant Avenue improvements (sidewalks, street trees, art work, pedestrian amenities, sewers)	Completed - \$10.7 million infrastructure upgrade finished in 2003.
Gathering Places	Civic Center Green created. Options to expand or create additional public gathering places are under consideration in Civic Center Master Plan and Redwood Blvd. Streetscape studies.
Linear Park along Railroad ROW	Bike/Ped. path is planned along SMART corridor
Village Design Concept (requires multiple uses, multiple buildings with multiple entries on 18 key “catalyst” sites)	Tresch Galleria, 999 Grant and Peets/Smashburger buildings are examples. Woodside Office Building and Mill Works did not really comply.
Theater District	Reopening of the Novato Theater being pursued
City Hall Campus	City Hall rehabilitated and City Offices built - \$21 million projects. New campus master plan being considered
Parking Structure at Community House	Parking added with City Office Building
Gymnastics/Teen Center	Completed in 2000 (\$2.8 million project)
Public Information Signage	Completed in 2014 (\$400,000 project)
Gateway Enhancements	Street enhancements being considered in the Redwood Boulevard Streetscape Study
Retail on Ground Floor on Grant	Implemented in Zoning Code
Allowances for Mixed Use (increased height limits)	Implemented in Zoning Code

<i>Policy/Objective</i>	<i>Status</i>
Downtown Sign Criteria	Implemented in Zoning Code
Design Guidelines	The Zoning Code requires compliance with all 140 listed design criteria
Downtown Business Improvement District	DBID established and operating.
Façade Improvement Program	Attempted, not successful

New Development: Since adoption of the Plan there have been six new private projects constructed:

Tresch Galleria
(7400 Redwood Blvd.)



Umpqua Bank Building
(999 Grant)



Woodside Office Building
(7250 Redwood Blvd. at DeLong)



Trader Joe's/Starbucks
(7514 Redwood Blvd.)



The Millworks
(790 De Long)



Smashburger/Peets
(7370 Redwood Blvd.)



White Paper Issues:

- Whether to retain the current ground floor use limitations on Grant and Redwood that preclude financial institutions and banks on the street frontage
- If all remaining public improvements called for in the DSP are still reasonable, particularly given the loss of Redevelopment funding
- Whether the specificity of land uses and design criteria for 18 “catalyst” redevelopment sites are still realistic in the current or foreseeable real estate market, or whether they inhibit new development
- Whether design guidelines in the DSP should continue to be mandatory criteria
- How best to update the DSP: either prepare a comprehensive update (with consultant assistance and new environmental review) following adoption of the new General Plan, or whether the DSP should be distilled down and incorporated into the new General Plan as a major focus area of the Land Use Element.